

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COFFEE CONSUMPTION ONSET AND PERSONAL WELLBEING IN UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE STUDENTS

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Abstract

Background: Americans' choice in caffeinated beverages, consumption amounts, and frequency of consumption varies depending on factors such as age, demographics, education level, and social status. Caffeine has shown to increase energy, alertness, attentiveness, and sociability. Research shows that the amount of caffeine consumed by adolescents has increased 70% in the past 30 years.

Objective: The objective of this study was to determine the relationship between the onset of coffee consumption, current consumption level, and personal wellbeing. It was hypothesized that an earlier onset of coffee consumption would have a positive correlation to increased coffee consumption later in life and a negative effect on personal wellbeing.

Methods: An online survey was administered to college students, age 18-24. Participants were recruited via social media. The survey assessed participants' history of coffee consumption, current coffee consumption, and perception of impact on appetite, mental status, mood, sleep patterns, and overall health. Data was analyzed using SPSS.

Results: Upon surveying participants (N=95), there were strong correlations ($p \leq 0.01$) between the onset of coffee consumption, amount consumed at onset, and current consumption level. Onset of coffee consumption was most highly reported during notable academic years, such as the first year of college (16%, n=15) and first year of high school (14%, n=13). Approximately 67% (n=64) reported consuming 1-2 cups/day at onset of consumption. Additionally, 53% (n=50) reported that coffee consumption benefits their overall mood, while 41% (n=39) claim it has no effect on overall health and wellbeing.

Conclusions: The onset of coffee consumption was most frequently reported during times of change, such as notable academic years. This finding may be related to the participants' report that caffeine consumption benefits their mood, above other qualities surveyed. Further research relating to other types of caffeinated beverages and foods would provide more conclusive results regarding overall caffeine intake and wellbeing.

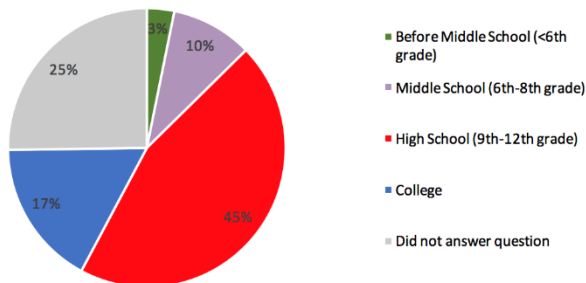
Background

Approximately 90% of American adults consume caffeine on a daily basis, with quantities ranging as high as the equivalent of four cups of coffee per day. While consumption is high among the adult population, the amount of caffeine consumed by adolescents has risen by 70% in the past thirty years. Adolescence is a time of growth and development, where factors such as sleep, diet, hydration, nutrition and mental health play an important role. The caffeine contained in coffee has shown to increase energy, alertness, attentiveness, and sociability among those who consume it. While potentially harmful to children and adolescents, these benefits may be desired by these populations, and to college students, as they strive to balance academics with extracurricular activities.

Methods

The study was approved by Texas Christian University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Participants consisted of college students, age 18-24, recruited through social media. An online survey was created utilizing Survey Monkey. The survey contained 19 questions assessing age of onset of coffee consumption, current average coffee consumption, and perceptions of the effect of coffee on personal wellbeing. Participants' responses were confidential, as each response was assigned a number and the only identifying factors in the survey were age and gender. The survey was closed once the sample reached the targeted number of participants. Data from the survey was then analyzed using SPSS.

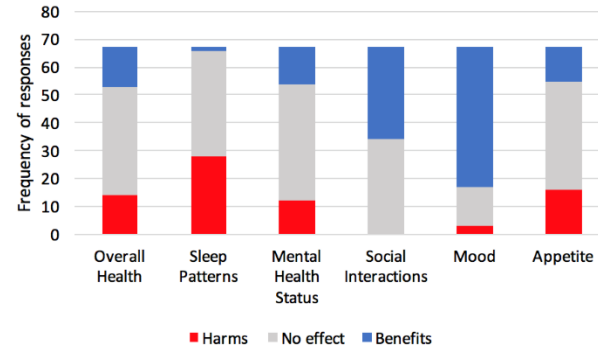
Age of Coffee Consumption Onset



Results

Upon surveying participants (N=95), there were strong positive correlations ($p \leq 0.01$) between the onset of coffee consumption, amount consumed at onset, and current consumption level. Notably, onset of coffee consumption was likely to occur during significant academic years, such as the first year of college (15.8%, n=15) and first year of high school (13.7%, n=13). Approximately 67% (n=64) reported consuming 1-2 cups/day at onset of consumption. When participants were asked why they began consuming coffee, 50.5% (n=48) reported energy levels, 49.5% (n=47) reported taste, and 33.7% (n=32) reported family/parental influence. Additionally, 52.6% (n=50) reported that coffee consumption benefits their overall mood, while 41.1% (n=39) claimed it has no effect on overall health and well-being.

Participants' Perception of Coffee's Effect on Wellbeing



Discussion and Conclusions

The onset of coffee consumption commonly occurs during times of change, such as significant academic years, which was noted in the survey results. Approximately 50% of participants responded that they began drinking coffee due to a desire for increased energy levels and/or taste. Additionally, approximately 34% reported that onset of consumption was due to influence of family/parents. This is presumably related to the fact that 58% of participants responded that they began drinking coffee under the age of 18, when they are likely to be living at home. The majority of participants reported that their coffee intake benefits mood, while having no effect on appetite, mental health status or overall health. Through these results, it is evident that there is a knowledge deficit on the health effects of caffeine in college students. Further research incorporating additional types of caffeinated beverages and caffeine containing foods would provide more conclusive results about the impact of coffee and caffeine consumption on wellbeing.

Standard Coffee Cup Sizes

