

Cannabis Use Among Gender and Sexual Minority College Students

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Background

- Substance use experimentation is commonly attributed to young adulthood.
- Sexual and gender minority (SGM) individuals have higher rates of substance use overall (Livingston et al., 2017).
- SGM youths have been observed to use marijuana at increased rates (Dunbar et al., 2022), possibly due to being exposed to higher rates of structural and interpersonal discrimination.
 - Hearing or experiencing microaggressions in relation to a sexual minority identity on college campuses has been found to significantly increase the risk for hazardous substance use (Wingber et al., 2019).
 - Sexual minority women and gender minority individuals who experience sexism may be at a higher risk for developing cannabis use disorder and lifetime cannabis use (Scheer et al., 2022).
- If the relationship between SGMs and increased substance use is mediated by minority stressors, cannabis use rates may be influenced by the need to manage stress or cope with negative emotions.

Hypotheses

- Individuals identifying as SGMs will be more likely to use cannabis than their heterosexual or cisgender counterparts in terms of quantity, frequency, and motives.
- In comparison to their cisgender/heterosexual peers, sexual and gender minorities will have lower reported emotion regulation.

Participants

- N=150 students attending a rural college in the northeast
- Predominantly White (90.7%, n = 136) and Female (81.2%, n=121), with an average age of 19.21 years (SD = 1.67).
- Recruited from introductory psychology and received course credit for participation.

Methods & Measures

- Data collected using self-report measures uploaded to SONA System.
- Self-report measures:
 - Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS; Gratz & Romer, 2004), the Daily Sessions, Frequency, Age of Onset, and Quantity of Cannabis Use Inventory (DFAQ-CU; Cuttler & Spradlin, 2017), and the Marijuana Motives Measure (MMM; Simons et al., 1998).
- Independent samples T-Test analysis using SPSS.

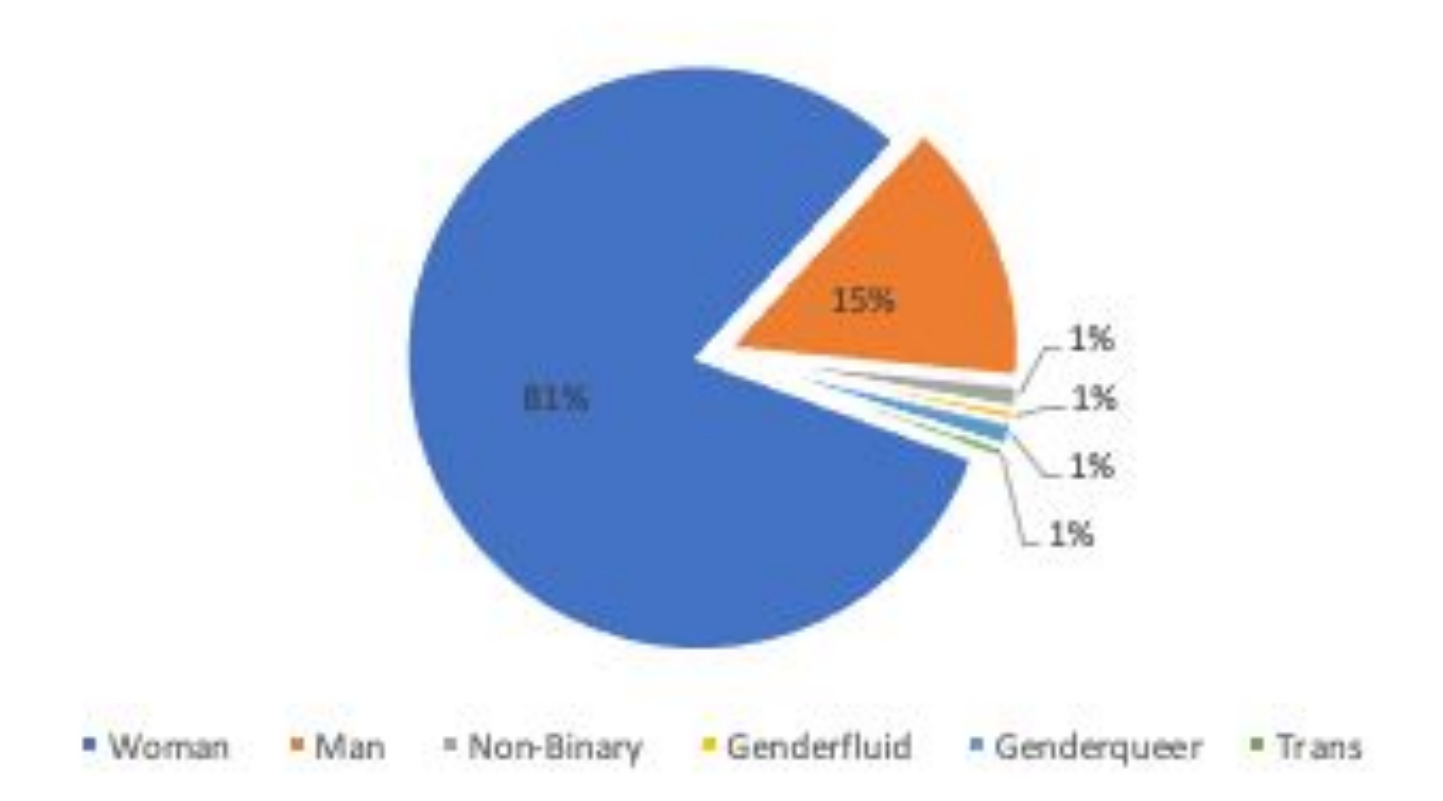
Results

Table 1:

		t	df	p	CI (lower)	CI (upper)
Sexuality	Frequency of Use	-1.797	148	0.074	-0.56597	0.02691
	Quantity of Use	-1.94	15.989	0.07	-1.35924	0.06028
	Coping Motives (MMM)	-2.239	107	0.014	-4.54755	-0.27632
	DERS-18 Scores	-2.988	148	0.003	-10.3922	-2.11802
Gender	DERS-18 Scores	2.607	148	0.01	3.14699	22.8669

- T-statistic analysis showed statistically significant differences in quantity of cannabis use and coping motives for sexual minorities and DERS-18 scores for SGM groups (see Table 1).
- No statistically significant differences in frequency of use reported for SGM groups, as well as no significant difference in quantity of use and coping motives for gender minority individuals.

Gender Identity



Discussion

- Findings suggest that sexual minorities are using higher quantities of cannabis than their heterosexual counterparts.
- DERS-18 scores for SGMs were significantly higher than their heterosexual and cisgender peers, highlighting the association of increased cannabis use as a means to cope with negative emotions, although MMM scores are only representative of sexual minorities.
- Limitations:
 - Small sample size of individuals endorsing a minority status
 - Not enough data to compare cannabis use frequency, quantity, and motives for the gender minority group.
 - Only 1 gender minority individual reported using cannabis.
 - Unable to tell whether substance use is a direct result of endorsing a SGM status.
- Future Directions:
 - Modeling these variables together in a regression analysis would make for interesting results.
 - Longitudinal studies could help us better understand the association between substance use and endorsing a SGM status.
 - Focusing more on the forms of intersectionality within minority stressors can help us comprehend how to better support SGM and their minority status.
 - Supportive relationships can potentially help buffer the effects of stressors on SGM youth's rates of substance use (Mereish & Watson, 2023)

Sexual Identity

