

# IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES ON CURRENT E-CIGARETTE USE WITHIN A YOUNG ADULT SAMPLE



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## ABSTRACT

The current study examined the association between several emotion competencies, e-cigarette expectancies, and current e-cigarette use. Young adults ( $M = 20.41$  years) answered questions regarding emotion regulation, distress tolerance, urgency, affect, beliefs about e-cigarettes, and e-cigarette susceptibility. The results indicate that negative affect and positive/negative urgency may play a role in e-cigarette use within this population.

## BACKGROUND

E-cigarette prevalence is particularly high among young adults, with 13.6% of individuals aged 18 to 24 in 2014 currently using e-cigarettes (USDHHS, 2016). Given this, examination of motivating factors in young adult populations is necessary due to the heightened risk of prolonged use after initiation before age 25 and the prevalence of e-cigarette use in this population as well (Schoenborn & Gindi, 2015; USDHHS, 2012).

Psychological distress can negatively affect smoking cessation within this age group (Lawrence, Mitrou, & Zubrick, 2011). While there is research regarding emotional components with cigarette use, there is very little regarding e-cigarette use.

Given that e-cigarette use has increased in prevalence and popularity, research examining motivating factors to engage in use is necessary. Emotional competencies may be helpful in implementing preventative and cessation programs.

## CURRENT STUDY

The current study seeks to expand literature by examining how an individual's beliefs about e-cigarettes, ability to control their distress, impulsivity when experiencing positive and negative emotion, affect, and emotion regulation can promote or deter e-cigarette use in a young adult population.

## METHODS

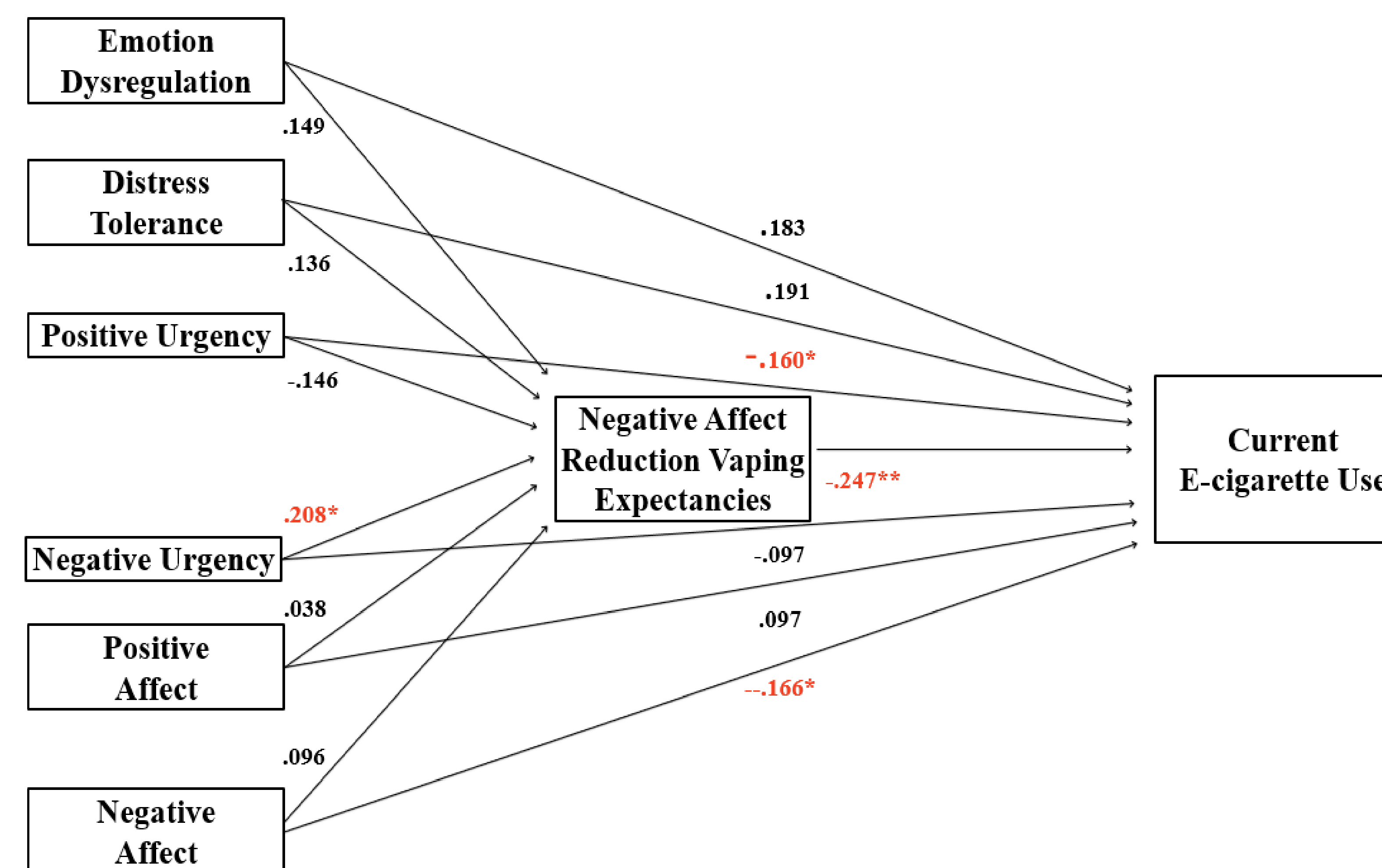
### Participants:

- 216 young adults ( $M$ -age = 20.41, 36.6% African American))
- Participants included e-cigarette users and non-users.

### Respondents answered questions about:

- Emotion dysregulation (Difficulties in Regulating Emotion Scale; DERS)
- Positive/negative urgency (Urgency, Premeditation, Perseverance, Sensation seeking, and Positive Urgency Scale; UPPS-P)
- Affect (Positive and Negative Affect Scale, PANAS)
- Distress tolerance (Distress Tolerance Scale, DTS)
- E-cigarette use

## RESULTS



A path analysis was used to examine the direct impact of the 4 emotional competencies (emotion dysregulation, positive and negative urgency, affect, and distress tolerance) and negative affect reduction outcome expectancies on use. The path analysis also examined the mediational effect of negative affect reduction outcome expectancies on use.

There was a direct effect of negative affect ( $\beta = -.166$ ;  $p=.017^*$ ), positive urgency ( $\beta = -.160$ ;  $p=.028^*$ ), and negative affect reduction outcome expectancies ( $\beta = .247$ ;  $p=.007^{**}$ ) on current use.

Path analyses displayed a significant direct effect of negative urgency ( $\beta = .208$ ;  $p=.028^*$ ) on negative affect reduction outcome expectancies. Negative affect reduction outcome expectancies mediated the relationship between negative urgency and current use ( $\beta = .051$ ,  $p=.008^{**}$ ).

## DISCUSSION

It is possible that maladaptive fluctuations in negative and positive affect might play a role in an individual's smoking behaviors (Kassel, Stroud, & Paronis, 2003). This is supported by the association between negative affect and e-cigarette use in the current study

The results suggest that emotion regulation difficulties, particularly negative urgency may play a role in initial e-cigarette maintenance. It is possible that individuals with prior difficulties with emotion competencies are more susceptible to using e-cigarettes as a coping mechanism. Therefore, these results might provide some insight on more emotion-focused prevention to reduce e-cigarette initiation.

Emotion competencies, specifically the ability to control one's impulses during highly emotional periods may play a role in e-cigarette initiation and maintenance. Future research should seek to determine whether these results vary by cultural groups. Further research should investigate emotion regulation training as a tool for prevention and cessation programs.

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