

**“Sometimes It Seems Easier to Push It Away”: A
Study into the Barriers to Help-Seeking for
Victims of Sexual Violence**

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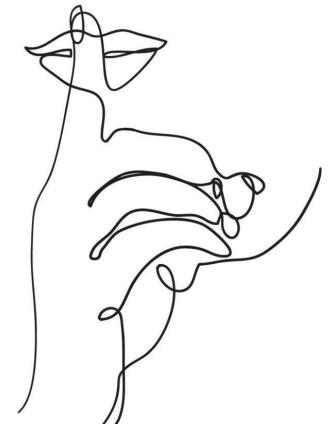
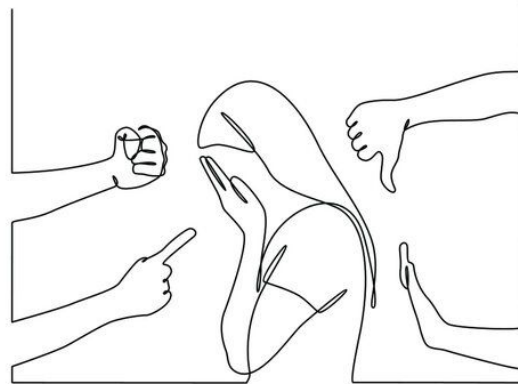
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“I experienced a lot of shame and anxiety and felt very dirty, and I blamed myself for everything.”

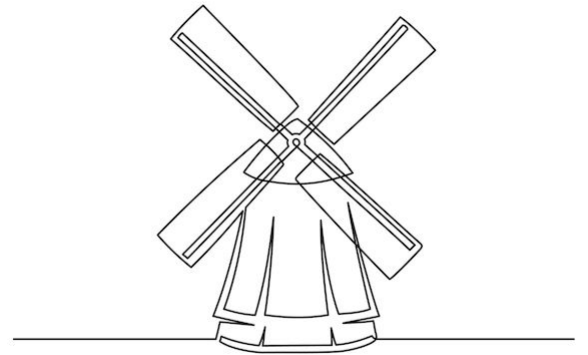
Help-seeking after sexual violence

- Serious long-term consequences
- Many do not seek help or report the incident
- Barriers to help-seeking



Study rationale

- Previous research: U.S. college samples
- Help-seekers vs. non-help-seekers
- The current study: non-student sample in the Netherlands



The current study

- Research questions:
 - Which barriers do victims of sexual violence in the Netherlands experience in their decision to seek help?
 - And do these barriers differ between help-seekers and non-help-seekers?
- Hypotheses:
 - Victims experience multiple barriers to help-seeking
 - Barriers differ between help-seekers and non-help-seekers

