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ASSESSING THE TREATMENT NEEDS OF SEXUALLY AGGRESSIVE MALE STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY IN THE UK

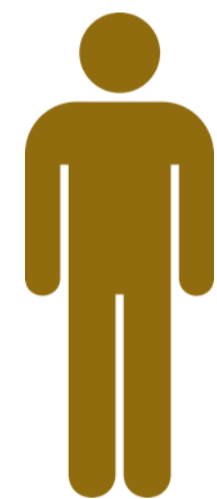
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Introduction

In the UK, figures suggest that over two-thirds of female university students experience sexual violence during their studies (1), with 1-in-20 having been raped or the victim of an attempted rape offence (2). However, despite a secure understanding of its prevalence, little remains known about the profile of sexual violence perpetrators in higher education (HE) settings. It is believed that our studies are the first in the UK to assess the treatment needs of sexually aggressive male students—the key perpetrators of university-based sexual violence offences (3, 4). **Study One** assesses the characteristics and predictors of sexual aggression amongst university males at one UK university, whilst **Study Two** evaluates the generalisability of findings across a national and representative sample.

Methodology

Participants were university students (aged 18+) who identified as male and heterosexual. They were recruited online and using local advertisement through voluntary sampling techniques.



Study One

N = 259 students from one university in South East England. Age ranged from 18-68 (*M* = 22.86, *SD* = 6.61). Most participants identified as White British (58.30%) and were highly educated (96.92%).



Study Two

N = 295 students from 100 different UK universities, including the OU. Age ranged from 18-75 (*M* = 25.07, *SD* = 8.28). Again, most participants identified as White British (70.51%) and were highly educated (95.93%).

Participants accessed an online survey that they were told assessed the psychological and behavioural characteristics of male university students. After completing a demographic survey that collected non-identifiable personal information, they responded to twelve psychological measures.

Measures comprised well validated self-report questionnaires that assessed various traits related to university-based sexual violence, as well as impression management. Specifically, they included measures of:

- Alcohol consumption
- Athletic involvement
- Offence-supportive beliefs
- Inappropriate sexual interests
- Social functioning
- Self / Emotional regulation issues

To assess sexual aggression, participants also completed the *Sexual Experiences Survey: Short Form – Perpetration* (SES-SFP; 5) which evaluated their sexual behaviours over the past 24-months.

Attention checks were employed to assess concentration in the study and financial remuneration was used to incentivize completion.

Results

Based on their responses to the SES-SFP, participants were divided into two groups: non-sexual aggressors (NSAs) were categorised as those who emphatically rejected all items, whilst sexual aggressors (SAs) were categorised as those who provided any non-zero response.

Sexual aggression: Prevalence and features. In Study One, 106 illegal sexually aggressive acts were reported by 33 male students (12.74% of the final sample), compared to 145 illegal acts by 30 male students (10.14%) in Study Two; see Figure 1. Victims were often female students (over 80%).

Group comparisons. In nearly all cases, SAs scored higher than NSAs on the psychological measures. Groups could be differentiated by one demographic variable (ethnicity) and three psychological variables (the HTW, IRMA-R, and SFQ-R-SV) in Study One, and six psychological variables (the HTW, IRMA-R, SFQ-R-SV, BPAQ, SERR, and DERS-SF) in Study Two.

Classifying sexual aggressors. The above variables were force entered into a binomial logistic regression to assess their relative ability to predict sexual aggression. In both studies, the final model was significant: Omnibus $\chi^2(4) = 25.82, p < .001$ (St.1) and $\chi^2(3) = 57.63, p < .001$ (St.2).

Final models could explain 9.66% (Cox & Snell R^2) to 19.31% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance in sexual aggression in Study One, versus 18.14% to 42.47% in Study Two. AUROC analysis showed that both models could discriminate between groups at better-than-chance levels; see Figure 2.

Of the variables that entered the final models, only the IRMA-R and SFQ-R-SV made a significant contribution in Study One, and the SFQ-R-SV, HTW, and BPAQ in Study Two (see Table 1). Neither impression management nor excluding attention checks made any discernible difference to results.

