QUANTIFYING THE LEVELS OF VIOLENCE TOWARDS MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN (MSM) IN THREE CITIES OF HONDURAS

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1. BACKGROUND

High rates of drug and gang violence, makes Honduras one of the most violent countries in the world. A social context of traditional values, homophobia and machismo create an environment that makes men who have sex with men (MSM) vulnerable to suffer different types of violence.

Even with the importance of this social issue, there has been no recent quantification of violence towards them. The Pan American Social Marketing Organization (PASMO) conducted a population-based study to assess the USAID Combination Prevention Program for HIV and quantify the proportion of this population experiencing some forms of violence.



2. METHODS

Between May and August 2017, a respondent driven sampling (RDS) cross-sectional survey was conducted in three Honduran cities with 1922 MSM (47% from Tegucigalpa, 31% from San Pedro Sula and 22% from La Ceiba), aged 18 to 40 years old.

Four types of violence were measured (psychological, verbal, physical and sexual), by asking participants if they have felt threatened, insulted, were punched or forced to have sex any time during the 12 months previous to the survey, and if they perceived it was due to their sexual preferences.



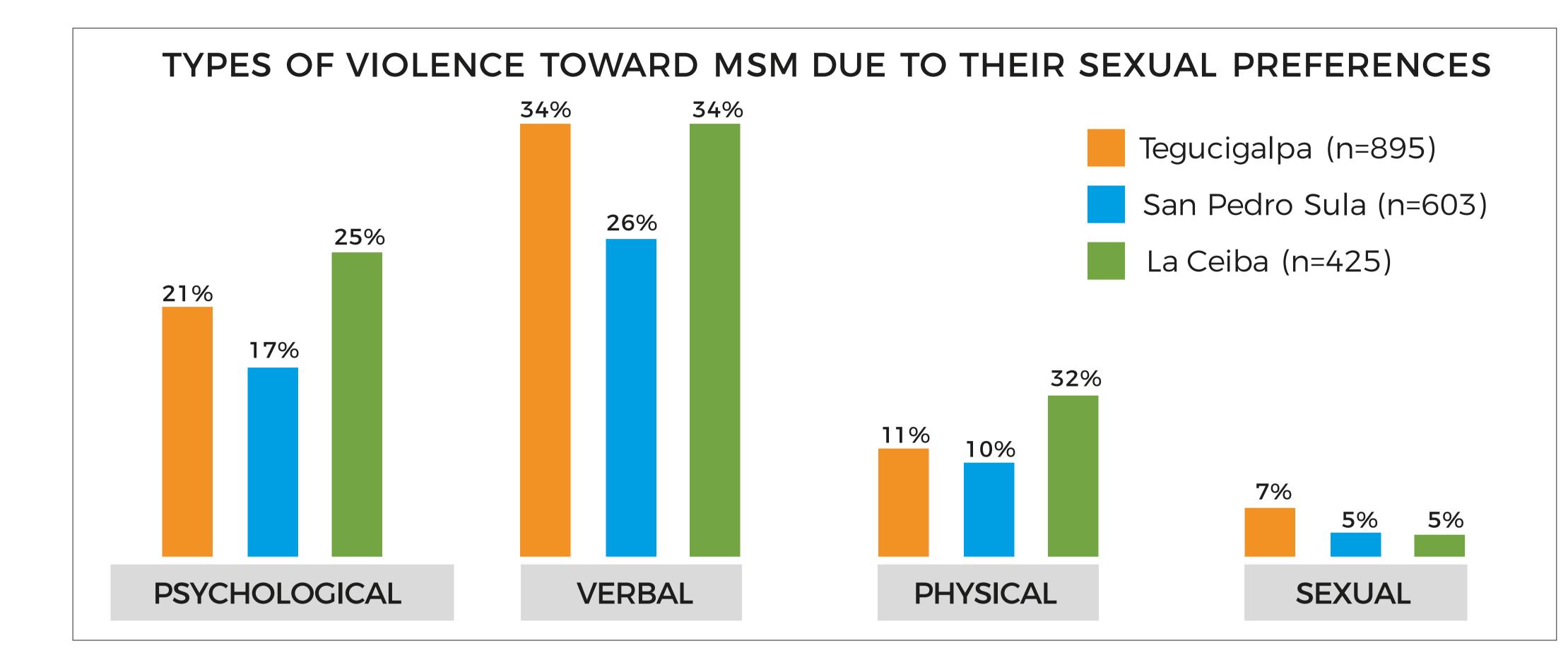
3. RESULTS

Overall, 19% of the participants self-identified as heterosexual, 39% as bisexual, 33% as gay, and 9% as transgender women. In addition, 50% was of low socioeconomic status (SES), 30% of middle SES, and 20% of high SES.

