

Study Question and Background

Our goal was to gauge pharmacy students' level of knowledge and training in regards to sex trafficking. Pharmacists often interact with patients on a daily basis and may be an underutilized means of combating sex trafficking in West Texas. We sought to identify the potential need for additional competency training.

Study Population

The study population included 36 first and second year pharmacy students from Amarillo, Abilene, and Dallas TTUHSC campuses. Of these students, 25 were female and 11 were male; 16 were Caucasian/White, 9 were Asian/Pacific Islander, 5 were African American/Black, 4 were Hispanic/Latino, and 2 were more than once race; 1 was aged 18-20, 18 were aged 21-23, 9 were aged 24-26, 4 were aged 27-30, and 4 were aged 31-36.

Limitations

One of our limitations was a small sample size of 36; we were also unable to properly power the study, so we cannot conclude that our results are statistically significant. Additionally, we were unable to differentiate by school year in the omnibus because many the pharmacy students left the "Year in Medical School" question blank. Lastly, it is difficult to determine true ability (i.e. to recognize or refer victims) from self-reported confidence in ability, as this data can be skewed by many well-known biases, such as overconfidence bias.

Data Collection Methods

This project used the TTUHSC Pharmacy School Omnibus Survey, an online survey instrument sent to all TTUHSC Pharmacy School students. The survey included 32 questions that ranged from student demographics to previous experiences, familiarity, preparedness, perception, and self-reported confidence levels regarding encounters with sex-trafficking victims.

Results

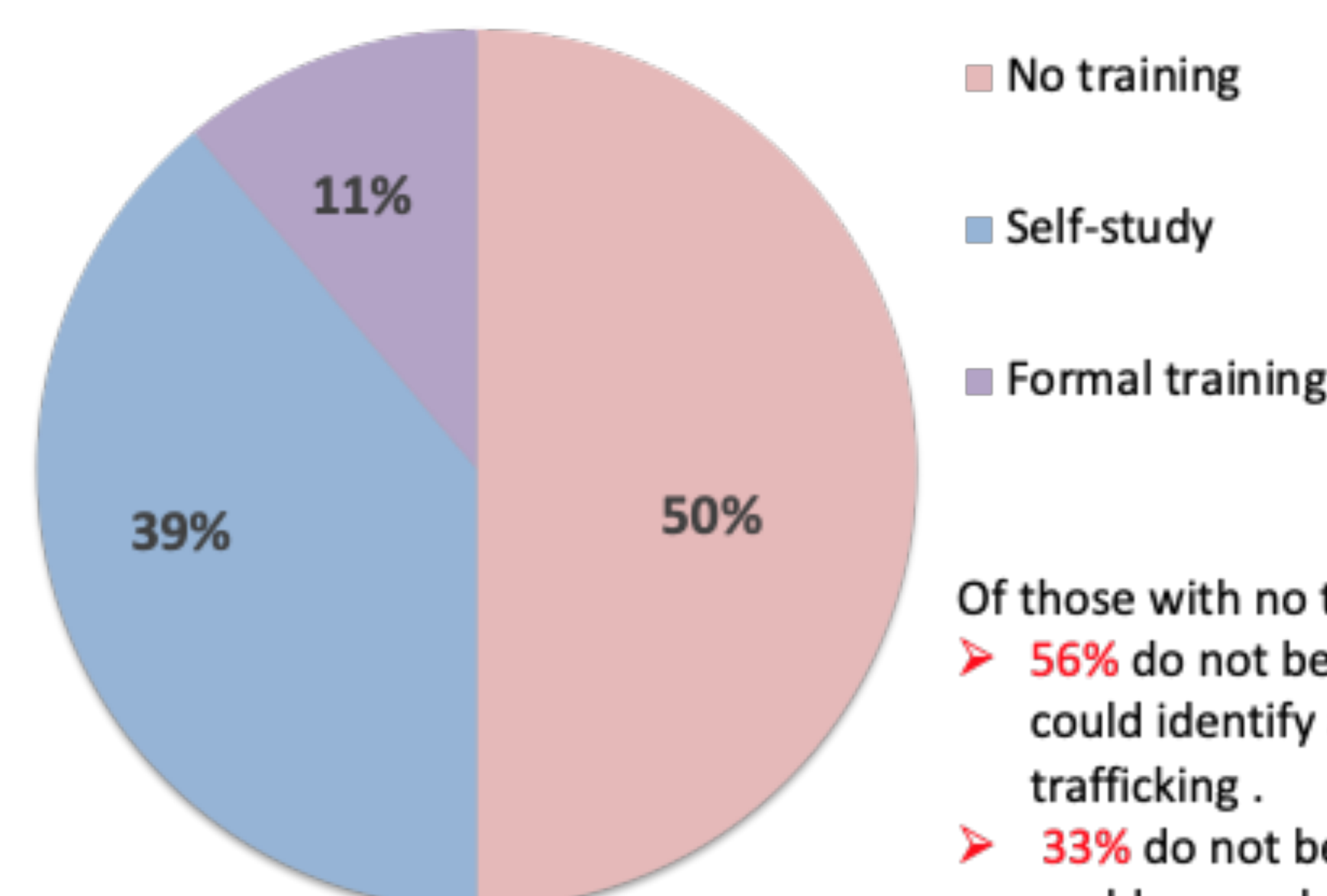
Of those with formal training:

