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The help-seeking behaviors among women with IPV experiences expressed in online health communities

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Global Health Summit 2022, Dallas
Academy of Violence and Abuse

Background

01 **IPV is Widespread & Harmful**

IPV affects one in three women and exacerbates their risk for many physical & mental health issues.

02 **IPV is Stigmatized & Severely Underreported**

IPV is treated as a private family matter and women refrain from reporting IPV out of pressure to protect their families.
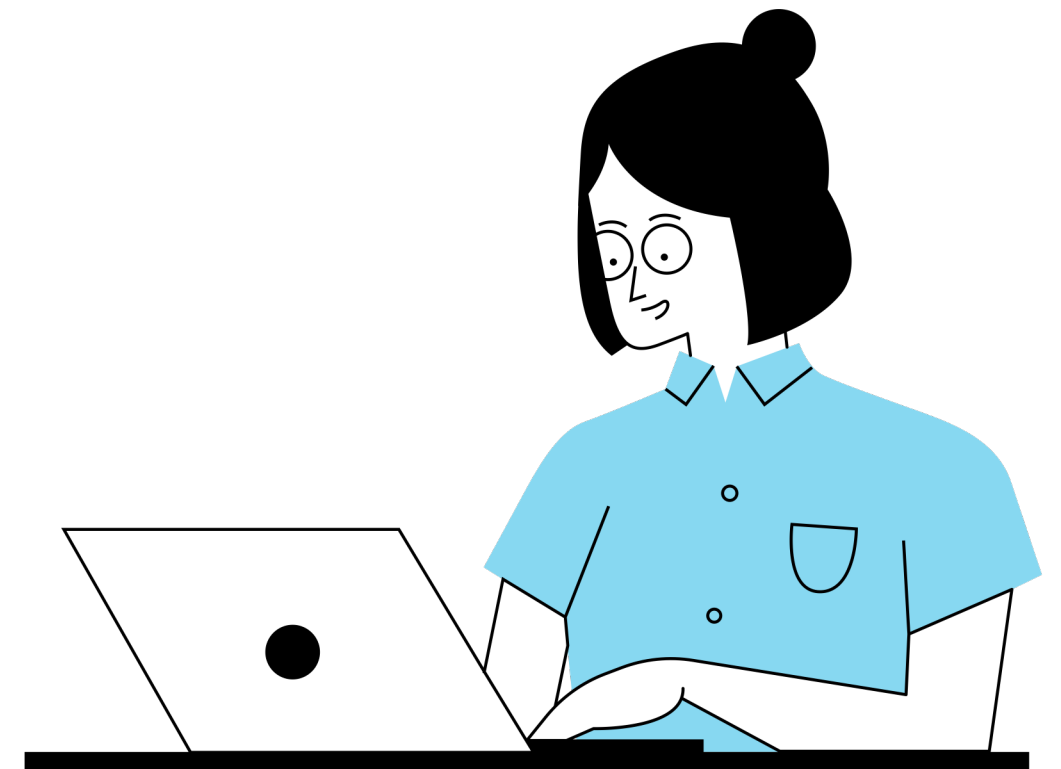
03 **Women Prefer Informal Help-seeking**

Women consistently prefer to disclose IPV experiences to informal networks like friends and family over police and other formal agencies.

(Parvin et al., 2016) (Johnson & Belenko, 2021; Paul, 2016; Muluneh et al., 2021)

04 **Advantages and Disadvantages of OHCs**

Advantages: Accessible, anonymous, find solidarity with other survivors

Disadvantages: Risk of misinformation, victim–blaming

Research Goals

To evaluate the usefulness/reliability of OHCs, we need to explore the help-seeking situation in those OHCs.

This is the **first** study with the goal to examine the help-seeking behaviors and types of advice sought by women with DV experiences in an online health community.

