

"DON'T HURT ME, NO MORE." UNVEILING VIOLENCE IN ONLINE TRANSACTIONAL SEX: A STUDY ON CISGENDER OR TRANS MEN, TRANS WOMEN, AND NON-BINARY PEOPLE IN FRANCE

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OBJECTIVES

In France, street-based sex workers are known to be particularly exposed to violence, however there is a lack of information regarding violence experienced by individuals engaged in online transactional sex (OTS). To address this gap, our study aimed to characterize client-perpetrated violence and associated factors among cisgender or trans men, trans women and non-binary individuals involved in OTS.

METHOD

Data collection took place in France from June 2021 to May 2022 via online self-administered questionnaires. Client-perpetrated violence, including verbal, physical, psychological, and sexual forms, was documented using «never,» «sometimes,» or «frequently» response options. Latent class analysis (LCA) was employed to identify different profiles of violence, followed by multivariate logistic regression to identify associated factors.

RESULTS

Among 265 participants in France (median age: 34 [IQR: 26;45]), 80% were cis men, 7% were trans women, 5% were trans men, and 8% were non-binary. Of the participants, 59% reported experiencing at least one form of violence from clients. LCA estimation revealed two distinct classes. Class 1 (n=145, 55%) comprised participants who had lower probabilities of experiencing client-perpetrated violence: physical (42%), psychological (30%), sexual (28%), and verbal (6%). Class 2 (n=120, 45%), in contrast, had higher probabilities of reporting client-perpetrated violence: physical (100%), psychological (93%), sexual (93%), and verbal (84%) (Figure 1). Multivariate logistic regression revealed several factors associated with higher likelihoods of reporting client-perpetrated violence (Class 2): higher education level (aOR: 2.22, 95% CI [0.93-5.44]), unemployment or student status (aOR: 2.00, 95% CI [1.05-3.88]), unstable housing (aOR: 3.05, 95% CI [1.07-9.36]), perceiving sex work as a less chosen activity (aOR: 1.17, 95% CI [1.02-1.33]), having more than five clients per month (aOR: 3.82, 95% CI [1.97-7.63]), and having experienced in the last 12 months discrimination in settings other than care services (family, friends, work, etc.) (aOR: 4.36, 95% CI [2.16-9.02]). Conversely, older age (aOR: 0.96, 95% CI [0.93-0.99]) was associated with lower probability of reported violence (Table 1).

Figure 1: Prevalence rates of self-declared client-perpetrated violence for the classes identified by the LCA