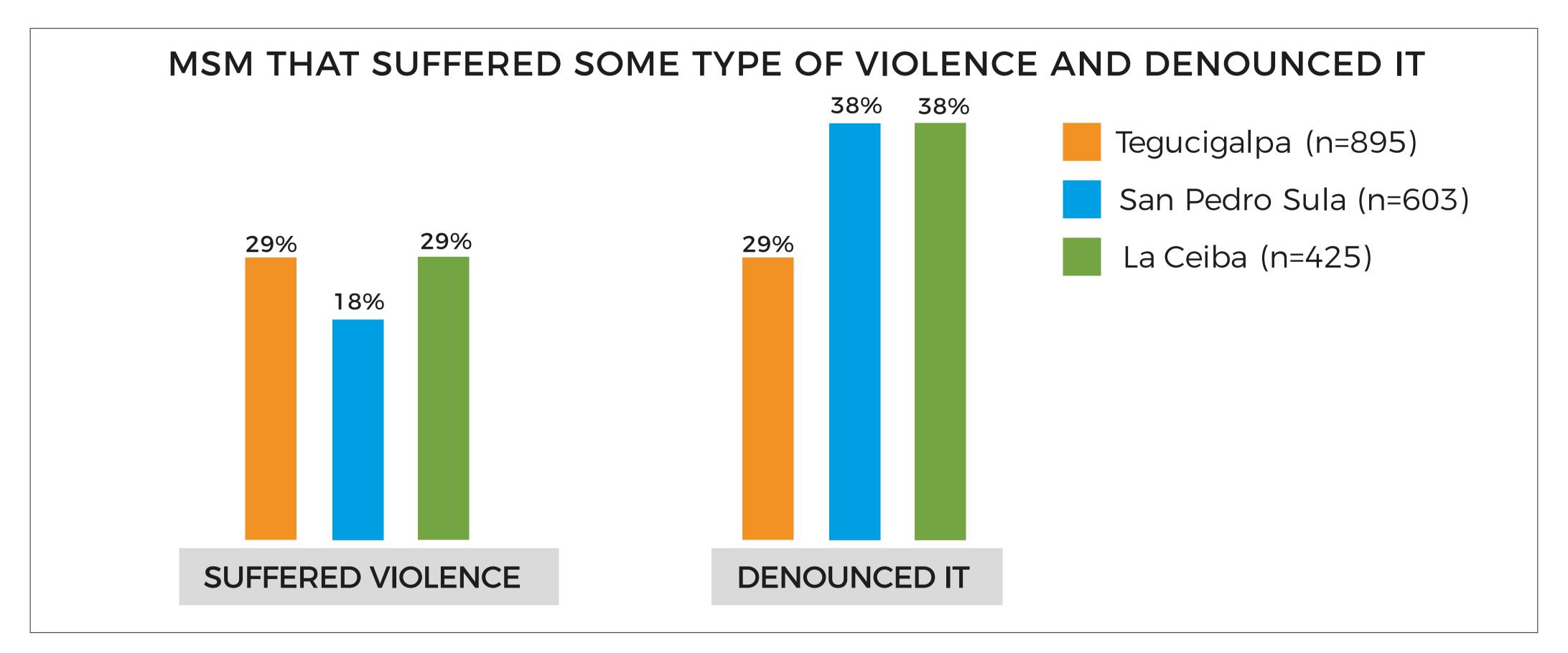
In Tegucigalpa, 29% of the participants suffered some type of violence, 21% suffered psychological violence, 34% verbal violence, 11% physical violence; and 7% sexual violence perceived to be related to their sexual orientation.

In San Pedro Sula, 18% suffered some type of violence, 17% suffered psychological violence; 26% verbal violence; 10% physical violence; and 5% sexual violence.

Finally, in La Ceiba, 29% suffered some type of violence, 25% suffered psychological violence; 34% suffered verbal violence; 15% physical violence; and 5% sexual violence.



The complexity of this social phenomenon reveals that only some MSM, that suffer any type of violence, tend to denounce it to a governmental office or to a non governmental organization (NGO) that gives support to this population. In this survey, those who reported suffering any type of violence, 29% denounced it in Tegucigalpa, 38% in San Pedro Sula and 38% in La Ceiba.



Other results, in this survey, related to HIV prevention, have shown that suffering some type of violence may reduce the chances of using condom at last sex (OR 0.694 [0.511-0.943], p < 0.05), and may increase the probability of conducting an HIV test (OR 1.536 [1.214-1.942], p < 0.001).

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The results showed considerable levels of violence towards MSM due to their sexual preferences.
- > Other important finding refers to the complexity of this phenomenon and the difficulties to denounce it to the corresponding institutions.
- It is important to develop communication strategies to reinforce the need to denounce any type of violence suffered by MSM, in order to reach an egalitarian society.
- The study also showed how violence can influence healthy behaviors, like condom use or HIV testing; therefore, it is important for HIV prevention programs to promote violence prevention activities and offer psychological support at clinic level.