Methods

O1 **Why is Reddit our data source?**

O2 **Inclusion/Exclusion**

O3 **Phases of Analysis**

Inclusion Criteria for Posts:

- Aged 18+
- Abused women
- Sought help to resolve DV-related issues
- Written in English

Exclusion Criteria for Posts:

- Under age 18
- Non-abused women
- Good news/gratitude postings
- Propaganda posts
- Automatic replies in comments
- Non-English posts
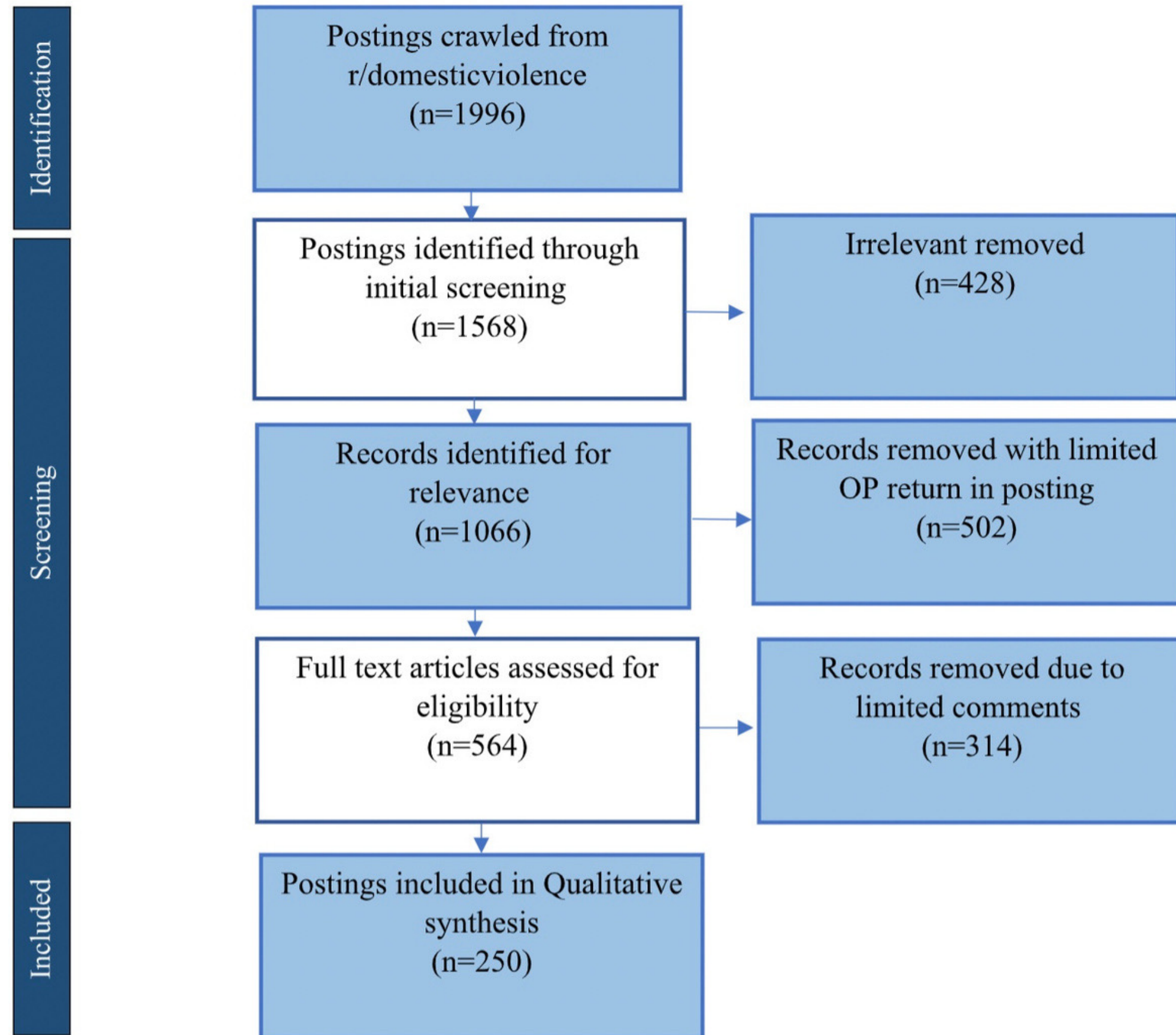
Flowchart of Reddit posting screening

Figure 1. PRISMA flow chart of Reddit posting screening.

