

Introduction

- Previous research has established that alcohol and cannabis co-use (co-use) is linked to greater health risks than the discrete use of either drug.
- There is little research connecting emotion dysregulation—the difficulty to adequately respond to one’s emotional experiences—to co-use.
- The present study aims to examine the relationship between ER and co-use.
- We hypothesized that emotion dysregulation would predict increased likelihood of co-use.

Method

- Participants (N=150) were recruited from introductory psychology courses and received course credit for taking an online survey via SONA.
 - N=45 reported co-use. N=101 reported no co-use.
- Participants were predominantly white (93.5%, n=73), female (80.7%, n=63), and 17-31 years old, with an average age of 19.62 years (SD=1.67).

Measures

- The DERS-18 and its subscales were used to assess emotion regulation (ER) abilities when distressed. Higher scores indicate emotion dysregulation.
 - *Limited Access to ER Strategies (Strategies)*: Reflects the belief that it is difficult to regulate one’s emotions once upset.
 - *Difficulties Engaging in Goal-directed Behavior (Goals)*: Measures someone’s difficulties completing tasks when upset.
 - *Lack of Emotional Clarity (Clarity)*: Gauges the degree to which someone understands their emotions when upset.
- Analyzed responses to the item “How often do you simultaneously use alcohol and cannabis?”

Figure 1. Responses to the item, “How often do you simultaneously use alcohol and cannabis?”

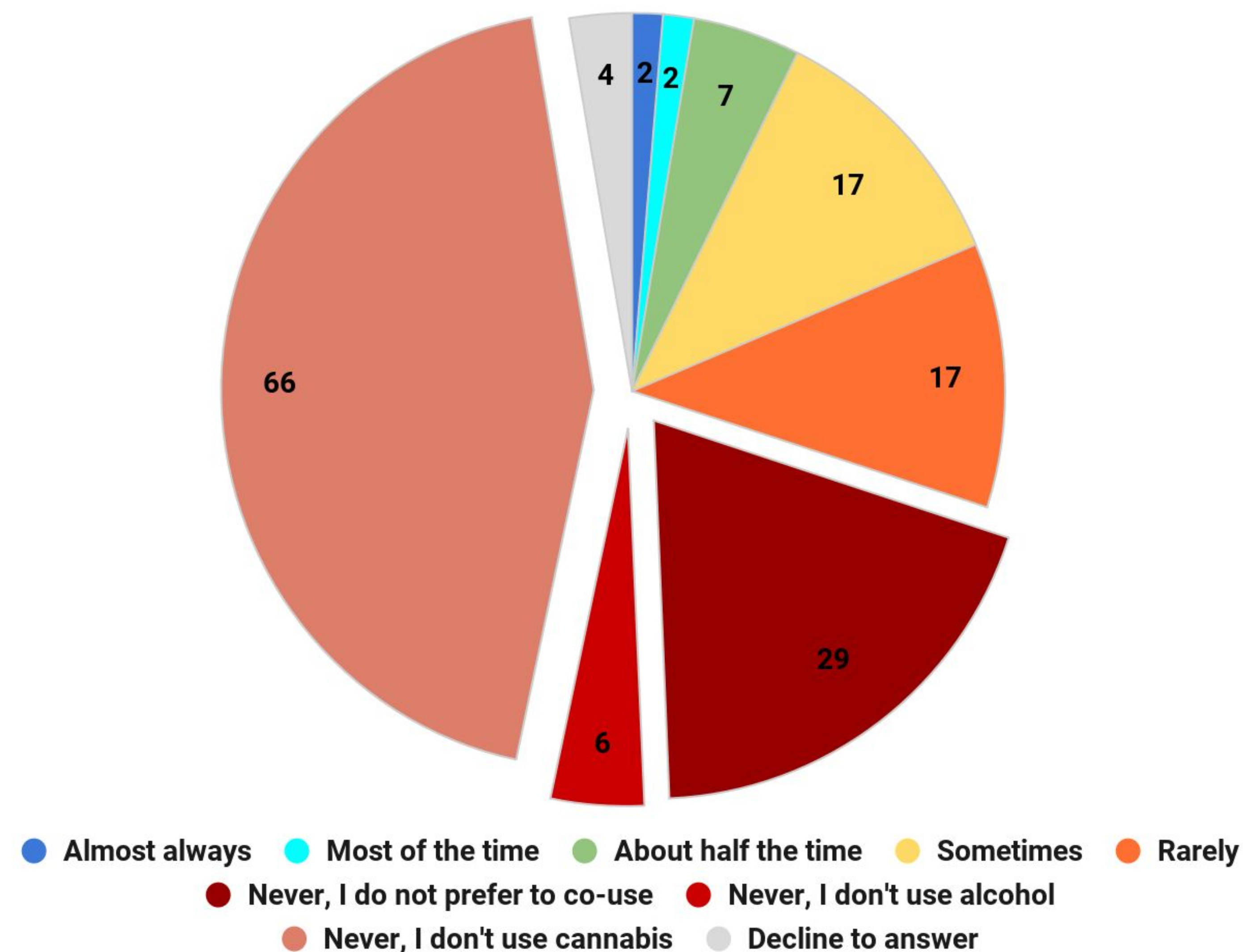


Table 1. Odds ratios for DERS-18 Scores & Co-users

	Significance	Odds ratio
Total DERS-18 Score	.003	1.054
Strategy Score	.008	1.173
Goals Score	<.001	1.231
Clarity Score	.018	1.182

References



Analysis & Results

- Binary logistic regressions with Total DERS-18 scores and its subscales as a predictor of a participant’s endorsement of co-use were used.
 - “1” indicated co-use and “0” indicated no co-use.
- Those reporting higher Total DERS-18 scores are about 1.054 times more likely to co-use.
- Those reporting higher Strategy scores are about 1.173 times more likely to co-use.
- Those reporting higher Goals scores are about 1.231 times more likely to co-use.
- Those reporting higher Clarity scores are about 1.182 times more likely to co-use.
- The results for the Awareness, Nonacceptance, and Impulse subscales were not significant.

Conclusions

- The present findings indicate that emotion dysregulation might predict co-use.
 - Specifically, experiencing difficulties engaging in goal-directed behavior (e.g., completing homework) most significantly predicted co-use.
- These findings are useful considering goal-, strategy-, and clarity-related constructs when designing interventions aimed at college students.
 - For example, we could encourage students to take regular breaks to reflect and articulate their emotions before resuming an assignment or social interaction.
- These findings are also helpful in gauging what activities students might employ when upset.
- Future research should consider:
 - Populations other than college students.
 - Standard units of cannabis.
 - If ER is associated with co-use just because co-users use more alcohol (or cannabis), or if there is something unique about co-use.