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The Relationships Between Perceived Social Support, Discrimination, Distress, and Alcohol Usage

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The Relationships Between Perceived Social Support, Discrimination, Distress, and Alcohol Usage

Kylie Thorwardson, Ryan Carpenter, Melissa Nance

INTRODUCTION

- Those who identify as a sexual minority are more likely to face discrimination based on their sexuality.
 - This can be explained by the *Minority Stress Theory* proposes that sexual minority health disparities are largely the result of stressors induced by harassment, maltreatment, discrimination and victimization (Marshall et al., 2008; Meyer, 2003) and may ultimately impact access to care." (Dentato, 2012)
- Sexual Minority individuals may experience a loss of social support like rejection by their friends and family (Snapp et al, 2015).
 - This loss of perceived support can heighten the stress that the individual already feels due to discrimination based on their sexuality.
- Previous studies have shown that stress is trigger for alcohol use (Spanagel et al, 2014).
- Due to the increased stress experienced by individuals who identify as a sexual minority, it is hypothesized that the amount of distress and discrimination faced by the individuals will be more strongly associated with amount of alcohol consumed for those with a sexual minority identity.
- Conversely, it is hypothesized that there is a negative association between the amount of perceived social support (PSS) and alcohol consumption in individuals with a minority sexual identity.

METHODS

- 141 Participants aged 19-59 [M= 24.91, SD= 6.64]
- For ease of comparison, all minority sexual identities were grouped together.
 - 38.6% of participants self-identified as a minority sexual identity (Bisexual (28.3%), Lesbian (3.9%), Pansexual (3.9%), Queer (0.8%), Don't Know (0.8%), Other (0.8%)
 - 61.4% self-identified as heterosexual.
- The participants identified racially as White (72.4%), Black (20.5%), Asian (3.9%), and one or more races (3.1%).
- Of the participants 10.2% were assigned male at birth and 89.9% were assigned female at birth
- The Perceived Social Support Scale (PSS) was used as an indicator of perceived support. The 12-question scale ranged from 1 [Very Strong Disagree] to 7 [Very Strong Agree].
- The first 9 questions on The Everyday Discrimination Scale were used as an indicator of discrimination. The scale spanned from 1 [Almost Everyday] to 6 [Never].
- The DASS-21 was used as an indicator of stress. The 21-question scale has 4 points 0 [Did not apply to me at all] to 3 [Applied to me very much, or most of the time]

METHODS

- A 28-day alcohol use average was calculated by multiplying the first two questions of the Alcohol Use Questionnaire
 - During the last **4 weeks**, on how many days did you drink **alcohol**? [Drop down menu; range 0 to 28]
 - During the last **4 weeks**, how many alcoholic drinks did you have on a typical day when you drank?[Drop down menu; range 0 to 50]

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Perceived Social Support	122	2.92	7.00	5.7712	.98424
Discrimination	122	1.56	6.00	4.6102	.96053
DASS	122	.00	2.71	.7588	.66299
Q&F of Alcohol	127	1.00	90.00	18.4961	18.37609
Valid N (listwise)	122				

RESULTS

- Regression Analysis
 - Neither sexuality, discrimination, nor their interaction significantly predicted alcohol use.
 - Neither sexuality, PSS, nor their interaction significantly predicted alcohol use.
 - Neither sexuality DASS (distress) nor their interaction significantly predicted alcohol use.
- Correlation Analysis
 - Sexuality and Distress were significantly associated ($r=-.368$, $p<.001$)
 - Sexuality and Discrimination were not significantly associated ($r=1.67$, $p<.066$)
 - Sexuality and PSS were significantly associated ($r=1.90$, $p<.036$)
 - PSS and Discrimination were significantly associated ($r=.296$, $p<.001$)
 - PSS and Distress were significantly associated ($r=-.407$, $p<.001$)
 - Distress and Discrimination were significantly associated ($r=-.247$, $p<.006$)