Methods

Phases of Data Analysis

Data Annotation
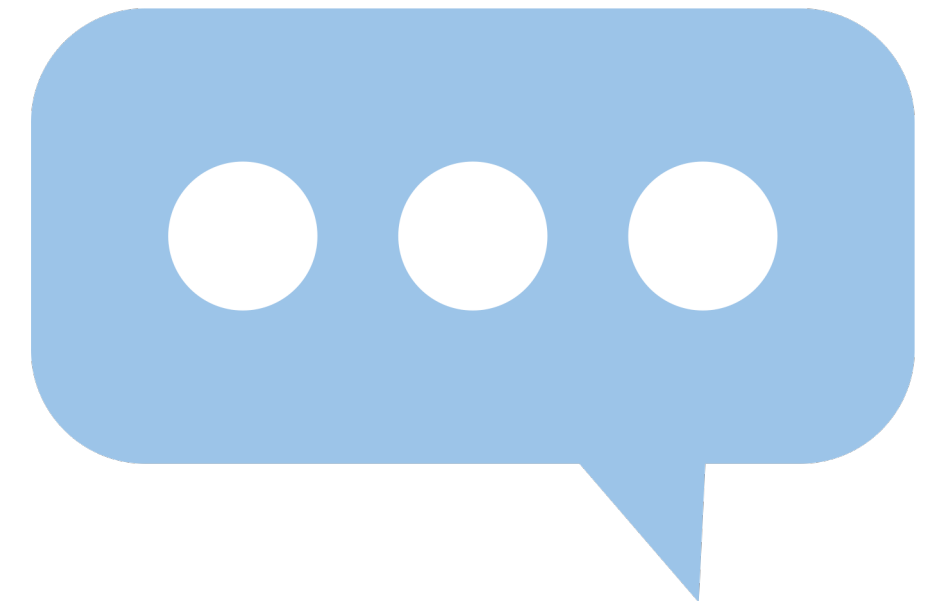
Reliability of the coded dataset

Kappa score: 0.66, Percent agreement: 85%

Descriptive Analysis

Thematic analysis of initial postings

Annotation Codebook Example

Help-seeking behaviors – Sources of Help asked and received	
Support sought by OP	Based on the first postings by OP, what support were sought explicitly.
Intangible support	
Information support sought	Asked any of the following information: (1) Shelters/ DV center/ Agency (2) Legal (3) Childbearing (4) Police (5) Wound assessment/record (6) DV report procedure/Documentation (7) Safety planning (8) Finance (9) Housing (10) Healthcare information (counselling, psychiatrist, doctor etc.) (11) DV survivors' network/ (Online) support groups (12) DV knowledge (13) Communication (14) Miscellaneous (Other)
Emotional support sought	Asked for emotional support: (1) Yes (2) No

Which were the most common **types of abuse** experienced and **help requested**? What were the most common **themes** in help-seeking posts?

Results   (N = 250)

⭐ Common Abuse Types

1**)** Physical abuse (N = 148, 47.1%), **2)** Sexual abuse (N = 109, 34.7%), **3)** Emotional abuse (N = 36, 11.4%), and **4)** Financial abuse (N = 21, 6.7%)

⭐ Common Help Requests

1**)** General information advice (N=70, 40.6%), **2)** DV knowledge (N = 43, 25%), **3)** Legal (N = 21, 12.2%), **4)** Communication (N = 15, 8.7%)

⭐ Thematic Analysis Results

Key Themes: **(1)** Recognition of the problem (n=57, 22.8%), **(2)** Advice-based help-seeking (n=98, 39.2%), **(3)** Emotional-based help-seeking (n=69, 27.6%), and **(4)** A forum for expression (n=50, 20%) **(5)** Explaining DV experience to others (n=15, 6%)

