



Divergent Findings Highlight the Need for Replication Studies or the Use of Innovative Methods

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In a Letter to the Editor entitled “Sexual Violence Communication Between Men and Women”, Ferreira et al. (2021) discuss the interpretation of the results found by Sanchez et al. (2019). First, we must elucidate that we were delighted by the fact that our article was read in detail. On the other hand, it caught our attention the reaction that came from a small hypothetical sentence. To contextualize, Sanchez et al. found that there were no significant sex differences in the prevalence of sexual violence reported by nightclubs patrons in Brazil in a large epidemiological portal survey. Data refer to sexual aggression on the night of the survey, occurred inside the venue, and was reported just after the occurrence. This result differs from international studies that measured past year violence in nightclubs, which point to women as the primary victims of sexual assault in nightclubs (Hughes et al., 2008).

In an attempt to raise hypotheses to justify the finding, Sanchez et al. (2019) suggested, in their discussion section, that this divergence of findings “could be related to the fact that women are less prone to report sexual aggression than men.” This sentence generated discomfort in Ferreira et al. (2021), stating that they disagreed with this hypothesis. We respect their position, but two facts drew our attention. First, Ferreira et al. disagreed but did not bring an alternative hypothesis to justify the finding of Sanchez et al.

It is expected that, by justifying a disagreement, a better alternative explanation for the finding would be proposed. Thus, the question remains: why is the prevalence of reports of sexual abuse in nightclubs in Sao Paulo the same between genders? Second, the references used to justify the disagreement are not comparable to the study they have criticized. Ferreira et al. (2021) presented arguments based on studies on prevalence of sexual abuse among children, in which the experience of sexual

abuse was reported mainly by girls. The Sanchez et al. (2019) study was focused on alcohol-related harms among men and women who attend nightlife settings, i.e., it involved nightlife patrons aged 18 years old or more, reporting violence inside nightclubs. Violence in nightlife settings among adults is not comparable with child sexual abuse in another context.

We understand the points raised by Ferreira et al. (2021), but we would like to discuss what would be the alternative hypotheses to justify the results found. At this point, it would be essential to have replication epidemiological studies to validate the findings or, even, studies with alternative designs to understand. Maybe qualitative studies would answer whether there is a gender difference in the interpretation of what is being considered sexual violence by the patrons or the difficulties women have in reporting their experiences of sexual abuse on the same night it occurred.

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