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Dennis Cregin

Binghamton University--SUNY

Jared Zubin

Binghamton University--SUNY

Humza Khan

Binghamton University--SUNY

Hubert Zhou

Binghamton University--SUNY

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Reversing the Trend of Study Drug Use in College Students

Dennis Cregin, Humza Khan, Jared Zubin, Hubert Zhou, Lina Begdache

Introduction

Illicit use of ADHD medications such as study drugs is common among college students, with 25.5% of survey respondents indicating such use. This use is undoubtedly motivated by misinformation about the effects of unprescribed ADHD medications on users and thus warrants an effective means by which at-risk populations can be educated on the negative consequences of illicit study drug use. The Health Belief Model posits that changing maladaptive health behaviors requires that interventions address the perceived barriers and perceived benefits of doing so (Champion & Skinner, 2008). Additionally, the Transtheoretical Model recognizes the importance of tailoring interventions to individuals' current motivation levels (Prochaska & Velicer, 1997). This study used these and other theories as a framework to investigate efficient means by which college students can be educated on the implications using ADHD medications without a prescription.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Most college students have not received formal education on the use of ADHD drugs

Hypothesis 2: Negative experiences with illicit ADHD drug use dissuades future use.

Hypothesis 3: Education on side effects and real life anecdotes may dissuade illicit ADHD drug use.

Methods

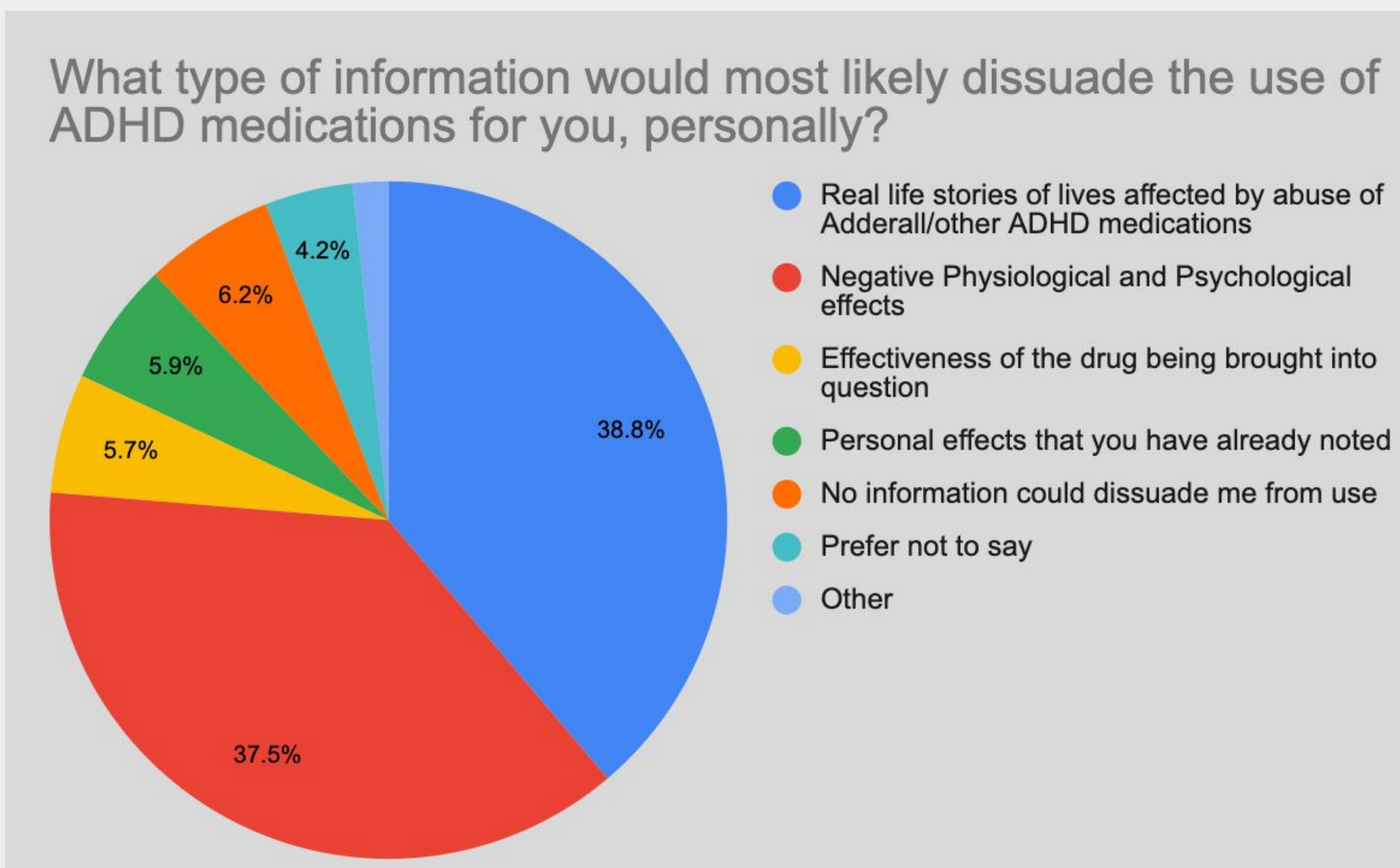
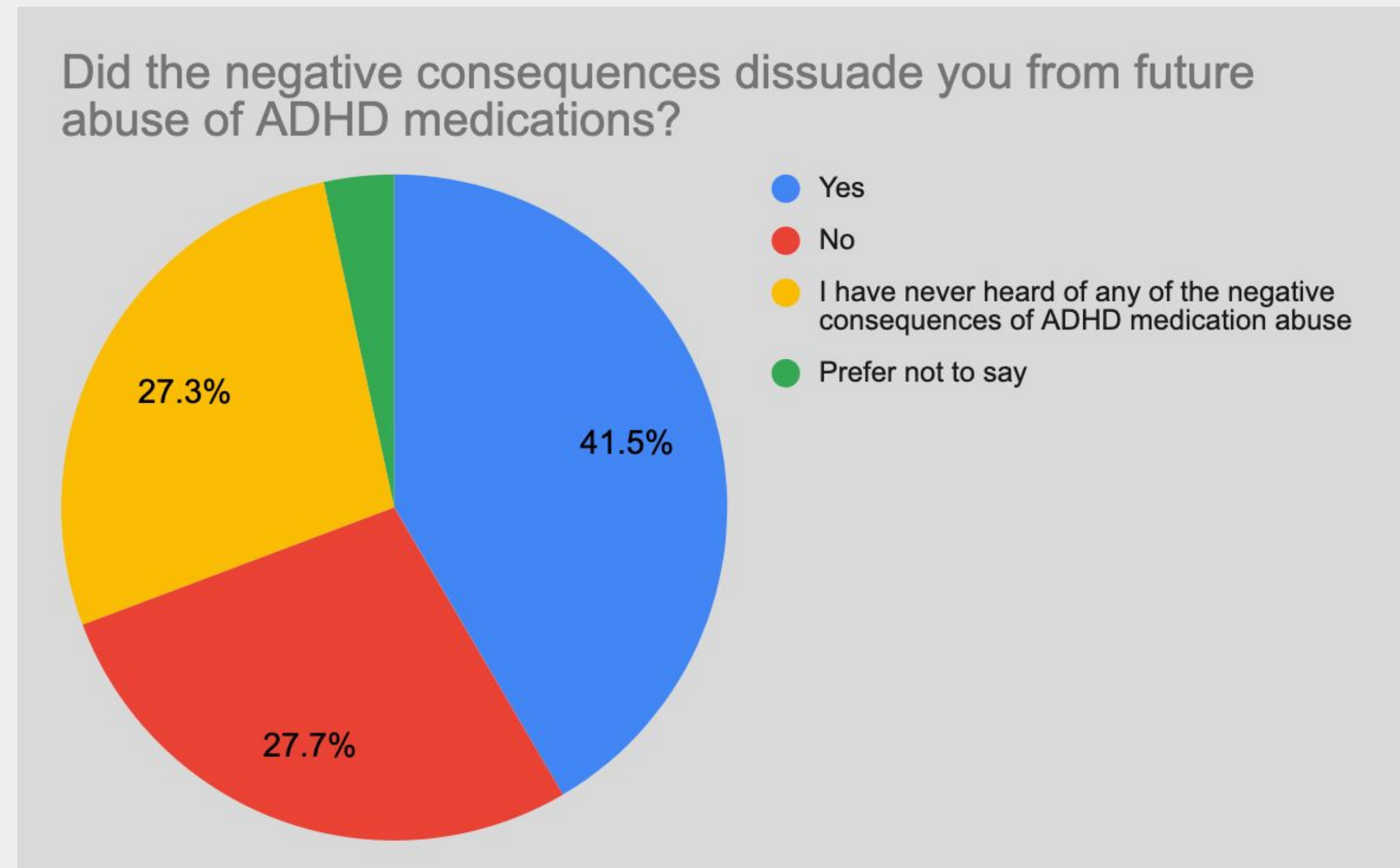
Data was collected using an anonymous Google Survey that asked participants to indicate illicit use of ADHD medication, perceptions of use, diet patterns, side effects of illicit use, and education regarding ADHD drugs.