Results

Examples of Key Themes/Sub–themes

Themes	Description	Examples
Recognition of the problem	N=57	
▪ **Narratives of personal thoughts (Context)**	Posters elaborate the thoughts about abusive experience and showing signs to recognize the danger from IPV.	"I know its mostly all lies and intended to intimidate me, i know he is a bad person and abusive, i know i should leave for me and my kids sake, i know I'll be happier once he is gone." "I guess what I'm trying to say is that I don't know how to feel right now because I know what he did was wrong and that it should never have happened." "Can he change? Will he really change? Should I trust him again?"
- Self-blame	Posters wonder whether they were to blame for what happened to them.	"I feel like I was to blame." "I feel I'm to blame. I've had insecurities/trust issues this whole relationship, and apparently me asking questions is yelling at him, and disrespecting him."
▪ **Clarification/recognizing the situation by others (confusion)** ▪ **Trying to understand the situation**	Posters were confused about what had happened to them and seeking for clarification whether the behaviour is abuse, are they in danger, is it risky or not?	"Is it abuse?" "Is it still family violence if I let him abuse me before?" "Am I putting my kids in danger if I do not report him to police?"

Discussion

What were our key findings?

General Advice	DV Knowledge	Legal Information	Safety Planning
Identifying Abuse	Emotional Support	Emotional Validation	Expression & Communication

Implications

01 Empirical evidence of need for legal and IPV knowledge

02 Difficulty identifying abuse/red flags

03 Emotional needs of women with IPV experiences

Limitations

Only 1 OHC data source has been used with a limited sample size (N=250).

Lack of Diverse Backgrounds

First, this study is unable to capture all the aspects of demographic information such as age, sex, education background, and income. Additionally, most Reddit users are from English–speaking countries.

Focus on Female Help-seekers

Our results should only be interpreted under the context of OHCs among **women** with IPV experience.

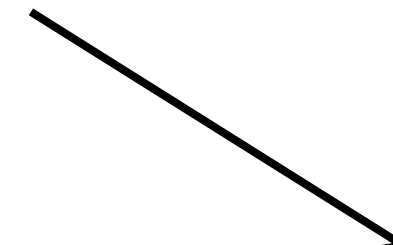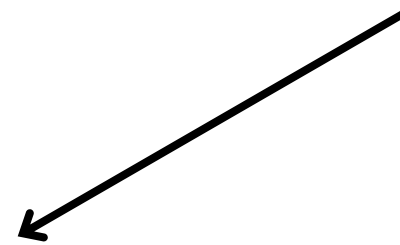### Doesn't Include Full Range of Help-seeking

The sample postings selected for this study are limited to 250. This could restrict the inclusion of other types of help–seeking behaviors in this population, like some postings related to the aftermath of DV.

Conclusion

What can we learn from this study?

Designing Better OHCs

Anticipate users' needs

Minimize misinformation

Early & useful intervention

Acknowledgements

Academy of Violence and Abuse
University of Pittsburgh

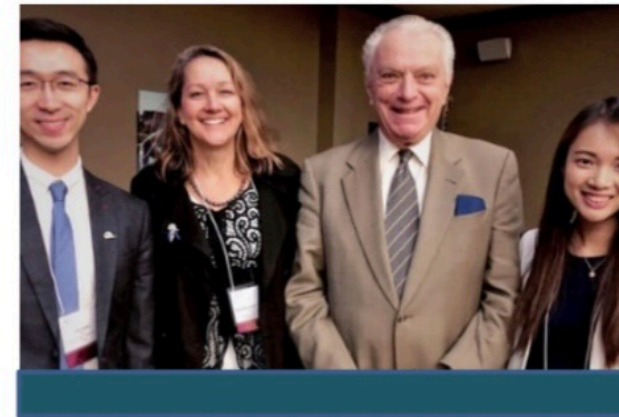**Advisor: Dr. Young Ji Lee**
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