Figure 1: Interaction of Distress and Alcohol Usage

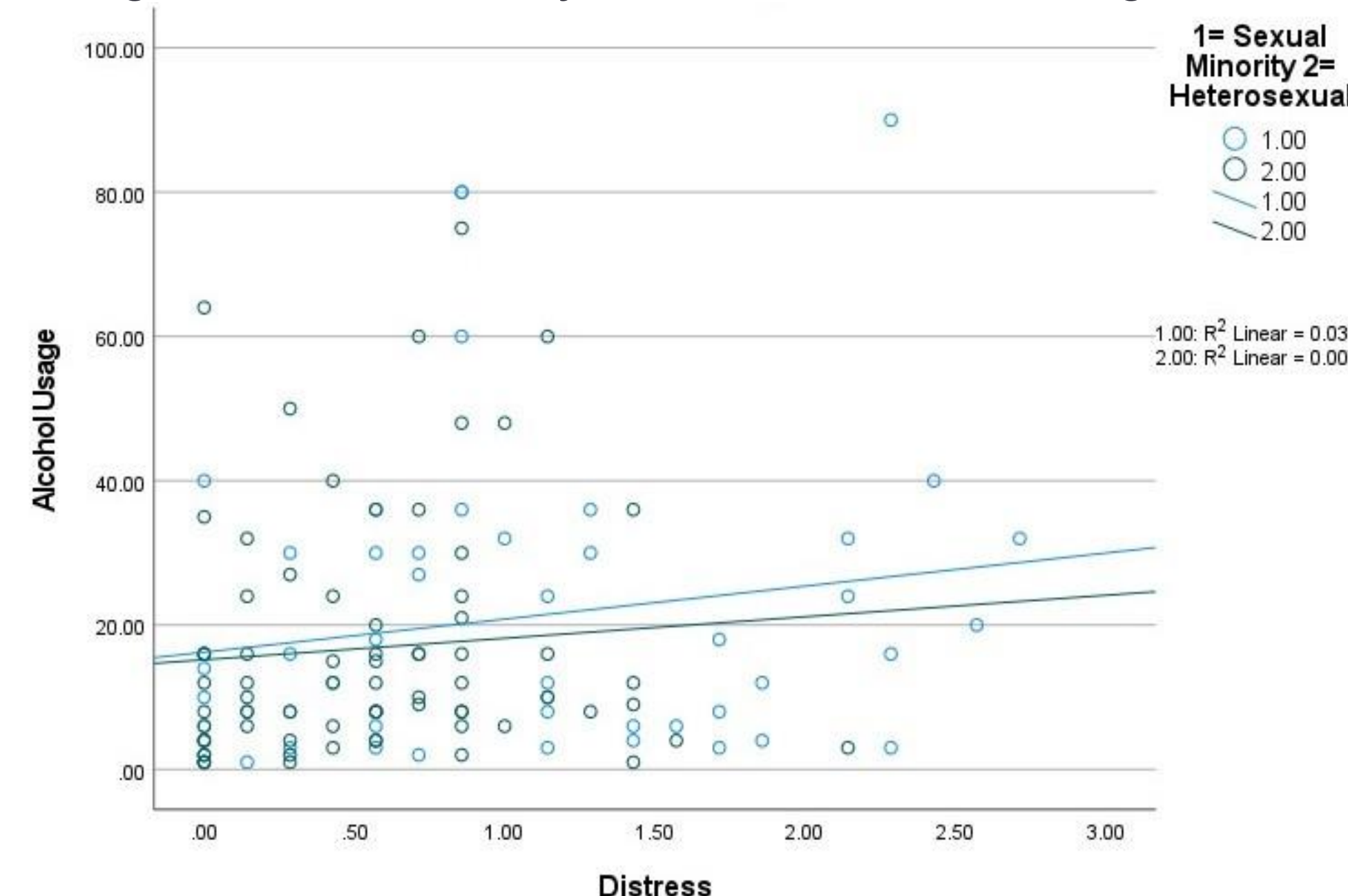


Figure 2: Interaction of Perceived Support and Alcohol Usage

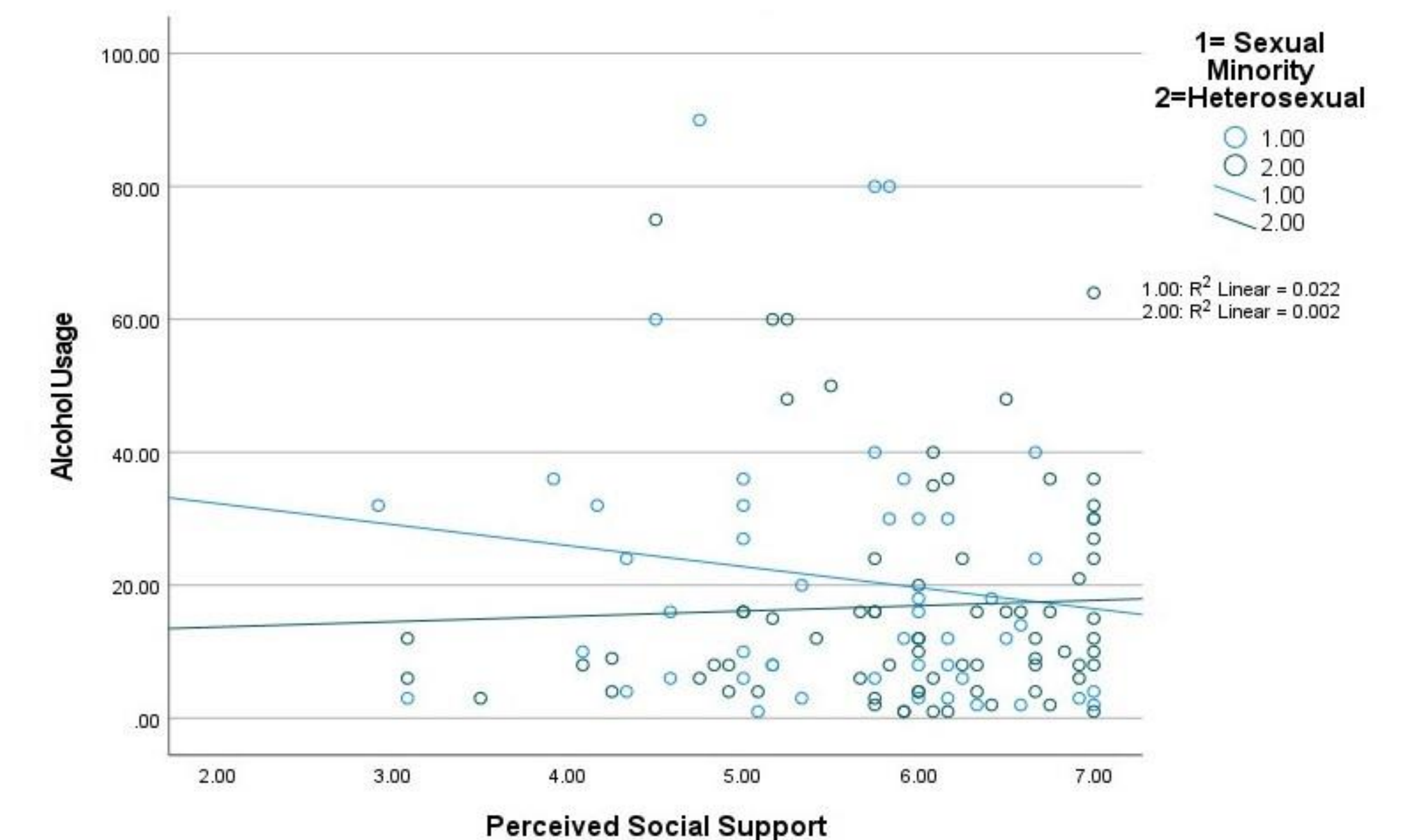
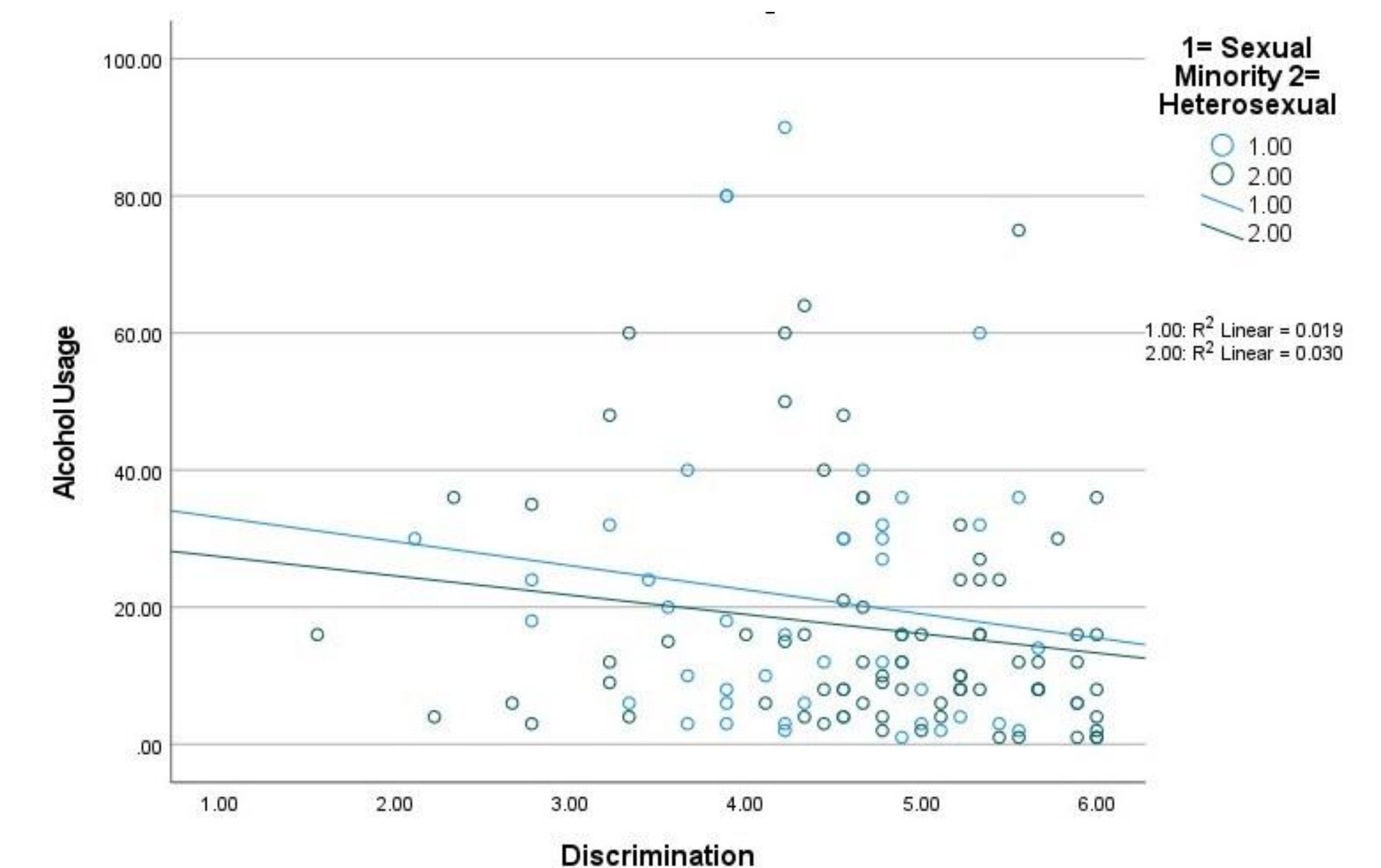


Figure 3: Interaction of Discrimination and Alcohol Usage



CONCLUSIONS

- Results of the regressions ran were not significant, indicates that people might be experiencing less discrimination for their sexuality
 - Supported by the correlation ran for sexuality and discrimination
- The correlations ran were all found to be significant save for the one on sexuality and discrimination. This indicates that those in a sexual minority are experiencing more stress.
 - Alcohol use may not be an outlet for said stress in this sample
- For future research, a bigger sexual minority population should be used as the main group represented in this sample was bisexuality
- Additionally, a regression was run on how discrimination affects a sum AUDIT drinking habits which hinted at race having an impact. This could be investigated with further research.