



# “I know myself again, which makes me motivated for life”: Feasibility and acceptability of using experience sampling methods with trauma-exposed sexual minority women

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## INTRODUCTION

- Sexual minority women (SMW) are at heightened risk of trauma compared to heterosexual women
- Minority stressors partly account for SMW's increased risk of trauma
- Trauma and minority stressors synergistically erode SMW's behavioral and mental health
- Existing research is limited by its use of cross-sectional and longitudinal methods
- Longitudinal designs (**e.g., ecological sampling methods [ESM]**) hold promise for examining the adversity, coping, and health among SMW
- Few studies have used ESM with SMW
- We aimed to examine the **feasibility and acceptability of using ESM** to assess trauma-exposed SMW's stressors, coping, and stress-sensitive health issues

## METHODS

- We assessed feasibility and acceptability of using once-daily, interval-contingent ESM with 161 trauma-exposed SMW ( $M_{age} = 29.1, SD = 7.57$ ); 20.5% nonbinary; 32.3% queer; 52.2% people of color; 14.3% with annual incomes  $\leq \$9,999$
- SMW completed **one online baseline assessment and once-daily brief online surveys for 14 days**
- SMW answered three open-ended questions about participating and about SMW research

## RESULTS: ESM Acceptability Quotes

- “My record of these 14 days, I feel much better, I have the right direction.”
- “...participating in this survey [gave] me a place to express my inner thoughts.”
- “When we talk about feeling insecure or being verbally harassed as women, that experience is often because we're perceived as straight and harassed as [a] woman but is more traumatizing as a queer woman.”
- Other SMW noted that the study “made me pay attention more to my feelings and surroundings” and “helped me realize that I... always try to ignore the problem. I appreciated being able to quantify that experience.”
- “After participating, I have more confidence to face people.”
- One participant noted that having space to contextualize responses would enable them to “feel comfortable answering questions honestly.”

## CONCLUSION

- Our novel findings suggest that **ESM is feasible and acceptable** among trauma-exposed SMW
- Researchers should consider our feasibility and acceptability findings to improve ESM studies with SMW, including:
  - structural adherence **barriers**
  - need for **write-in boxes**
  - **intersectional stressors** as treatment targets
  - feelings of **discomfort and empowerment** when answering trauma-related questions

## RESULTS: ESM Feasibility

- This study had an **81% retention rate, 78% compliance rate, and 45% completion rate**, which varied by SMW's sociodemographic characteristics.
- Survey completion rate was **78%**
- An average of 11.70 (Median = 13, SD = 3.31) daily surveys (83.50%) were completed by those who initiated the ESM
- There were 8.87% missing data across daily surveys
- Multiracial/multiethnic SMW and SMW living in the Northeast were more likely to be high vs. low completers
- White SMW were more likely to be low vs. high completers compared to SMW of color

## RESULTS: ESM Acceptability Themes

- **Theme 1:** SMW enjoyed participating and felt positively about the ESM experience
- **Theme 2:** SMW felt supported to reflect on the impact of early and ongoing stressors
- **Theme 3:** SMW appreciated the chance to self-reflect and challenge existing thought patterns and coping behaviors
- **Theme 4:** SMW recognized their capacity to tolerate trauma-related distress
- **Theme 5:** SMW recommended that researchers focus on SMW's diverse stressors and daily experiences
- **Theme 6:** SMW wanted a rationale for providing sensitive information and more space to narrate their experiences
- **Theme 7:** SMW recognized the need for affirmative treatment and policies

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