

Me & You Too: Empowering 6th Graders for Healthy Decision-Making and Risk Avoidance in Southeast TX

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June 25-27, 2024 | 2024WARD: Building Brighter Futures for Today's Youth Leaders | U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF), Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program Grantee Conference

Introduction

Teen pregnancy and repeat teen birth rates in Texas surpass national averages, posing challenges for urban areas in educating youth on sexual risk prevention. **Me & You Too**, an 8-lesson computer-based Sexual Risk Avoidance Education program (MYToo), aims to foster healthy decision-making and protective factors among 6th graders, encouraging delayed sexual activity until marriage, raising awareness about human trafficking, and mitigating risk behaviors. This presentation delineates the program's impact.



Methods

Surveys were administered to 6th grade students (aged 11-12) from seven Southeast Texas middle schools participating in the MYToo 8-lesson curriculum. Entry (n=196) and exit (n=178) surveys included ACF mandated questions alongside additional scales assessing psychosocial factors related to abstinence, risk avoidance, conflict resolution, dating relationships, awareness of human trafficking, decision-making, self-awareness, self-regulation, and goal-setting. Descriptive statistics and chi-square analyses were evaluated.

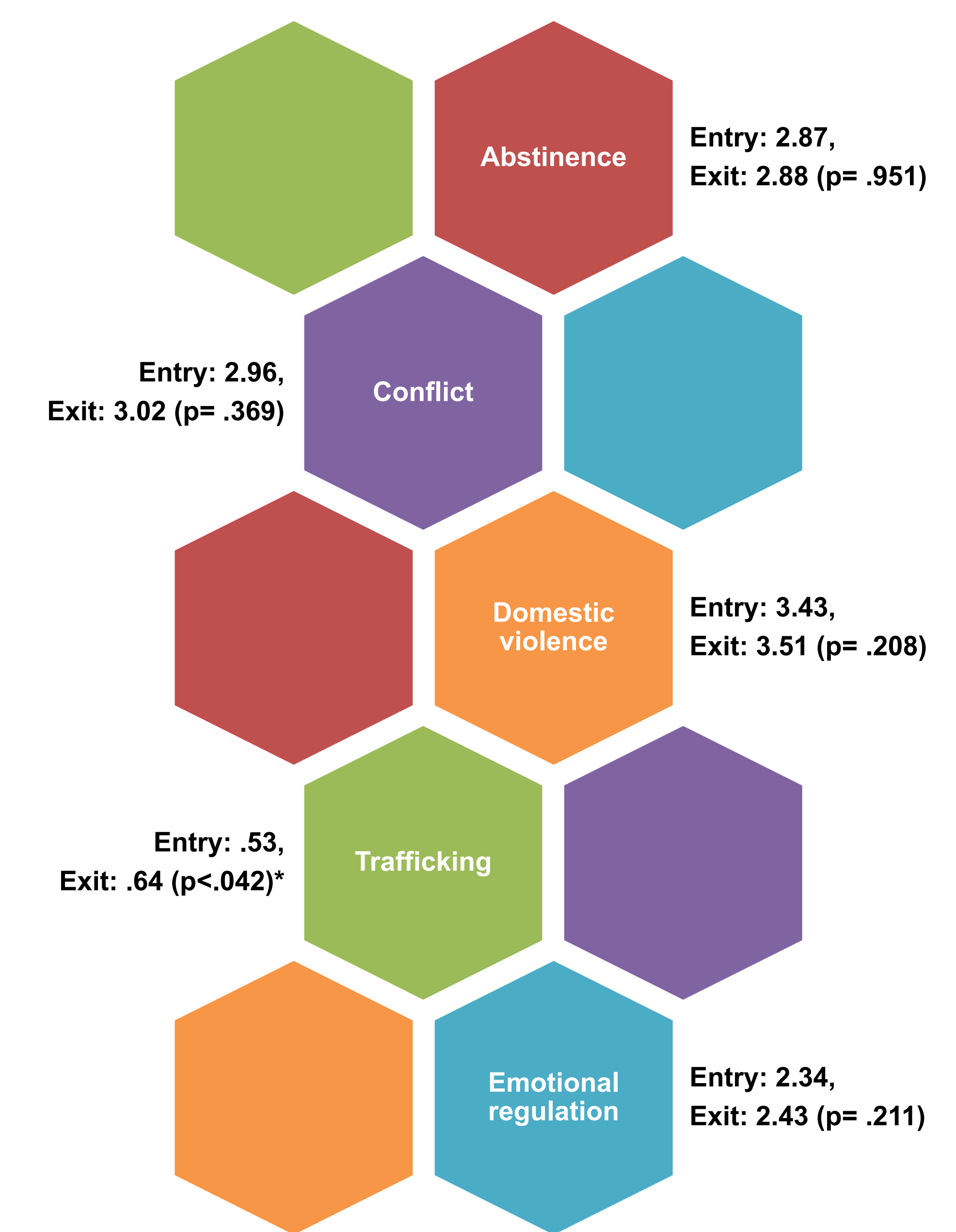
Results

Students reported progress in healthier decision-making and the utilization of protective factors to uphold their personal boundaries. While attitudes towards abstinence, conflict management, emotional regulation, and opposition to dating violence improved, significant differences between entry and exit measures were not observed. Before the study, among all survey participants, 51.9% had never been in a relationship and 98.9% had never had sexual intercourse. There was, however, a significant difference in awareness and understanding of human trafficking.

Measures for Selected Constructs

Behavior or Construct	# of items	Scale Used	Example Item
Abstinence	6	4-point Likert Scale (1- Strongly disagree, 4- Strongly Agree)	The best way for young people to avoid an unwanted pregnancy is to wait until they are married to have sex.
Managing Conflict	7	4-point scale (1- Never, 2- 1 or 2 times, 3- 3-5 times, 4- 6 or more times)	Told the person how I felt.
Domestic Violence in Dating Relationships	9	4-point Likert Scale (1- Strongly disagree, 4- Strongly Agree)	It is OK for a boy to hit his girlfriend if she did something to make him mad.
Trafficking	5	True / False	When someone is trafficked, they are kidnapped and held against their will.
Emotional Regulation	4	4-point scale (1-Very Difficult, 2- Difficult, 3- Easy, 4- Very Easy)	Getting through something even when I feel frustrated.

Selected Constructs with Comparable Entry/Exit Items



After being in the program, students were more likely to...

- Make decisions not to drink alcohol (50%)
- Make decisions not to smoke cigarettes, use other tobacco products, or marijuana (52%)
- Plan to delay having sexual intercourse until they graduate high school or college (55%)
- Plan to delay having sexual intercourse until marriage (69%)

Conclusions

Although significant psychosocial outcomes were largely not reported, a larger sample size might yield more detectable outcomes. Early and recurrent education, coupled with discussions on utilizing protective measures to avoid risky situations, could aid youth in maintaining healthy boundaries.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to ACYF and UTHealth Houston's Me & You Team for funding and supporting this research. Funding: Project #USDHHS Administration for Children & Families 90SR0118-01-00

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Of those who have been in a situation where they could have used **Select, Detect, Protect** steps, **93.9% used the steps to "play by their rules"**.