- > 75% do not believe they could identify a victim of sex trafficking
- > 25% do not believe they could properly refer a possible victim of sex trafficking to appropriate resources.

Of those who self-study:

- > 64% do not believe they could identify a victim of sex trafficking
- > 7% do not believe they could properly refer a possible victim of sex trafficking to appropriate resources.

Training Methods



No training

Self-study

Formal training

Of those with no training:

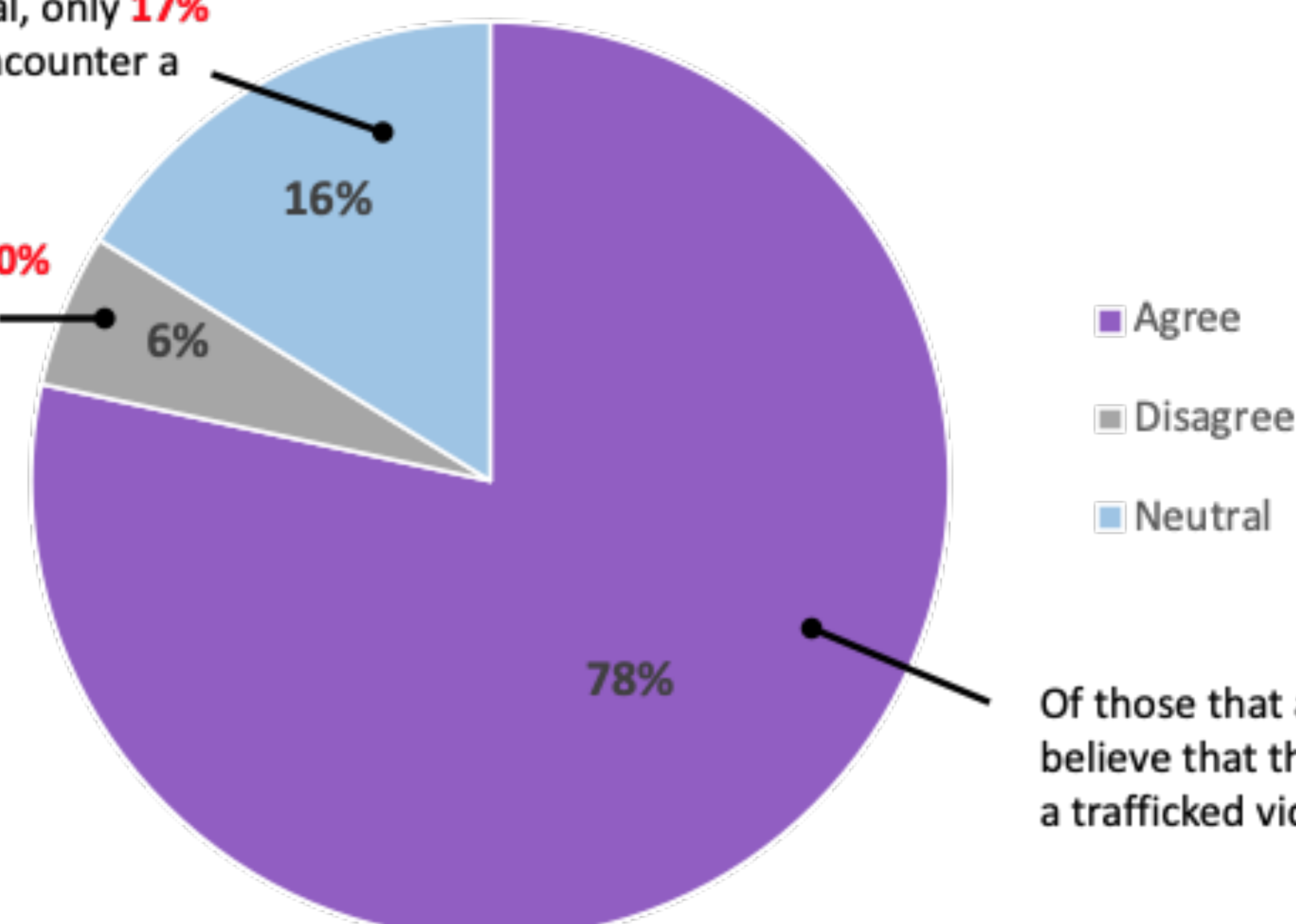
- > 56% do not believe they could identify a victim of sex trafficking .
- > 33% do not believe they could properly refer a possible victim of sex trafficking to appropriate resources.

