

# Emotion Regulation and Cannabis Use Motives

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## Introduction

- Young adults who use substances have been shown to struggle with emotion regulation, while those who struggle to regulate positive emotions also have greater drug misuse and severity (Weiss, et al., 2021; Weiss et al., 2018).
- Motives to use drugs or alcohol have been tied to substance use problems, with coping motives being the most significantly associated with use related outcomes (Schultz et al., 2019; Cooper et al., 2015; Buckner, 2013b).
- Emotion regulation is motivated by the achievement of desired emotional states (Gross, 1998; Tamir, 2016), yet there is little research considering the ways in which emotion regulation and motives are associated with each other.

## Hypotheses

- Based on previous research, I hypothesized that
  1. Overall DERS-18 scores will positively correlate with the enhancement, coping and conformity subscales of the MMM.
  2. Overall DERS-18 scores will positively correlate with the suppression subscale of the ERQ.
  3. Overall DERS-18 scores will negatively correlate with the social and expansion subscales of the MMM.
  4. Overall DERS-18 scores will negatively correlate with the reappraisal subscale of the ERQ.

## Methods

- Participants were college students (N=75) who completed an online survey through SONA for extra credit in a psychology course.
- Pearson Product Moment Correlations were used to assess the relationship between DERS-18 (DERS-18; Victor & Klonsky, 2016) overall scores and MMM subscales; as well as the relationship between DERS-18 overall scores and ERQ subscales (ERQ; Gross & John, 2003).

## Measures

- The Marijuana Motives Measure (MMM; Simons et al., 1998) was used to assess motives to use cannabis. Subscales include Coping, Conformity, Social, Enhancement and Expansion.
- The Difficulty in Regulating Emotions (DERS-18; Victor & Klonsky, 2016) was used to assess emotion regulation. Higher overall scores reflect emotion dysregulation, while lower overall scores reflect emotion regulation.
- The Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ; Gross & John, 2003) was used to assess emotion regulation strategies. Suppression is associated with worse interpersonal functioning and experiencing more negative emotions. Reappraisal is associated with better interpersonal functioning and experiencing more positive emotions.

Table 1:

DERS-18 and MMM Correlations

| MMM Subscales | Correlation with DERS-18 Total | Significance (2-tailed) |
|---------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Suppression   | .339**                         | .003                    |
| Reappraisal   | -.473**                        | <.001                   |

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 2:

DERS-18 and ERQ Correlations

| ERQ Subscales | Correlation with DERS-18 Total | Significance (2-tailed) |
|---------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Coping        | .547**                         | <.001                   |
| Social        | .343*                          | .015                    |
| Conformity    | .274                           | .054                    |
| Enhancement   | .246                           | .078                    |
| Expansion     | .165                           | .237                    |

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

## Results

- Overall DERS-18 scores positively correlated with the enhancement, coping and conformity subscales of the MMM. Hypothesis 1 was supported.
- Overall DERS-18 scores positively correlated with the ERQ suppression subscale. Hypothesis 2 was supported.
- Overall DERS-18 scores positively correlated with the social and expansion subscales of the MMM. Hypothesis 3 was not supported.
- Overall DERS-18 scores will negatively correlate with the ERQ reappraisal subscale. Hypothesis 4 was supported.
- Emotion dysregulation is significantly positively correlated with higher suppression of emotions and significantly negatively correlated with higher reappraisal of emotions.
- Emotion dysregulation was significantly positively correlated with Coping and Social motives to use marijuana.

## Conclusions

- Emotionally dysregulated individuals may be motivated to use cannabis to cope with negative emotions.
  - This supports previous research showing that coping motives are associated with negative marijuana use related outcomes (Schultz et al., 2019; Cooper et al., 2015; Buckner, 2013b).
- Emotionally dysregulated individuals may be socially motivated to use marijuana to enjoy a social setting.
  - This may be encouraged by descriptive and injunctive norms held by family and friends about cannabis use (Buckner, 2013a).
- Enhancement and conformity motives are associated with negative marijuana use related outcomes (Schultz et al., 2019; Buckner, 2013b) but were not significantly correlated with emotion dysregulation.
  - Future research should assess potential avenues that allow enhancement and conformity motives to result in negative marijuana use outcomes.
- Expansion was the most weakly correlated with emotion dysregulation but was still positively correlated, indicating an association with dysregulation.