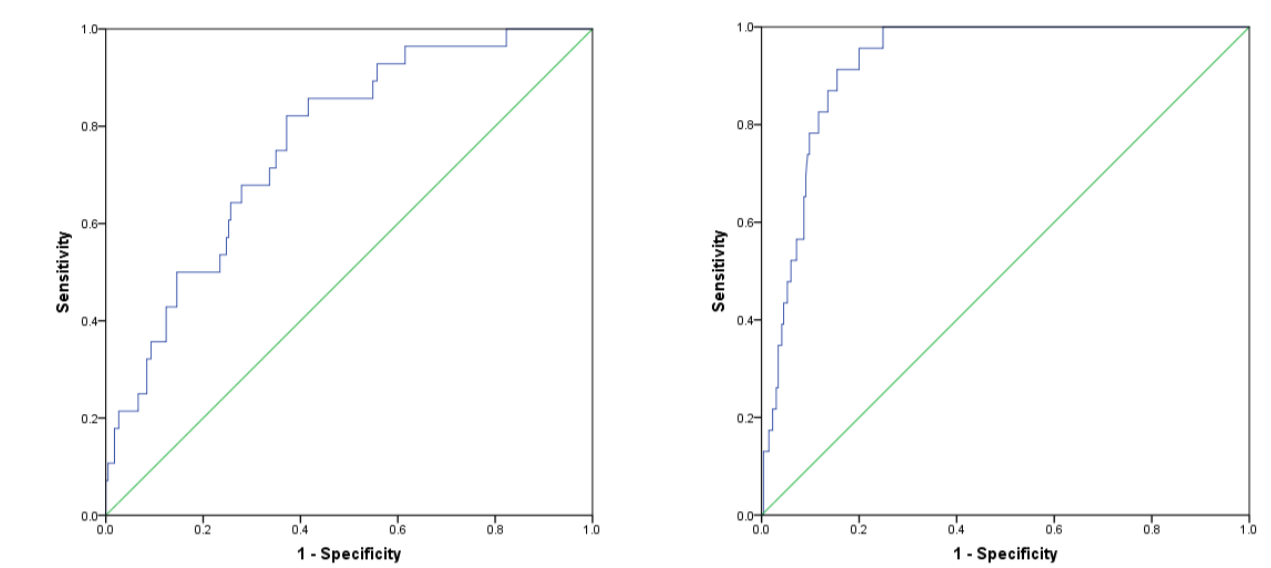


Figure 2. ROC curves showing the discriminatory abilities of logistic regression models in both studies.

Variables	B	SE	Wald	p	95% CI for ORs		
					ORs	Lower	Upper
Ethnicity	0.27	0.44	0.36	0.55	1.31	0.55	3.10
HTW	0.01	0.03	0.06	0.81	1.01	0.95	1.07
IRMA-R	0.08	0.03	8.48	0.00	***	1.08	1.14
SFQ-R-SV	0.07	0.03	6.07	0.01	**	1.08	1.14
Constant	-6.32	1.07	34.73	0.00	***	0.00	

Variables	B	SE	Wald	p	95% CI for ORs			
					ORs	Lower	Upper	
SFQ-R-SV	0.12	0.03	13.33	.000	***	1.12	1.06	1.20
HTW	0.14	0.03	18.51	.000	***	1.15	1.08	1.22
BPAQ	0.11	0.04	10.33	.001	**	1.12	1.05	1.20
Constant	-12.51	2.11	35.09	.000	***	0.00		

Table 1. The final logistic regression models.