The link to the survey was distributed via email, social media, and outreach events.

Data from 761 respondents was used in this study.

Results

Roughly 27% of respondents were male, with about 72% female and 1% non-binary. 57.3% of respondents said that they had never received formal education about the effects of ADHD medication. 74.2% of respondents have never sought out extra information regarding the risk factors of ADHD medication. 41.5% of respondents said that the negative consequences dissuaded them from future abuse of ADHD medication while 27.7% were not dissuaded. When asked what type of information would most likely dissuade the use of ADHD medications for respondents personally, the majority of respondents answered that real life stories of lives affected by abuse of Adderall or other ADHD medications (38.8%) and negative physiological and psychological effects (37.5%) would be most likely to dissuade them from future use.



Discussion

Results indicated that a majority of college students have not received a formal education on the risk factors of illicit ADHD medication. These results support Hypothesis 1. Programs can be implemented into university curriculums, such as a Gen Ed mandatory class that delves into such topics. Risk factor education may also be effective for high schoolers.

The results of Figure 1 suggest that the majority of individuals who used illicit ADHD medication were dissuaded from future use when experiencing negative symptoms. These results support Hypothesis 2. Having such effects can cause a reduction in the number of people using such substances. However, the percentage of individuals who still wished to use these substances illicitly is still high. More interventions need to be developed to spread the awareness of the dangers of these substances.

The results from Figure 2 indicate that the majority of survey respondents are dissuaded most by real life stories of lives affected by illicit ADHD medication, and negative physiological and psychological effects. Educational interventions should incorporate real life stories into their curricula. Counterintuitively, few students responded that experienced effects of taking illicit ADHD medication would dissuade them from use. This seems to go against Figure 1, which had a large proportion of students stating that negative consequences of using illicit ADHD medication dissuade them from future use.

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