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## Introduction

- Compared to heterosexual individuals, sexual minority (SM) individuals report greater cannabis use and cannabis related consequences.<sup>3, 4-7</sup>
- Current research posits that increased cannabis use among SM individuals may be partially attributed to experiencing proximal stressors (e.g., internalized/subjective thoughts and experiences).<sup>5-7, 10</sup>
- Individuals with poor emotion regulation abilities tend to report greater cannabis use and related consequences.<sup>4, 8, 12-13</sup>
- Specifically, SM individuals report poorer emotion regulation abilities compared to heterosexual individuals<sup>8, 11</sup>; however, minimal literature has examined the role of emotion regulation on the association of cannabis use and proximal stressors.
- **Aim: This study examined if emotion regulation moderated the association between proximal stressors and cannabis use frequency and related problems**

## Method

### Participants & Procedure

- Participants were  $N=97$  young adult (18-25 years old) college students who reported past 30-day cannabis use (see Table 1 for demographics) and completed a 1-hour online survey.

### Measures

#### Cannabis Use

- Past 30-day **cannabis frequency**: “How many days did you use marijuana in the past 30 days?”
- **Cannabis Use Disorder Identification Test-Revised (CUDIT<sup>1</sup>)** measured cannabis related consequences in the past 6-months. A sum score was calculated (range: 0-32).

#### Emotion Regulation

- **Difficulties in Emotion Regulation (DERS<sup>9</sup>)** measured trait emotion regulation abilities (e.g., “When I’m upset, I become out of control”) using a 5-point scale where 1=*Almost never* to 5=*Almost always*. A sum score was calculated (range: 36-180).

#### Proximal Stressors

- **Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity Scale (LGBIS<sup>11</sup>)** measured proximal stressors related to sexual identity using a 7-point scale where 1=*Strongly disagree* to 7=*Strongly agree*. This measure includes 8 subscales: **Acceptance concerns** (AC; e.g., “I often wonder whether others judge me for my sexual orientation”), **Concealment motivations** (CM; e.g., “My sexual orientation is a very personal and private matter”), **Identity uncertainty** (IU; e.g., “I’m not totally sure what my sexual orientation is”), **Internalized homonegativity** (IH; e.g., “If it were possible, I would choose to be straight”), **Difficult process** (DP; e.g., “Admitting to myself that I’m an LGB person has been a very slow process”), **Identity superiority** (IS; e.g., “I look down on heterosexuals”), **Identity affirmation** (IA; e.g., “I am glad to be an LGB person”), **Identity centrality** (e.g., IC; “My sexual orientation is a central part of my identity”). Average scores were calculated for each subscale.

#### Data Analysis

- Correlations examined bivariate associations among the variables.
- Moderation analyses were conducted in SPSS using the Haye’s PROCESS Macro (Model 1; Bootstrap=10,000).

**Figure 1. Interaction of Identity Uncertainty and Emotion Regulation on Cannabis Related Consequences**



**Among SM individuals with poorer emotion regulation skills, greater identity uncertainty was associated with greater cannabis related consequences ( $p < .001$ )**

The association between identity uncertainty and cannabis related consequences was not significant for those with better emotion regulation skills ( $p = .965$ )

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

Demographic Variable	Total (N=97)
Age (M, SD)	19.9 (2.0)
Sex (female; n, %)	89 (91.8)
Gender (women; n, %)	79 (81.4)
Hispanic (yes; n, %)	9 (9.3)
Race (n, %)	
White	35 (36.1)
Black	41 (42.3)
Other	21 (21.6)
Sexual Identity (n, %)	
Lesbian or Gay	13 (13.4)
Bisexual+	76 (78.4)
Don't Know/Unsure	8 (8.2)
Relationship Status (n, %)	
Single	53 (54.6)
Committed Relationship	40 (41.2)
Married/Civil Union	3 (3.1)

## Results

- Greater emotion dysregulation was correlated with greater acceptance concerns, identity uncertainty, internalized homonegativity, difficult process, identity superiority, and cannabis consequences ( $p$ 's  $< .05$ ; see Table 2).
- Emotion regulation moderated the association between identity uncertainty and cannabis related consequences ( $F = 9.08, p < .001$ ; see Figure 1).
- Emotion regulation did not moderate the association between any other proximal stressor and cannabis frequency or cannabis consequences.

**Table 2: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between Variables**

	M (SD)	DERS	Freq.	CUDIT	AC	CM	IU	IH	DP	IS	IA
DERS	98.5 (27.1)	-									
Freq.	13.9 (10.9)	.040	-								
CUDIT	10.9 (9.7)	.273**	.605**	-							
AC	8.9 (4.5)	.370**	-.045	.208*	-						
CM	11.0 (4.1)	.194	-.066	.090	.566**	-					
IU	11.2 (5.9)	.263**	.086	.369**	.235*	.252*	-				
IH	6.8 (3.8)	.248*	.036	.291**	.375**	.267**	.515**	-			
DP	9.5 (4.0)	.264**	.129	.242*	.595**	.245*	.400**	.460**	-		
IS	7.1 (4.1)	.258*	.136	.392**	.350**	.137	.288**	.286**	.275**	-	
IA	15.5 (3.7)	-.080	.025	-.036	-.002	.075	-.151	-.447**	-.164	.143	-
IC	17.8 (6.5)	.109	.032	.137	.241*	-.049	.044	.042	.201*	.441**	.425**

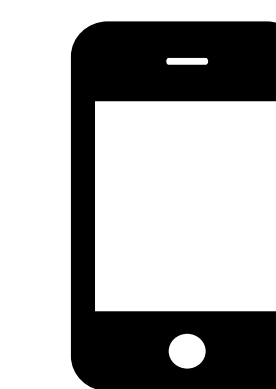
Note: DERS = Emotion regulation; CUDIT = Cannabis related consequences-Revised; AC = Acceptance concerns; CM = Concealment motivation; IU = Identity uncertainty; IH = Internalize homonegativity; DP = Difficult process; IS = Identity superiority; IA = Identity acceptance; IC = Identity centrality

## Discussion

- Among SM individuals, those with poorer emotion regulation abilities may be drawn to using cannabis as a means of coping with negative thoughts and uncertainty related to their sexual identity, consistent with the self medication model, leading to greater cannabis related consequences.
- However, SM individuals with better emotion regulation skills may be able to mitigate negative health behaviors, such as cannabis use, and reduce their risk of cannabis related consequences, even when experiencing proximal stressors, including uncertainty surrounding their sexual identity.
- Future research should focus on examining if these results are generalizable using a larger and more diverse sample, including adults not in enrolled in college.
- Clinical interventions may focus on enhancing emotion regulation skills among SM individuals to reduce the impact of proximal stressors, specifically identity uncertainty, and possible cannabis related consequences.

Take a picture to download the poster and references

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