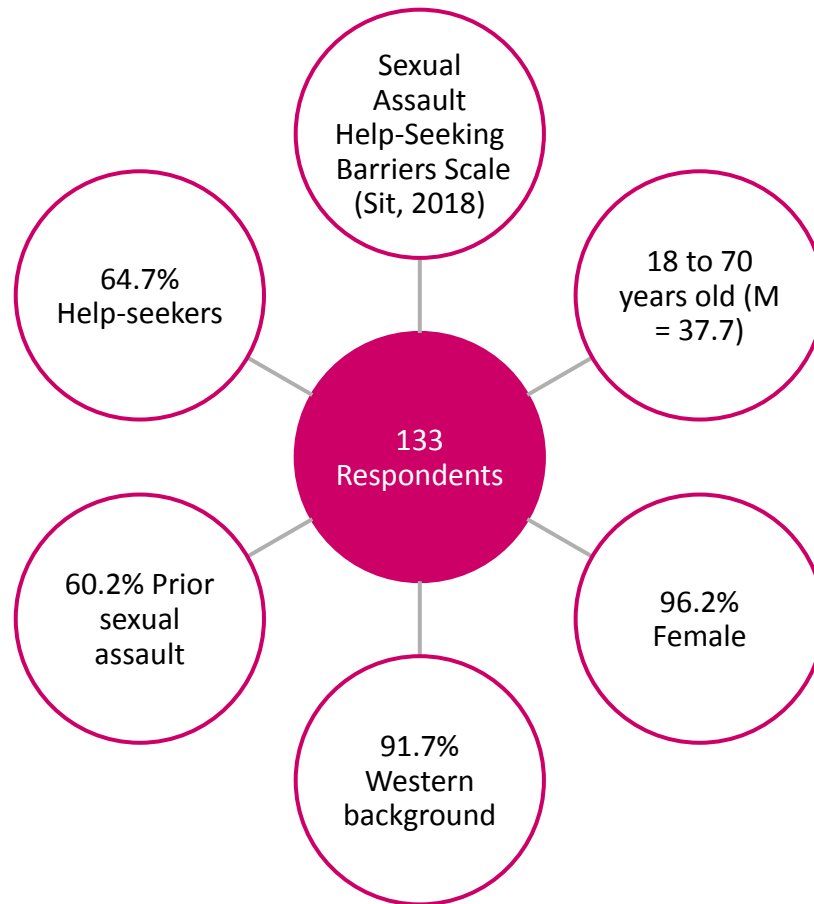


Methodology: Introduction

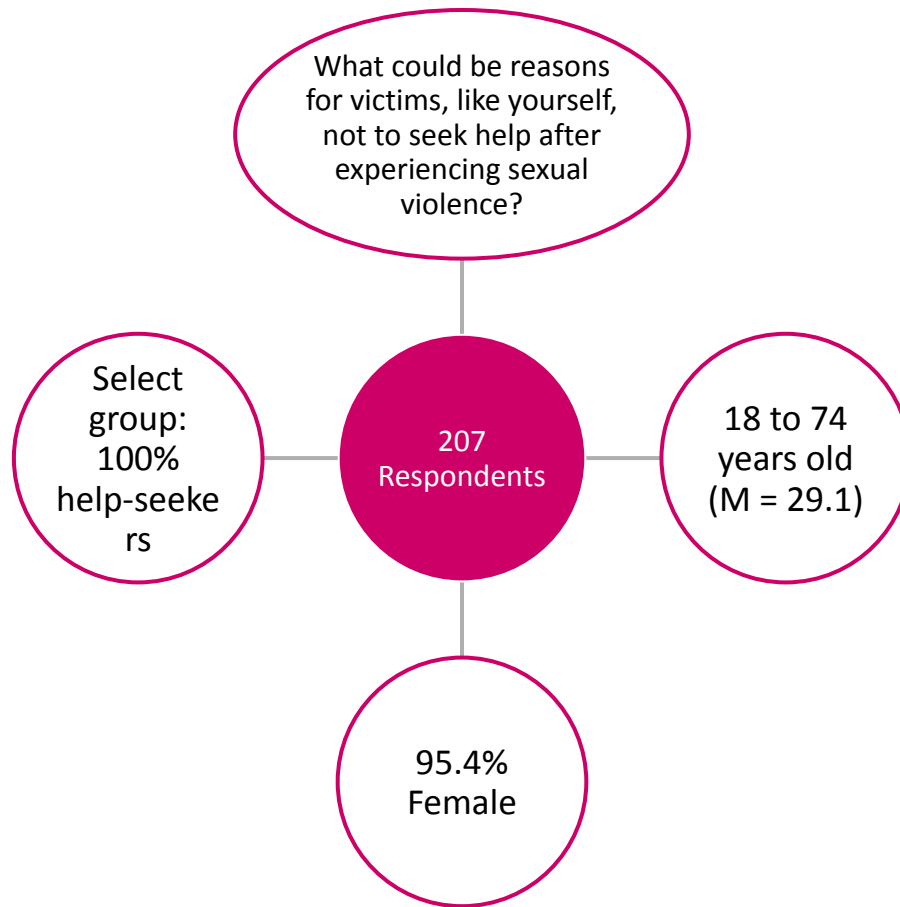
- Part of a larger research project
 - Personal contribution health insurance
 - Costs of help-seeking at Sexual Assault Centers
 - Pilot study



Methodology: Online Survey



Methodology: Open-ended Survey



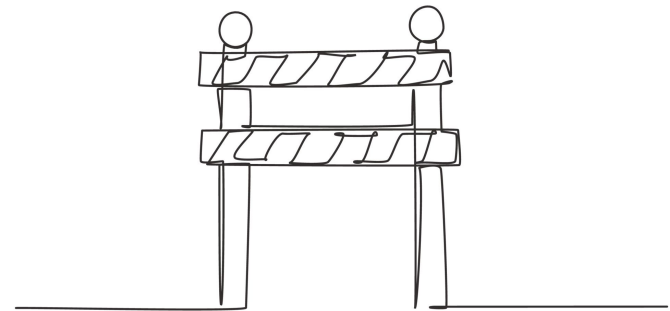
The findings (1)

- Many barriers to help-seeking
- Open-ended survey:
 - Individual and interpersonal barriers similar to prior literature
 - Few sociocultural barriers

“I was recently having a conversation with a friend and she played everything down. This made me feel that I came up with everything myself and that I was making a bigger thing of it than it was in reality. These reactions can lead you to doubt your own credibility. If your friend already does not believe you, then what would the Police even think?”

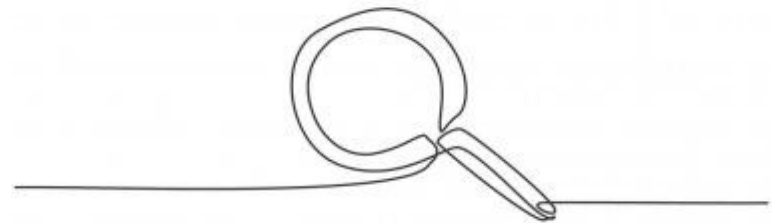
The findings (2)

- Differences between help-seekers and non-help-seekers
- Help-seekers: higher distrust of support providers ($t(117) = -2.31, p = .023$) and accessibility problems ($t(117) = -3.30, p = .001$)
 - Prior negative experiences with help-seeking?
- Non-help-seekers: higher minimization of the incident ($t(127) = 2.33, p = .021$)
 - Also reported by help-seekers?



Take-home message

- Several barriers to help-seeking
- Differences between help-seekers and non-help-seekers unclear
- Future research
 - Representative non-student sample
 - Qualitative and quantitative study of underlying relationships



Questions?



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