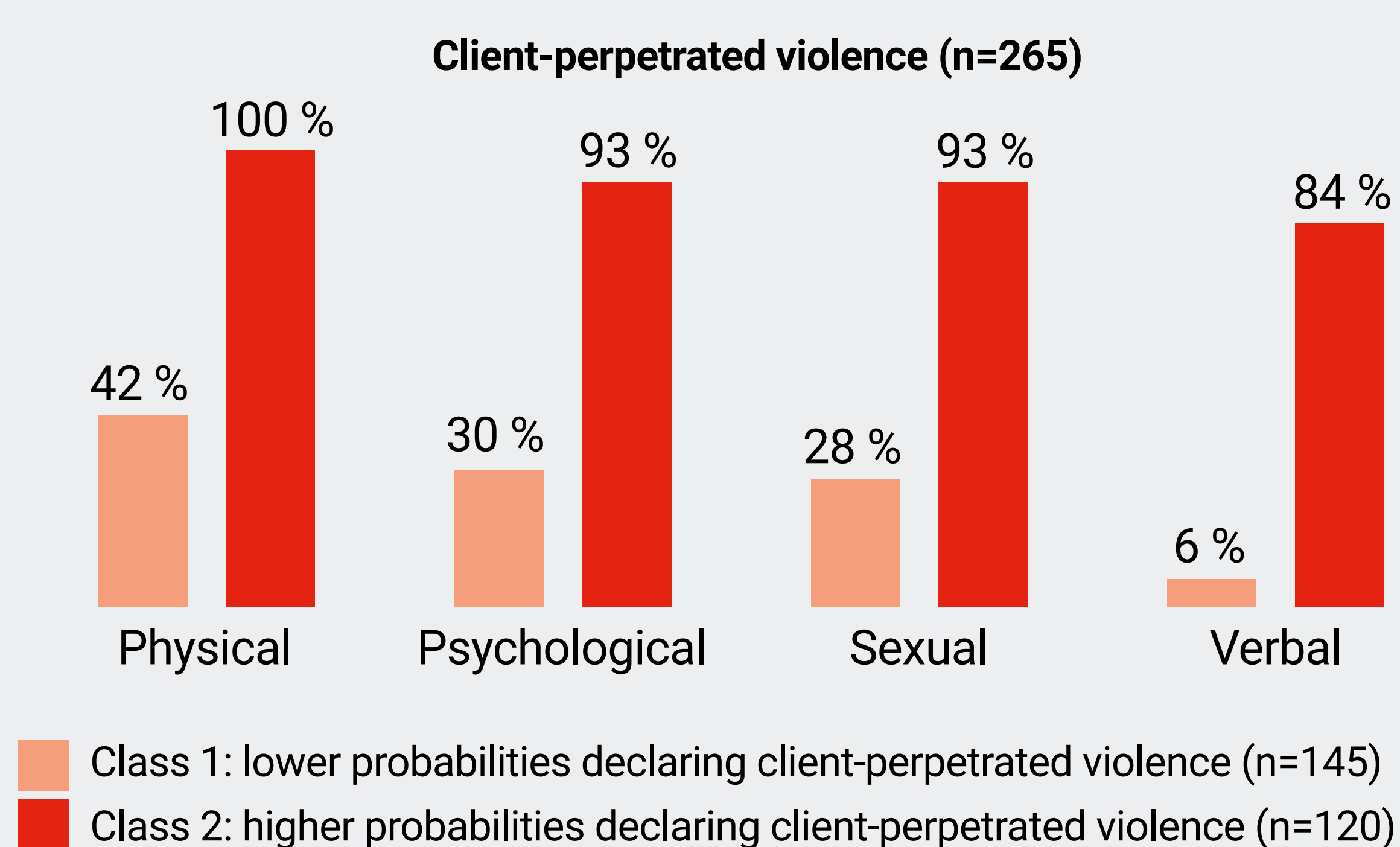


Table 1: Factors associated with belonging to Class 2, with a higher probability of experiencing client-perpetrated violence.

	aOR	[95%CI]	p-value
Age (per additional year)	0,96	0,93 – 0,99	0,007
Gender			
Cis Men	1,00		
Trans or non-binary	1,26	0,56 – 2,88	0,6
Education Level			
Secondary school or less	1,00		
Higher or further education	2,22	0,93 – 5,44	0,076
Housing			
Stable	1,00		
Unstable	3,05	1,07 – 9,36	0,042
Employment			
Employed	1,00		
Student or unemployed	2,00	1,05- 3,88	0,037
Perception of sex work as a less chosen activity	1,16	1,02 – 1,33	0,026
Number of clients per month			
0 to 5	1,00		
More than 5	3,82	1,97 – 7,63	<0,001
Experienced discrimination			
No	1,00		
Yes	4,36	2,16 – 9,02	<0,001

aOR: adjusted Odd Ratio; CI: confidence interval

TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Findings from the ANRS SEXTRA study confirm that cisgender or trans men, trans women and non-binary people engaged in OTS in France face client-perpetrated violence. Vulnerability to violence is heightened among individuals dealing with precarious circumstances, discrimination, and engaging in involuntary sex work. Importantly, this study challenges the stereotype that violence is exclusive to women working on the streets. These results should be used to inform the development of targeted interventions among the studied population, involved in OTS.

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