Graph 1: Of surveyed students, Graph 1 demonstrates the different levels of training students have had on the topic of sex trafficking. The graph also shows the respondents' confidence in identifying and properly referring victims of sex trafficking.

Is Sex trafficking a serious problem in West Texas

Of those that are neutral, only 17% believe that they will encounter a trafficked victim.

Of those that disagree, 0% believe that they will encounter a trafficked victim.



Agree

Disagree

Neutral

Of those that agree, 81.5% believe that they will encounter a trafficked victim.

Graph 2: Of surveyed students, Graph 2 demonstrates whether students believe sex trafficking is a serious problem in West Texas. The graph also shows the respondent attitudes to whether they will come into contact with a trafficked victim.

Discussion

As shown by Graph 1, our pharmacists are not adequately trained in the topic of sex trafficking. Those who do have formal training feel more confident in being able to refer patients who are sex trafficked, although they also score lowest in confidence identifying sex trafficking victims. It is difficult from our data to tell why they may not be as confident in this regard, but one explanation is that they may understand the complexities of sex trafficking that make it difficult to identify. Still, it is important that we instruct our pharmacists to the best of their ability so that they can identify and properly refer victims of sex trafficking when such a case arises. The data suggests that there is a need to increase awareness of sex trafficking within the pharmaceutical profession.

As shown Graph 2, those who believe that sex trafficking is a problem in West Texas also believe that they, as pharmacists, will come into contact with trafficked victims. This further emphasizes a need to educate pharmacy students on how to handle situations involving sex trafficking victims.

Next Steps

- Continue to attend monthly meetings and stay in contact with the Socio-Economic Council of Lubbock
- Provide pharmacy students with an evidence-based educational module focused on sex trafficking within Texas
- Conduct two post-module surveys: one immediately following the presentation and the second set at a later date in order to record student retention of sex trafficking knowledge

References

1. Balik R. Trends in pharmacy practice could be exploited by sex traffickers. Pharmacy Today. 2019 Jan. 25(2): 36
2. Montague A. Identifying Victims of Human Trafficking. 2016. University of Michigan College of Pharmacy