

CANNABIS-INDUCED DYSPHORIA/PARANOIA MEDIATES THE LINK BETWEEN CHILDHOOD TRAUMA AND PSYCHOTIC-LIKE EXPERIENCES IN YOUNG CANNABIS USERS.

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Introduction and aims: Childhood trauma (abuse and neglect) is a major risk factor for cannabis use disorder as well as psychotic-spectrum disorders. Psychotic-like experiences (PLEs) in young people who use cannabis may be an early indicator of psychosis risk following cannabis use. We examined whether (i) childhood trauma moderates the association between cannabis use and PLEs, (ii) the association between childhood trauma and cannabis use is mediated by subjective effects of cannabis (euphoria and dysphoria/paranoia), and (iii) the association between childhood trauma and PLEs is also mediated by these subjective effects.

Design and methods: Participants were 2630 young people (aged 16-25) who regularly use cannabis and were recruited through online advertisements. They were asked to complete a cross-sectional survey measuring cannabis and other substance use, childhood trauma, PLEs, and the subjective effects of cannabis (euphoria and dysphoria/paranoia).

Results: A significant interaction indicated the effect of cannabis on PLE frequency was stronger for individuals with more severe childhood trauma. Childhood trauma was also associated with greater cannabis use and PLE frequency, both of which were mediated by subjective dysphoria/paranoia when using the drug.

Discussions and conclusions: Childhood trauma was associated with greater PLEs in young people who use cannabis, which may be linked with an increased susceptibility to the dysphoric/paranoid subjective effects when using the drug. Childhood trauma should be addressed early in young people who use cannabis to mitigate the psychosis-associated harms of the drug.

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