

Help-Seeking in Female Sex Worker Survivors of Violence in La Romana, Dominican Republic

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A pilot study examining factors associated with help-seeking behavior in female sex workers (FSWs) in La Romana, Dominican Republic

BACKGROUND

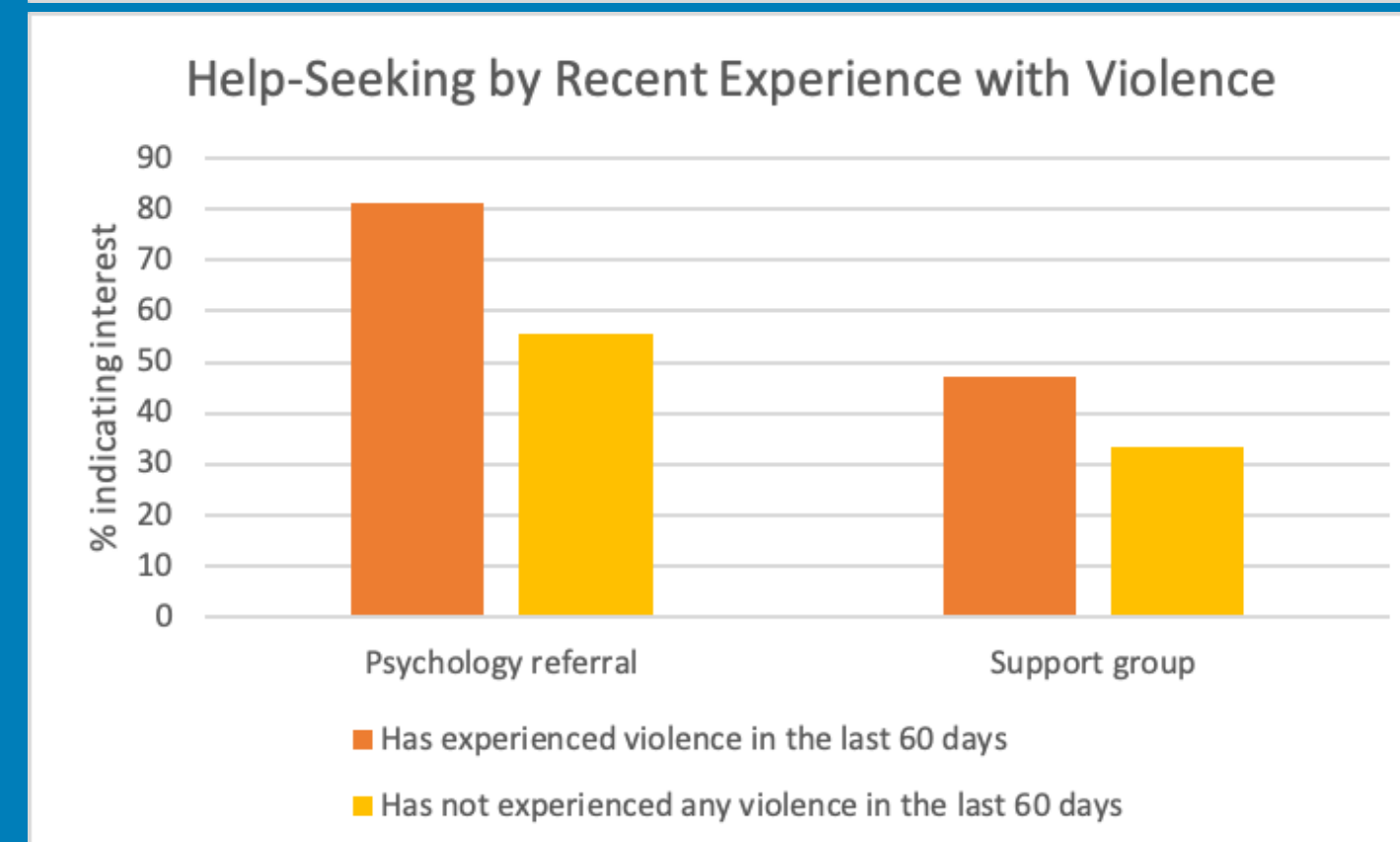
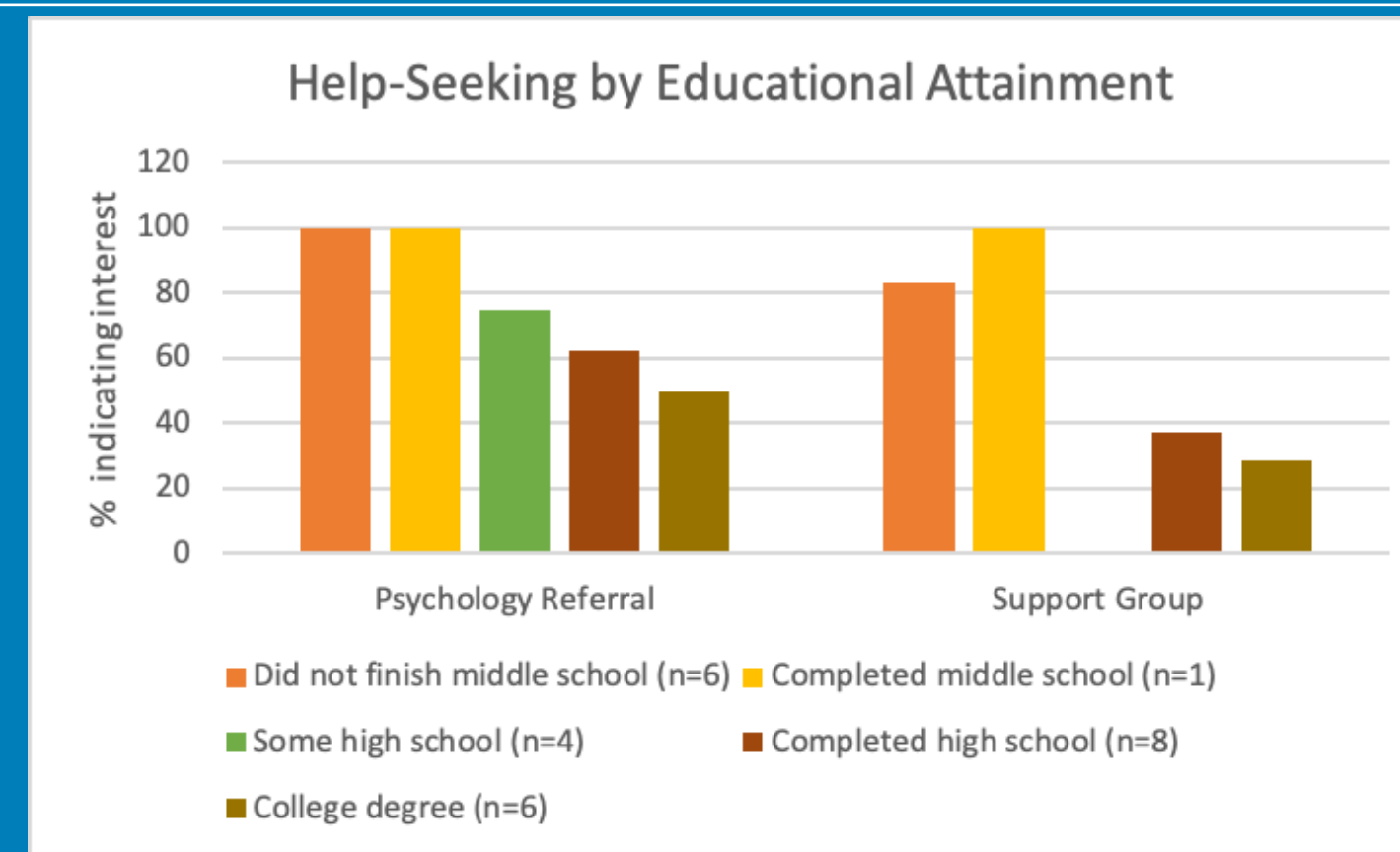
Previous research in the Dominican Republic (DR) has found that almost one fifth (18.3%) of FSWs have experienced violence in the last 6 months.¹ Previous experiences of violence in women have been linked with poor health outcomes and self-rated health for over 20 years after the violence.² Many studies have been done on help-seeking behaviors, but none have been done on FSWs in the DR.

