Sexual Identity Moderates Binge Eating Behaviors and Cannabis Use in a Sample of Young Adult Women

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Introduction

- Compared to heterosexual women, sexual minority women (SMW) report two to four times higher levels of cannabis use and binge eating behaviors.[1-2; 4; 6-7]
- Approximately 25% of individuals with binge eating disorder report using cannabis.[9]
- Current research posits that individuals may use cannabis to alleviate guilt and negative emotions due to binge eating.[8]
- Although SMW report higher rates of binge eating and cannabis use, sexual identity differences on the relationship between these two behaviors are unknown.
- **Aim: This study examined if sexual identity (SMW vs. heterosexual) moderated the association between binge eating and past 30-day cannabis use frequency among a sample of young women.**

Method

Participants & Procedure

- *N* = 83 young women recruited for a larger EMA study about binge eating and health behaviors among women
- Data are from the baseline survey
- Participants were:
  - 18-30 years old
  - Cisgender female
  - Reported binge eating in past 2-weeks
  - Narrowed to participants who reported past 30-day cannabis use (given study focus)
- See Table 1 for characteristics of the sample

Measures

Binge Eating

- The binge eating subscale from the Eating Pathology Symptom Inventory[3] measured binge eating related behaviors in the past four weeks (e.g., I ate until I was uncomfortably full). Items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*Never) to 4 (Very Often*). Sums score were calculated for analyses (Range: 0-32).

Cannabis Use

- Past 30-day cannabis frequency: "How many days did you use marijuana in the past 30 days?"

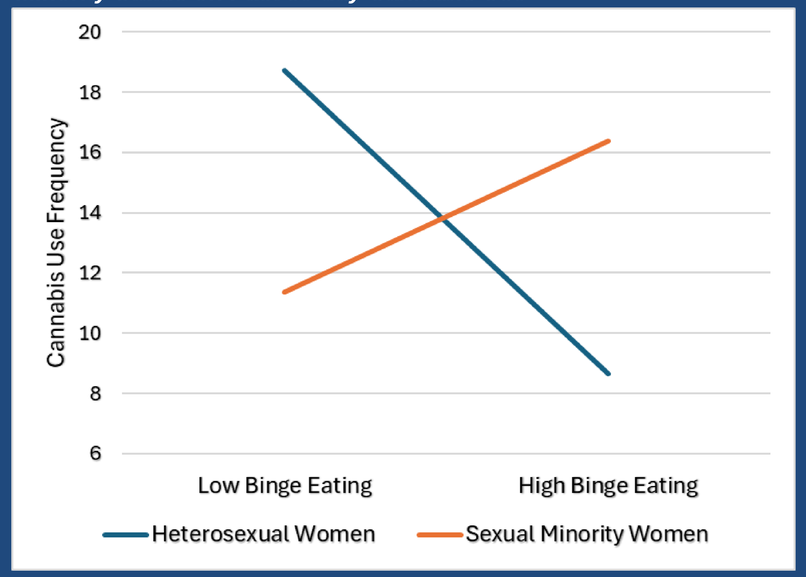
Sexual Minority Status

- **SMW** reported: a) only or mostly attraction to women or b) equal attraction to men and women or attracted to people regardless of their gender identity and have a current or recent romantic partner who identifies as a woman.
- **Heterosexual** women reported: only or mostly being attracted to men.
- A sexual identity variable was created reflecting 0 = *heterosexual* and 1 = *SMW*.

Data Analysis

- Correlations and t-tests were used to examine bivariate associations among the variables.
- A linear regression was executed using SPSS.

Figure 1. ***Interaction of Binge Eating Behaviors and Sexual Minority Status on Past 30-day Cannabis Use***



Sexual identity was a significant moderator of the association between binge eating and cannabis use frequency (*F* = 8.06, *p* = .006; see Figure 1)

Among heterosexual women, greater binge eating was associated with less frequent cannabis use (*p* = .010); there was no association for SMW (*p* = .254).

Table 1: ***Demographic Characteristics of Study Sample***

Demographic Variable	Total *N*=83	Heterosexual *n* = 31 (37.3%)	SMW *n* =52 (62.7%)	*p*
Age (*M, SD*)	26.0 (3.4)	26.8 (5.2)	25.6 (3.4)	.111
Hispanic (yes; *n*, %)	12 (14.5)	3 (9.7)	9 (17.3)	.339
Race (*n*, %)				.633
White	48 (57.8)	19 (61.3)	29 (55.8)	
Black	23 (27.7)	9 (29.0)	14 (26.9)	
Other	12 (14.5)	3 (9.6)	9 (17.3)	
Education (*n*, %)				.837
Some high school	3 (3.7)	2 (6.5)	1 (2.0)	
High school graduate	6 (7.3)	2 (6.5)	4 (7.8)	
Some college/Associate's	20 (24.4)	8 (25.8)	12 (23.5)	
Bachelor's degree	42 (51.2)	16 (51.6)	26 (51.0)	
Graduate degree	11 (13.4)	3 (9.7)	8 (15.7)	

Results

- Past 30-day cannabis use frequency and binge eating were not significantly correlated for the overall sample (*r* = -.05, *p* = .640)
- There were no significant sexual identity differences on past 30-day cannabis use frequency (*p* = .636; see Figure 2) and binge eating (*p* = .057; see Figure 3).

Figure 2. ***Differences on Past 30-day Cannabis Use Frequency by Sexual Identity***

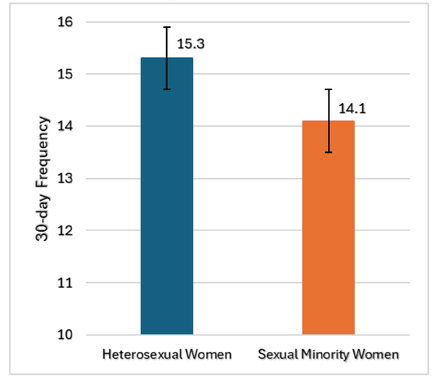
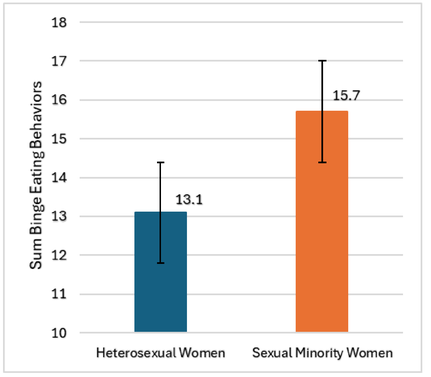


Figure 3. ***Differences on Binge Eating Behaviors by Sexual Identity***



Discussion

- **Heterosexual women findings:**
  - Heterosexual women with low levels of binge eating behaviors use cannabis more frequently, perhaps as opposed to engaging in binge eating; this may be in response to cope with negative emotions.
  - However, heterosexual women with greater binge eating behaviors may be more cautious about using cannabis frequently for fear that it will increase their appetite and cause more binge eating.
- **SMW findings:**
  - Binge eating behaviors were not associated with cannabis use frequency for SMW.
  - There may be other mechanisms (e.g., minority stressors) that impact cannabis use and binge eating behaviors for SMW.[5]
- Intervention programs for heterosexual women could focus on binge eating and cannabis use simultaneously, while interventions for SMW may need to focus on these health behaviors separately.

Take a picture to download the poster and references

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