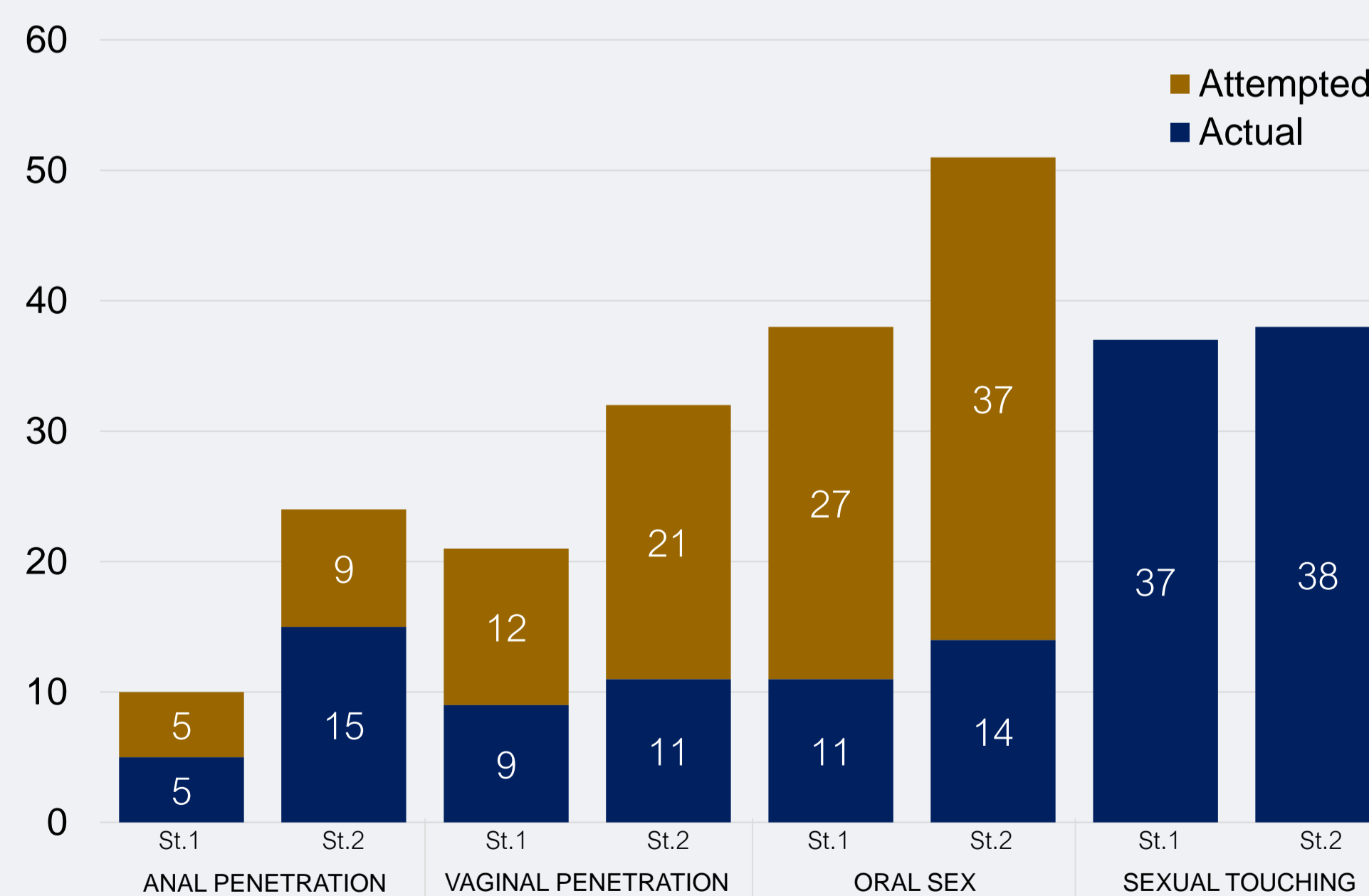


Figure 1. The prevalence of self-reported sexually aggressive behaviours over the past 24-months by university males across both studies.

Conclusion & Future Directions

- Sexual violence perpetration occurs at alarming rates at UK universities compared to within the general community.
- University males who have recently perpetrated an act of sexual violence differ psychologically from university males who have not.
- The characteristics of sexually aggressive male students may differ across the UK, and possibly even between HE institutions.
- Future research should attempt to replicate findings with larger samples to validate these conclusions and to assess whether sexually aggressive male students form a homogenous group with shared treatment needs.

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