DESCRIPTION OF ORGANIZATION

Clínica de Familia La Romana (CFLR) is a community-based clinic with the goal of improving the health of families in La Romana, DR through health care services, education, and research. The Programa de la Mujer was started in 1990 to provide health services to FSWs, including monthly check-ups and education on STI prevention.



TABLES



METHODS

A pilot cross-sectional survey of participants identifying as female, aged 18 or older, and having exchanged a sexual act for money in the past year was conducted at CFLR in DR. Forty-five subjects were recruited from the women's health program at CFLR. Interviews were conducted at CFLR by trained personnel. The questionnaire included demographic characteristics and an assessment of the violence experienced.

DISCUSSION

- Of the 45 FSWs surveyed, 58% had ever experienced violence and of those, 62% had experienced violence in the last 60 days.
- We found that women with less education were more likely to seek help despite finding in the literature that more education is usually associated with help-seeking. However, other studies have found that women with less education are more likely to experience more violence and more severe violence.
- Our finding that women with past experiences of violence but no recent violence seek help at a lower rate is concerning, since it is well documented that experiences with violence can have adverse long-term health consequences. This study, once completed, could highlight the need for screening and early intervention in FSWs who have experiences with violence.

- FSWs with lower educational attainment have higher rates of help-seeking
- FSWs who have experienced violence more recently are more likely to seek help

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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