



The Role of Outness in Relation to Mental Health for Minoritized Sexual Orientations

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INTRO

- Bisexual people may be at increased risk for depression due to rejection and stigma from both LGBTQIA+ and heterosexual communities.
- Sexual orientation outness may be protective for mental health but can also increase risk for discrimination.

METHODS

- Adult members of the LGBTQIA+ community completed an online survey assessing depression and anxiety symptoms, sexual minority stress, and sexual orientation outness.
- Analyses focus on cisgender participants ($n = 590$) as outness may be experienced differently by trans and non-binary people.
- 33.73% identified as lesbian/gay.
- 66.27% identified as bisexual, queer, or pansexual
- Analyses examined whether sexual orientation (gay/lesbian vs. bisexual/queer/pansexual) moderated the relationship between outness and anxiety or depression.

RESULTS

- Gay/lesbian participants reported higher outness ($p < .001$) and lower anxiety ($p = .01$) than other participants but did not differ in depression symptoms ($p = .06$)
- Anxiety and depression were negatively correlated with outness ($r_s = -.15$ and $-.14$, $p_s < .001$).
- For cisgender women the relationship between outness and anxiety was not moderated by sexual orientation ($p = .49$), while the relationship between outness and depression was ($p = .04$).
- Outness was protective against depression for lesbian women ($p = .001$), but not for other sexual minority women ($p = .14$). (**fig 1.**)

MAIN FINDING
Bisexual, pansexual, and queer cisgender women do not show the same relationship between outness and decreased depressive symptoms as cisgender lesbian women but do show similar relationships between outness and anxiety symptoms. This may be due to stigma that results in lower levels of community support among bisexual and other sexual minority women compared to lesbian women.

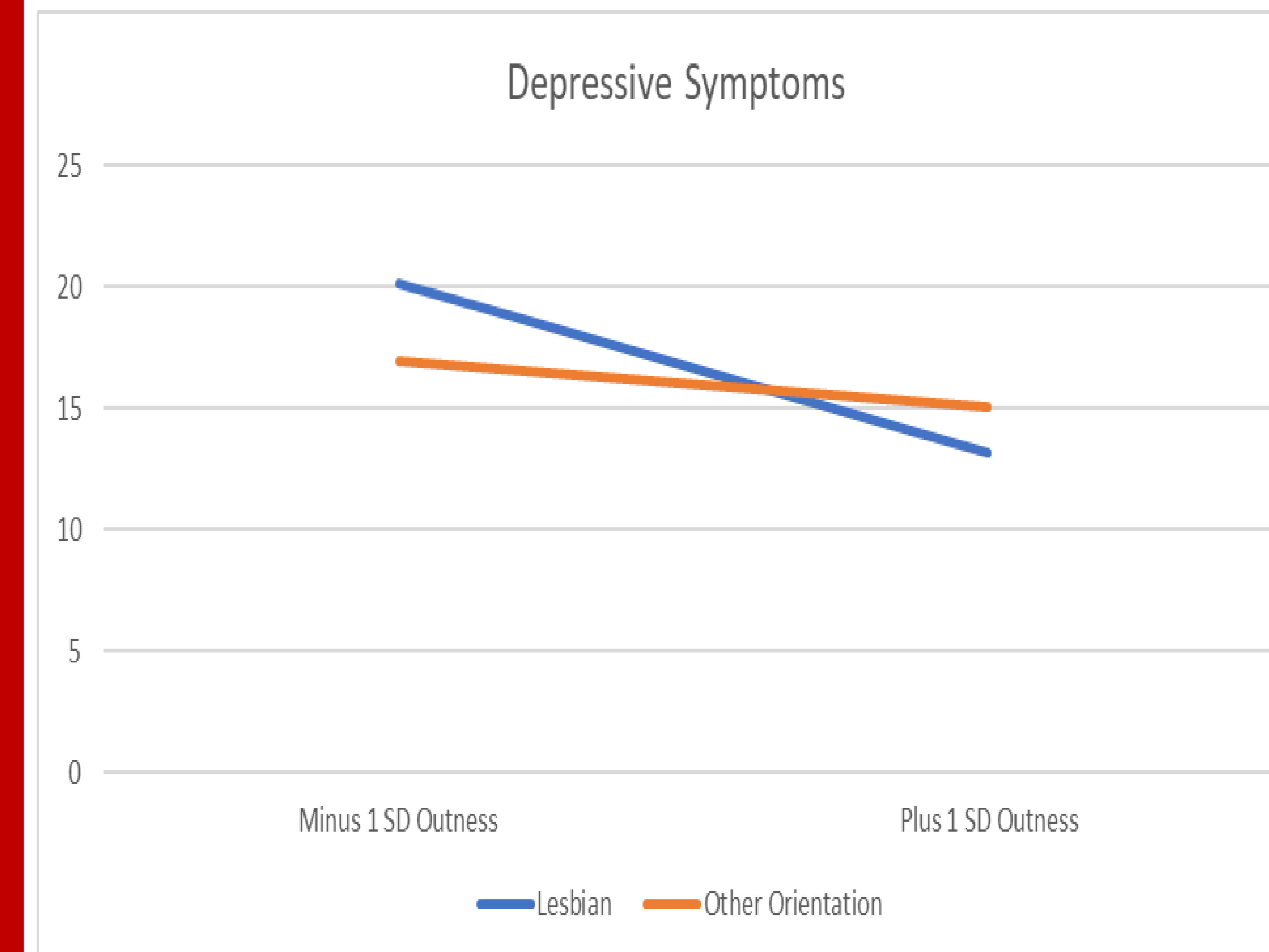


Figure 1. Sexual orientation moderates the relationship between outness and depression

DISCUSSION

- Bisexual, pansexual, and queer cisgender women do not show the same relationship between outness and decreased depressive symptoms as cisgender lesbian women.
- This may be due to stigma that results in lower levels of community support among bisexual and other sexual minority women compared to lesbian women.
- This at-risk group may be more likely to experience negative mental health outcomes related to minority stress.