

The Role of Cannabis in Modulating Female Sexual Desire: A Narrative Review

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ABSTRACT

As cannabis legalization expands across the globe, growing public interest has turned toward its potential effects on women's sexual health—particularly in areas of desire, arousal, and satisfaction. Historically, female sexual function has been underexplored, with minimal attention given to how plant-based substances like cannabis may influence libido and intimacy. With mounting anecdotal accounts and a growing body of scientific inquiry, this topic demands greater investigative rigor.

This narrative review synthesizes current research on cannabis and female sexual desire, emphasizing low- to moderate-dose use. It examines neurobiological mechanisms, including the role of the endocannabinoid system (ECS), and integrates observational studies and patient-reported outcomes to identify trends, inconsistencies, and clinical relevance. The review also highlights gaps in the literature and the need for robust randomized controlled trials. As clinicians adopt integrative approaches to sexual health, understanding cannabis's nuanced impact on female desire could shape future therapeutic strategies.

Introduction

Female sexual desire is influenced by a complex interplay of hormonal changes, emotional well-being, relationship dynamics, cultural norms, and psychological health influences. These elements often misalign, contributing to challenges such as low libido and reduced sexual satisfaction. Conditions like Female Sexual Dysfunction (FSD), and specifically hypoactive sexual desire disorder (HSDD), affect a significant portion of women. Yet, treatment options remain limited and frequently overlook key drivers of desire.

In this context, cannabis is gaining attention for its perceived role in enhancing sexual experiences. Anecdotal reports and grassroots discussions suggest cannabis may help women feel more relaxed, present, and emotionally engaged during intimacy. This review investigates cannabis's potential to influence sexual desire and outlines current scientific knowledge, its limitations, and future research directions [1,2].

Mechanisms of Action

Cannabis interacts with the endocannabinoid system (ECS)—a regulatory network involved in mood, stress response, pain perception, and pleasure. The primary cannabinoids,

tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD) engage receptors in brain regions associated with sexual behavior and emotional regulation. THC binds to CB₁ receptors, heightening sensory perception and reducing psychological inhibitions, while CBD may help alleviate anxiety and promote calmness. These effects may jointly foster a more mentally receptive and physically attuned state, potentially making it easier for women to experience sexual desire and pleasure.

Findings from Human Studies

A 2022 study revealed that over 70% of women who intentionally used cannabis before sex felt an increase in sexual desire. However, some studies using clinical tools like the Female Sexual Function Index (FSFI) found that while arousal and lubrication improved, changes in desire were less consistent. This suggests that cannabis may enhance conditions conducive to desire (e.g., relaxation, comfort) rather than act as a direct aphrodisiac.

Limitations and Gaps

Existing research heavily relies on self-reported data and online surveys, with inconsistent parameters regarding cannabis strain, dose, and delivery method. Such variability makes comparative

Standardized tools like the FSFI may also fail to capture the subtleties of cannabis's impact on desire. Rigorous clinical trials are needed to explore strain-specific effects, dose-response relationships, and interactions with trauma and mental health [2,3].

Cannabis may offer therapeutic value for women facing sexual challenges rooted in stress, anxiety, or discomfort. Yet clinicians must navigate this terrain cautiously, recognizing the individualized nature of cannabis use and the risk of dependency. Comprehensive assessments—including mental health history, relationship context, and prior substance use—are essential before recommendations.

Conclusion

Cannabis may help some women reconnect with their sexual selves by enhancing sensation, reducing anxiety, and deepening emotional presence. Though scientific validation lags behind personal testimony, emerging data suggest that intentional, informed use may support more fulfilling sexual experiences. However, substantial work lies ahead. Future efforts must prioritize well-designed trials, refined assessment tools, and greater insight into how gender, culture, trauma, and relational dynamics shape cannabis's role in sexual health. Only through thoughtful investigation can we responsibly integrate it into clinical practice [5].

Study	Sample	Key Finding	Effect on Desire	Notes
Lynn et al. (2019)	373 women	Increased orgasm & pleasure, decreased pain	Mixed	Self-report survey
Mulvehill et al. (2024)	387 women	Improved orgasm ease and frequency	Indirect	Focused on orgasmic dysfunction
BMC Survey (2022)	811 adults	70% of women reported increased desire	Strong	Intentional pre-sex cannabis use
MDPI (2022)	187 patients	Improved lubrication and arousal	No increase in desire	Used FSFI assessment
Springer Review (2024)	Meta-review	Observed biphasic dose-response pattern	Dose-dependent	No randomized controlled trials

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