

Legalizing Marijuana

Name:

Institutional affiliation:

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The topic on legalizing marijuana is controversial one anywhere in the world today. There are various parties that feel legalization would bring more harm than good and there are those that advocate for the plant's legalization. Most of its use as medicine has been made legal in several states across the United States. New Zealand is one of the countries in the world that has managed to legalize and decriminalize the use of marijuana owing to the many 'coffee shops' found in the country. On the issue of health, some extensive research has shown that marijuana shows no evidence of causing lung cancer in human beings and therefore making it safe for recreational and medicinal use. It is a catch 22 to realize that the cigarettes industry rakes in billions of dollars a year while still being the sole leader in causing lung cancer. Essentially, the following research collects the reasons given in various literature on the legalization of marijuana and the factual information about legalization. The literature review will give about four reasons given for legalization and the plausible facts that follow the reasons. Most of the legislative implications around legalization of marijuana will be explored as well.

Literature Review

Several reasons have been given for proposing the full legalization of the use of marijuana, not only in the United States but also in the rest of the world. The first and the most important reason for legalization is that it will lead to the creation of jobs (Walker, 2014). Marijuana is fairly complex plant to grow, harvest and process for use. Most of these operations are done in secret and therefore take long to complete. Consequently, legalization would mean that every essential part of the plant's life cycle from planting, weeding, harvesting and processing would create an operations chain that would see to the employment of a significant

number of people. The unemployment rate in the United States at the moment stands at about 4% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). The percentage could easily be reduced if the operations running around marijuana would be made legal and work oriented. Legalization would easily put more than two percent of the entire unemployed population back to work. In the same way, legalization would ensure that the people remain in the jobs due to the permanent cycle of planting and harvesting that would be facilitated. Indeed, legalization would see most youth get jobs to support their families and improve their lives in general.

The second reason given for legalization is the amount of money that legalization has the potential to earn any government. In the United States at present, only ten states have legalized recreational use of marijuana. Further, about twenty one states in total have legalized medicinal use of marijuana. The states that have made the plant legal have seen the potential the plant has on the basis of revenue generated from taxation. Essentially, marijuana is taxed 15% in the states that its use have been made legal. One of the states that imposes the tax is the state of Colorado. According to the tax data collected in the state of Colorado, marijuana sales in 2018 reached an upward of about 1.2 billion dollars (Colorado Department of Revenue, 2019). The sales led to the state collecting about 270 million dollars from marijuana sale taxes. The number is comparable to the less than a quarter of the amount collected from taxation of alcoholic products. Further, according to a study conducted by the Georgia State University, the sales of alcohol have gone down by 15% in the states that have made medical use of marijuana legal. Further, the numbers are seen to be 20% drops in the states that have made recreational use legal (Chong, 2017). Consequently, the states make more money because the taxes imposed on marijuana are higher than those on alcohol. States like California and Washington have recorded taxes of \$345 and \$376 million respectively in the year 2018 (Walker, 2014). It is fairly hard to ignore the

numbers presented by the states even though the accuracy is questionable, there is still unrealized potential in legalizing the plant's use.

Thirdly, legalization of marijuana would allow for consumer safety measures. Marijuana users would be better informed if the product was taken through vigorous safety tests to determine its use. Marijuana's harmful impact to the youth has been examined and shows no significant correlation between legalization and increased use. In fact, the converse is true because states that have managed to legalize recreational use like Colorado have experienced significant decreases in the number of youths that prefer to use the substance (Chong, 2017). Consequently, research has shown that most youth are associating the use of marijuana more with medicinal than recreational purposes. The same has been observed in states that have legalized medicinal use only. However, conclusive results are yet to be collected on the relationship between legalization of marijuana and decreased use by the youth.

The fourth reason given by literature on legalizing marijuana is that it would reduce harm and lead to proper inquiries about the product. Essentially, it is recommended that consumers know as much as possible about the chemicals that have gone into cultivating the plant. In this way, the harm caused by street sold products would be reduced and proper vetting and inspection of the plant would be possible. In the same way, data on potency and dosage would be easily available to allow the safe use of the product even on medical purposes. The current trend sees parents with children requiring medical marijuana go to the extent of making the medicines themselves because of lack of proper documentation and dosage procedures (Caulkins et al., 2012). However, the states that have progressed are seeing many farmers as well as pharmaceutical companies go out of their way to conduct research on the plant and come up with dosages that are helping children and other people requiring medical marijuana. Further, the

research is also helping recreational users by informing them about the THC levels available in the strains of marijuana that they enjoy for recreation.

Methodology

The literature used was collected based on searches involving legalization of marijuana. The sources were selected based on their years of publications. Essentially, current data was used to collect information on legalization. Essentially, the process of collecting data saw that there are not many sources that have gone deeper into investigating the safe use of marijuana despite most of the facts presenting that marijuana overdose is virtually impossible by human beings (Caulkins et al., 2012). Further research on the subject showed that medicinal use is in no way conclusive. It was observed that there is also need for conclusive research on the medicinal application of marijuana. Dependent variables and controls for the proper research of marijuana represent a major problem. In essence, the research allowed for the categorization of marijuana users according to frequency of usage. The research found that the literature was divided between those people who had never used the substance, those who had used marijuana at least once and those who have been using the plant regularly. In the collection of data it was seen that most of the data was collected from the third group in order to give a more comprehensively researched platform (UC Davis Health, 2019). Further, the reasons were listed according to their frequency of appearance and number of mentions in publications. Consequently, the reasons most mentions for legalization were found to be taxes, employment, inspection and safe use and effects to the youth. The four reasons were also confirmed against data and found to be usable.

In conclusion, the research has revealed numerous gaps on the use of marijuana specifically for medical reasons. There seems to be forces that dictate the extent and level of

research. However, the most prominent of the barriers was observed to be the drug classification charts that place marijuana as a schedule one drug. This means that the drug, although it has several benefits on medicinal used is still placed in the category of dangerous drugs. Another hindrance to the progress of marijuana legalization for both recreational and medicinal use is regulation. The fact that many people could plant the herb on their back yards gives precedence for the difficulty in regulation procedures. In fact the most plausible way for regulation has been seen to be taxation which for the most part is showing positive results.

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