

## Knowledge, Attitudes, and Awareness of Cannabis Use among Final Year Nursing Undergraduates in Sri Lanka

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Cannabis usage has garnered significant attention due to its increasing usage and potential health impacts. As future healthcare professionals, nursing students play a vital role in educating and caring for individuals affected by cannabis. This study aimed to fill the existing research gap by assessing the knowledge, attitudes, and awareness of cannabis use among all final year nursing undergraduates in Sri Lanka, a topic not previously explored in this population. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire among 312 final year nursing undergraduates representing all nursing faculties in state universities in Sri Lanka. The questionnaire was validated after two rounds of revisions suggested by five experts in the validation committee. Ethical approval was obtained from ERC at KDU, and the necessary administrative permissions were obtained from state universities. The sample comprised 64.4% females and 35.6% males, with a mean age of 25.28 years. Most were Sinhala (79.8%) and Buddhist (67.9%). Cannabis use was reported by 19.6% of participants, with 72.1% of them continuing usage. The median scores for Knowledge, Attitude, and Awareness were 74.0, 77.0, and 47.50, respectively. Significant positive correlations were observed between knowledge and attitude ( $r=0.433$ ,  $p<.001$ ), knowledge and awareness ( $r=0.286$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and awareness and attitude ( $r=0.189$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). These results indicate a considerable knowledge gap and varying attitudes towards cannabis use, suggesting the need for targeted educational interventions. Enhancing knowledge and fostering positive attitudes can improve awareness and patient care, underscoring the critical role of nursing students in managing cannabis use. High knowledge but low awareness levels may result from limited practical exposure, and curriculum focused more on theory than real world aspects of cannabis use.

**Keywords:** *cannabis, knowledge, attitudes, awareness, nursing undergraduates*