

Religiosity Influences Legalization of Marijuana among Chaldean Americans

Bianca Elias, B.S.¹, Anthony Cholagh, D.O.², Anthony Mansour, B.S.³, Angelina Selou, MPH⁴, Florence Dallo, Ph.D., MPH⁵

¹Oakland University William Beaumont School of Medicine, ²Henry Ford Health, ³Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine, ⁴Centria Healthcare, ⁵School of Health Sciences, Oakland University

Introduction

- Religious affiliation significantly influences attitudes towards marijuana, with atheists and agnostics displaying greater support for marijuana legalization compared to religious individuals
- Chaldeans are Aramaic-speaking Christians from Northern Iraq who identify as Catholics.
- Michigan is home to approximately 187,000 Chaldeans.
- Michigan recently legalized recreational marijuana use in 2018.
- Passing of this law provided an opportunity for many Chaldean Americans to become prominent suppliers and sellers in the industry

Aims and Objectives

The objective of this study was to examine the association between religiosity, legalization, and moral acceptability of recreational and medicinal marijuana among Chaldean Americans in metropolitan Detroit.

Methods

An online survey was created and distributed through various social media groups, churches, and Chaldean organizations which resulted in a total of 637 respondents following the removal of respondents who did not meet criteria. The survey was open from March 20th, 2022 to April 20th, 2022. The independent variable was level of religiosity. The dependent variables were moral acceptability, opinion towards legalization of recreational and medicinal marijuana, and risk of cannabis use disorder. Logistic regression was used to estimate the strength of the association between the independent and dependent variables.

Results

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants, n=637

Characteristics	n	%
Female	407	63.9
Age		
18-20	82	12.9
21-29	348	54.6
30-39	102	16.0
40+	105	16.5
Never Married	428	67.2
Highest level of education		
Less than hs/hs diploma	66	10.4
Some college/associate degree	185	29
Bachelor’s degree	281	44.1
Graduate degree	105	16.5
Employment Status		
Full Time	314	49.3
Part Time	103	16.2
Student	157	24.6
Disabled/Retired/Unemployed/Other	63	9.9
Annual Household Income		
Less than \$50,000	156	24.6
\$50,001-\$100,000	184	29.1
\$100,001-\$200,000	160	25.3
More than \$200,000	133	21.0
Language		
Chaldean/Arabic	119	18.7
English	512	80.4
Catholic	594	93.2
Political Viewpoint		
Conservative	453	71.1
Neither	137	21.5
Liberal	46	7.2

Table 2. Religiosity and Attitudes Toward Marijuana, n=637

	N	%
Religiosity level		
Low/Moderate	133	22.1
High	484	78.4
Legalizing <u>medicinal</u> marijuana		
Strongly/somewhat support legalization	481	83.4
Strongly/somewhat oppose legalization	96	16.6
Legalizing <u>recreational</u> marijuana		
Strongly/somewhat support legalization	274	45.7
Strongly/somewhat oppose legalization	325	54.3
Moral acceptability of <u>medicinal</u> marijuana		
Morally acceptable	446	85.8
Morally wrong	74	14.2
Moral acceptability of <u>recreational</u> marijuana		
Morally acceptable	216	41.1
Morally wrong	310	58.9

Table 3. Odds Ratios and 95% Confidence Intervals Association Between Religiosity and Support of Legalization of Recreational Marijuana, n=637

	Model 1 ^a OR (95% CI)	Model 2 ^b OR (95% CI)	Model 3 ^c OR (95% CI)	Model 4 ^d OR (95% CI)	Model 5 ^e OR (95% CI)	Model 6 ^f OR (95% CI)
Religiosity						
Support of Legalization of Recreational Marijuana						
Low	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
High	5.73 (3.61, 9.09)	5.87 (3.67, 9.39)	6.09 (3.78, 9.94)	5.99 (3.71, 9.68)	4.60 (2.79, 7.60)	2.80 (1.46, 5.39)
Moral Acceptability of Medicinal Marijuana						
Low	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
High	3.12 (1.38, 7.01)	3.21 (1.42, 7.27)	3.31 (1.45, 7.54)	3.20 (1.39, 7.32)	2.72 (1.16, 6.36)	1.25 (.41, 3.70)
Moral Acceptability of Recreational Marijuana						
Low	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
High	5.69 (3.56, 9.10)	5.50 (3.42, 8.86)	5.58 (3.43, 9.07)	5.43 (3.34, 8.84)	3.88 (2.31, 6.52)	2.36 (1.16, 4.78)
Risk of Cannabis Use Disorder						
Low	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
High	0.31 (0.21, 0.47)	0.33 (0.22, 0.50)	0.33 (0.22, 0.49)	0.33 (0.22, 0.50)	0.36 (0.23, 0.57)	0.59 (0.36, 1.01)

Table 3: In model 6 where it was fully adjusted, the legalization and moral acceptability of recreational marijuana were statistically and significantly related to religiosity. That is, those with higher level of religiosity are more likely to oppose the legalization of recreational marijuana.

^a Model 1 is unadjusted, ^b Model 2 adjusts for age, sex and marital status, ^c Model 3 additionally adjusts for education, employment, and income, ^d Model 4 additionally adjusts for language, ^e Model 5 additionally adjusts for political viewpoint, ^f Model 6 additionally adjusts for tolerance and perception of harm

Conclusions

The goal of this study was to examine the association between religiosity, legalization, and moral acceptability of recreational and medicinal marijuana among Chaldean Americans in metropolitan Detroit. The main findings were approximately 78% of respondents report high religiosity and 83.4% strongly or somewhat supporting the legalization of medicinal marijuana. In addition, 85.8% felt medicinal marijuana was morally acceptable and 58.9% believed recreational marijuana was morally wrong. Individuals who reported high religiosity were more likely to oppose legalization of recreational marijuana (OR=2.80; 95% CI = 1.46, 5.39) and believe that recreational marijuana was morally wrong (OR=2.36; 95% CI = 1.16, 4.78).

Future studies should assess changes in attitudes and behaviors while utilizing qualitative studies to help provide more detailed information. We believe that the attitudes towards marijuana, especially recreational marijuana could change in the future based on evolving societal norms.

References

- Burdette, A. M., Webb, N. S., Hill, T. D., Haynes, S. H., & Ford, J. A. (2018). Religious Involvement and Marijuana Use for Medical and Recreational Purposes. Journal of Drug Issues, 48(3), 421-434. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022042618770393>
- “Chaldean American History.” *Chaldean Community Foundation*, <https://www.chaldeanfoundation.org/chaldean-history/>. Accessed 20 Aug. 2022.
- State Medical Cannabis Laws. (2023, June 22). <https://www.ncsl.org/health/state-medical-cannabis-laws>.
- Francis, Jon. “The Issue of Recreational Marijuana and Other Drugs in Our Community.” *Chaldean Diocese of St. Thomas the Apostle U.S.A*, 14 Dec. 2018, <https://chaldeanchurch.org/the-issue-of-recreational-marijuana-and-other-drugs-in-our-community/>.

Acknowledgements

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the participants who made this research endeavor possible. Their contributions in completing the survey have been instrumental in shaping the outcomes of this study. Their willingness to devote their time and efforts made this research possible. Furthermore, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the OUWB Embark Program for granting me the opportunity and resources to embark on this enriching research journey. The platform provided by the Embark Program has been instrumental in fostering my academic growth and development. I am also deeply grateful to my Embark advisor, Dr. Dwayne Baxa, PhD., whose support, guidance, and mentorship have been invaluable throughout the duration of this project.