Insight Into Inpatient Adolescent Psychiatry Patients' Learning Needs Concerning Consent, Boundaries, and Social Media Safety

An analysis of quality improvement pre and post-lesson survey data

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INTRODUCTION

Given the rapidly evolving landscape of social media and the young age of many of its users, it is important that children and adolescents have the skills and confidence to protect themselves from on and offline exploitation.

While the exact prevalence of adolescents using dating apps and social media to meet new people is difficult to evaluate, current in-app precautions are inadequate to prevent underage children from joining adult sites. A subset of adolescents use these adult apps to meet new people in person[1].

Sexting is prevalent in these age groups and education on proper consent and boundaries has been proposed as an effective way to minimize the risk of harm as youth explore their sexuality[2].

PURPOSE

Assess and improve the effectiveness of the lessons provided at the Kobacker center.

Better understand the concerns, prior knowledge, and education gaps of the adolescent inpatient population.
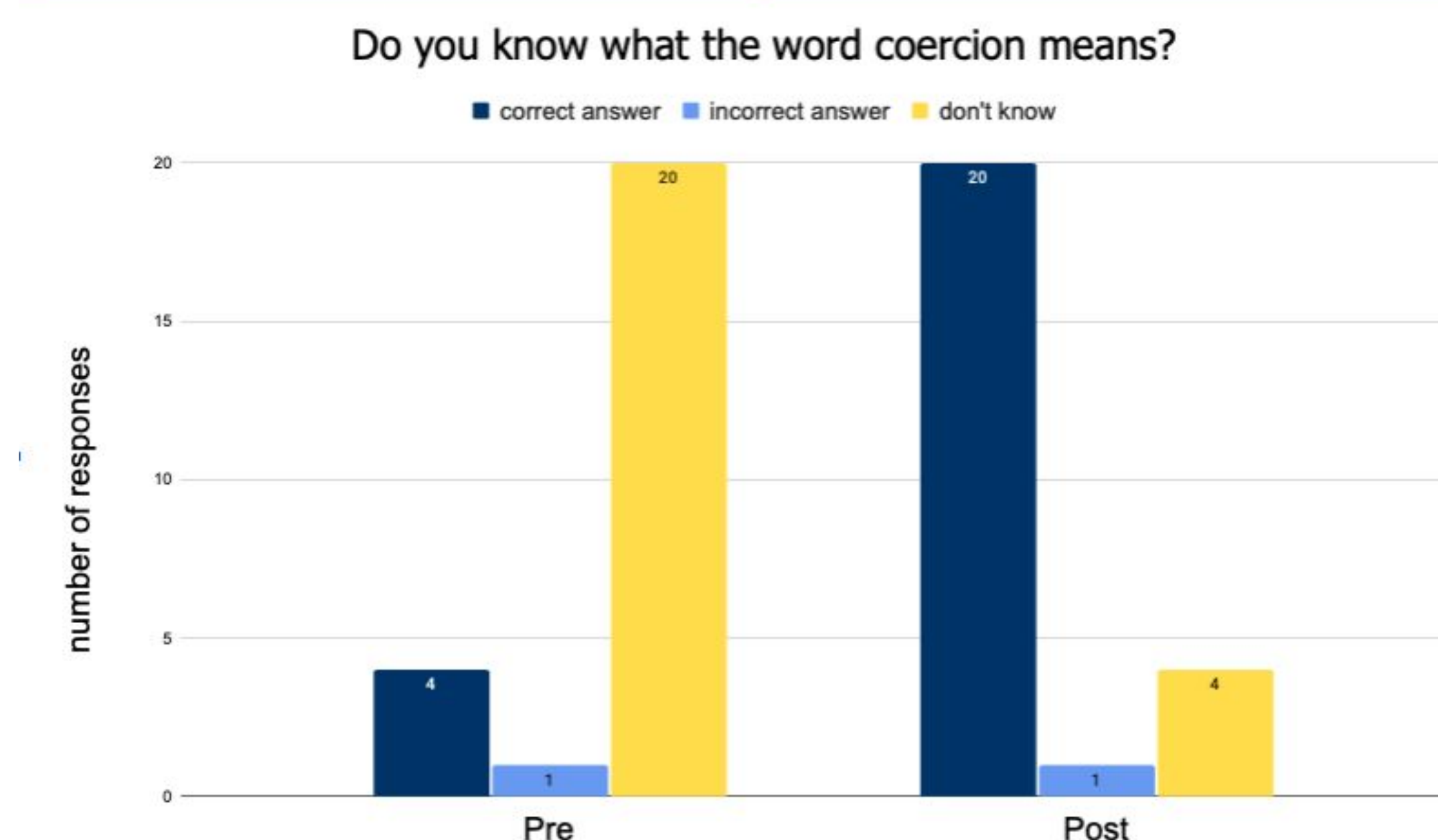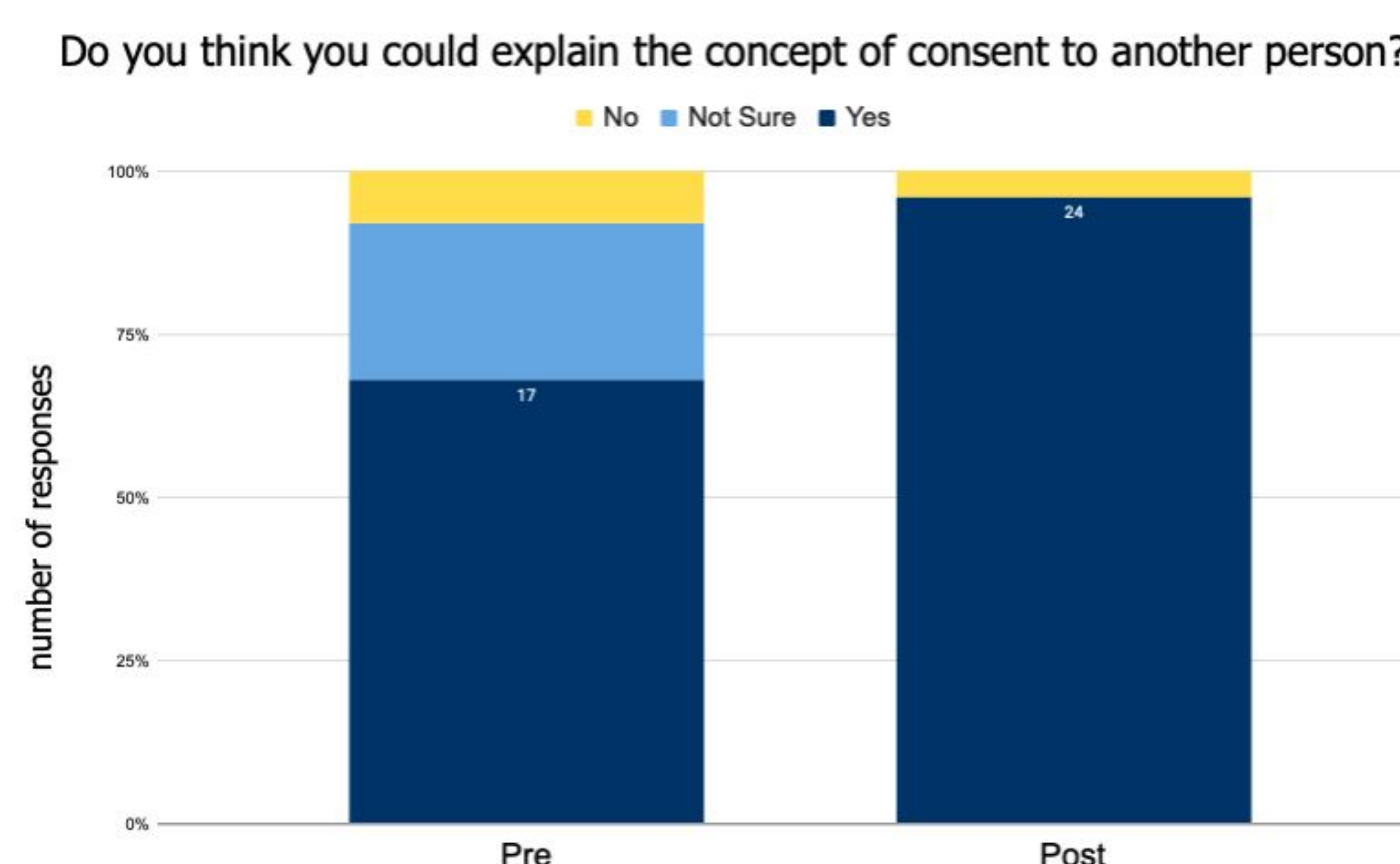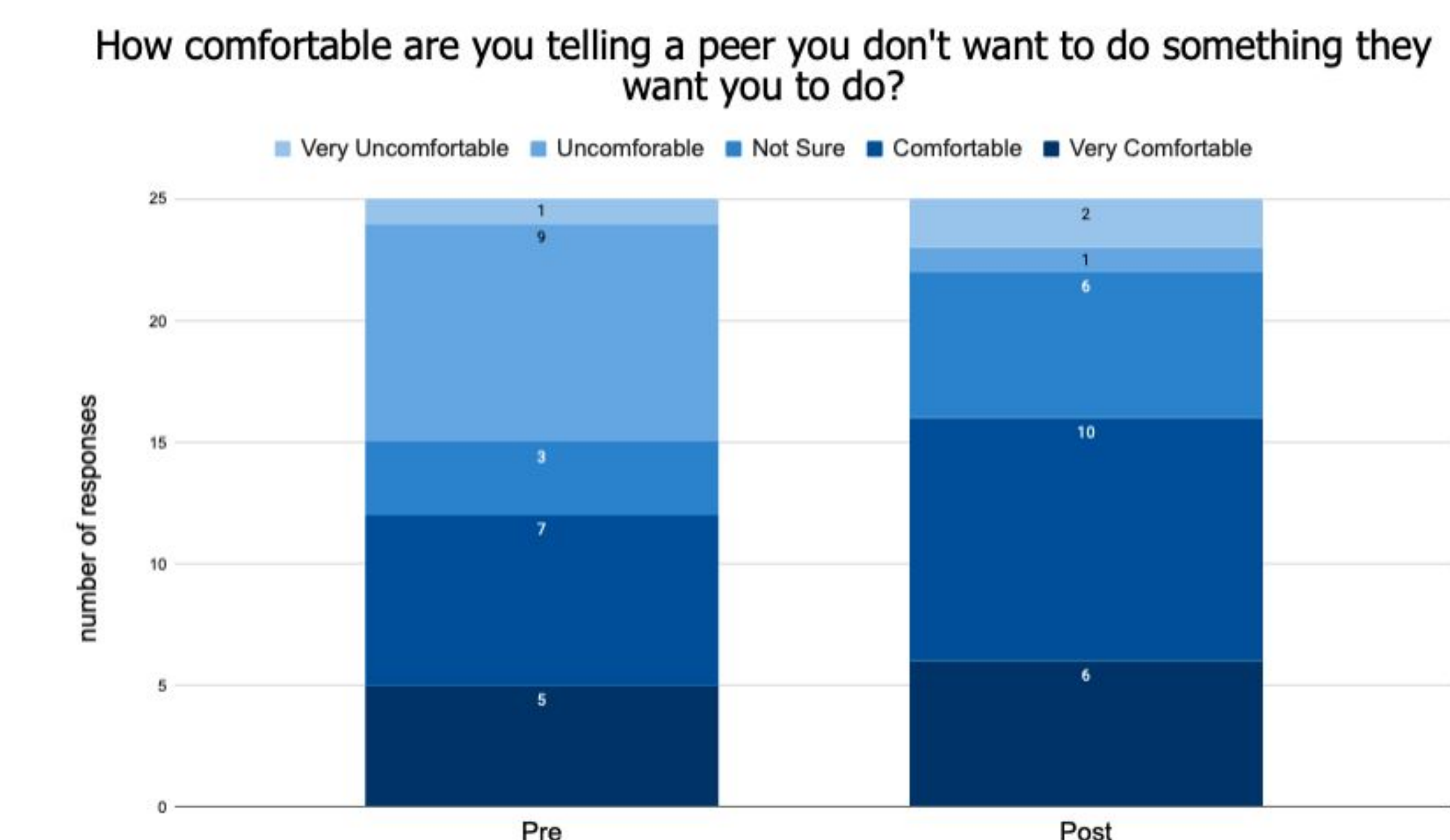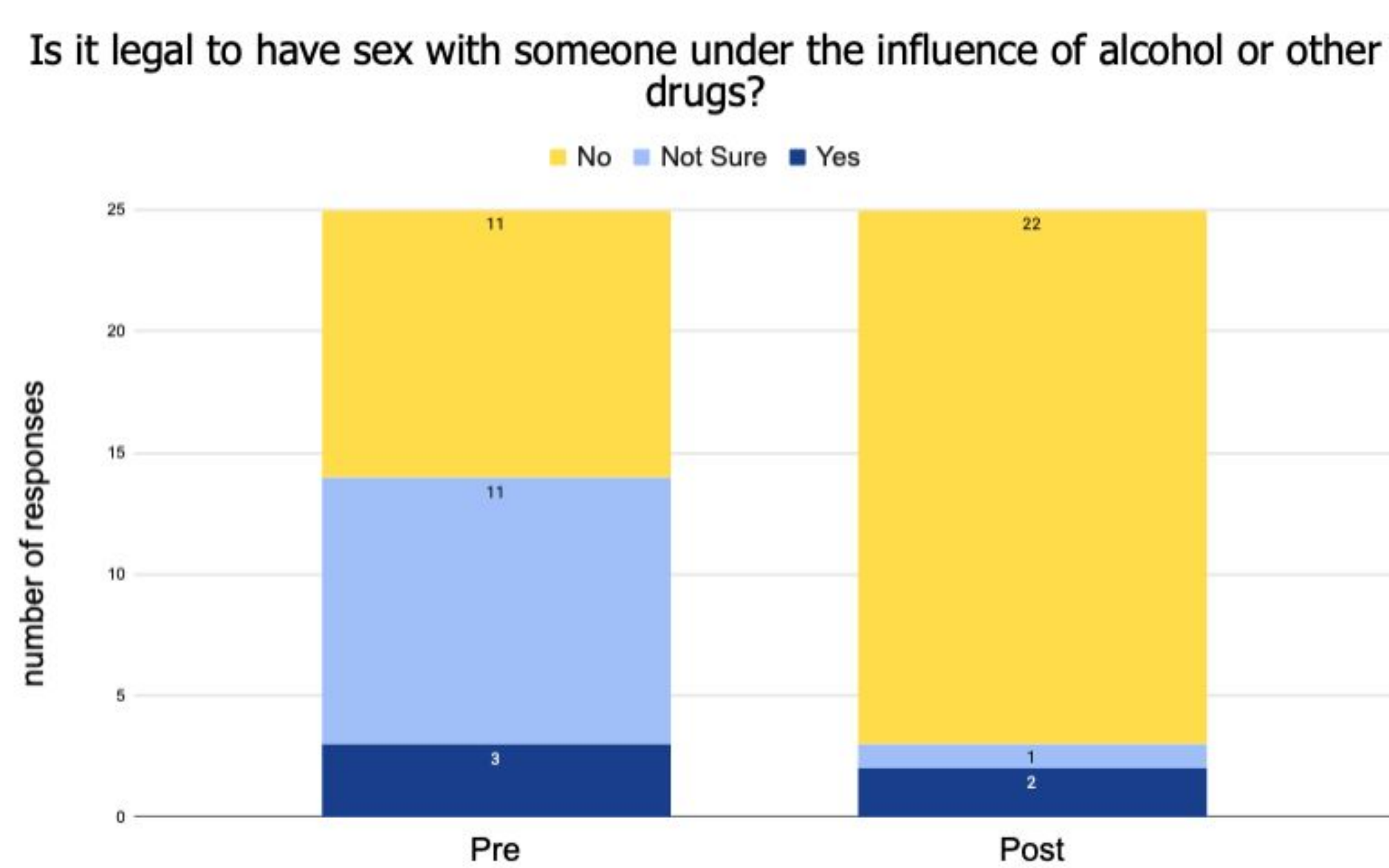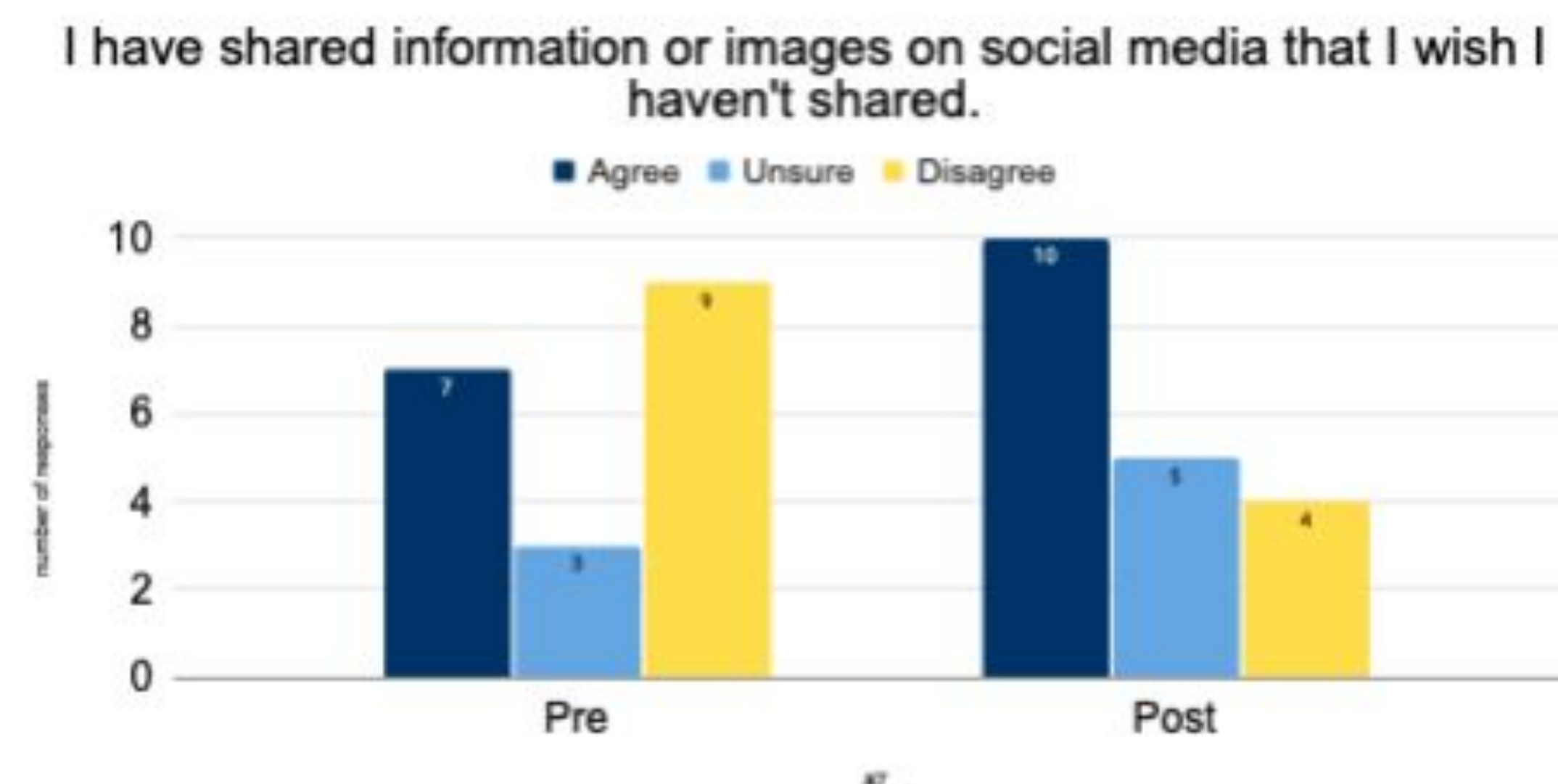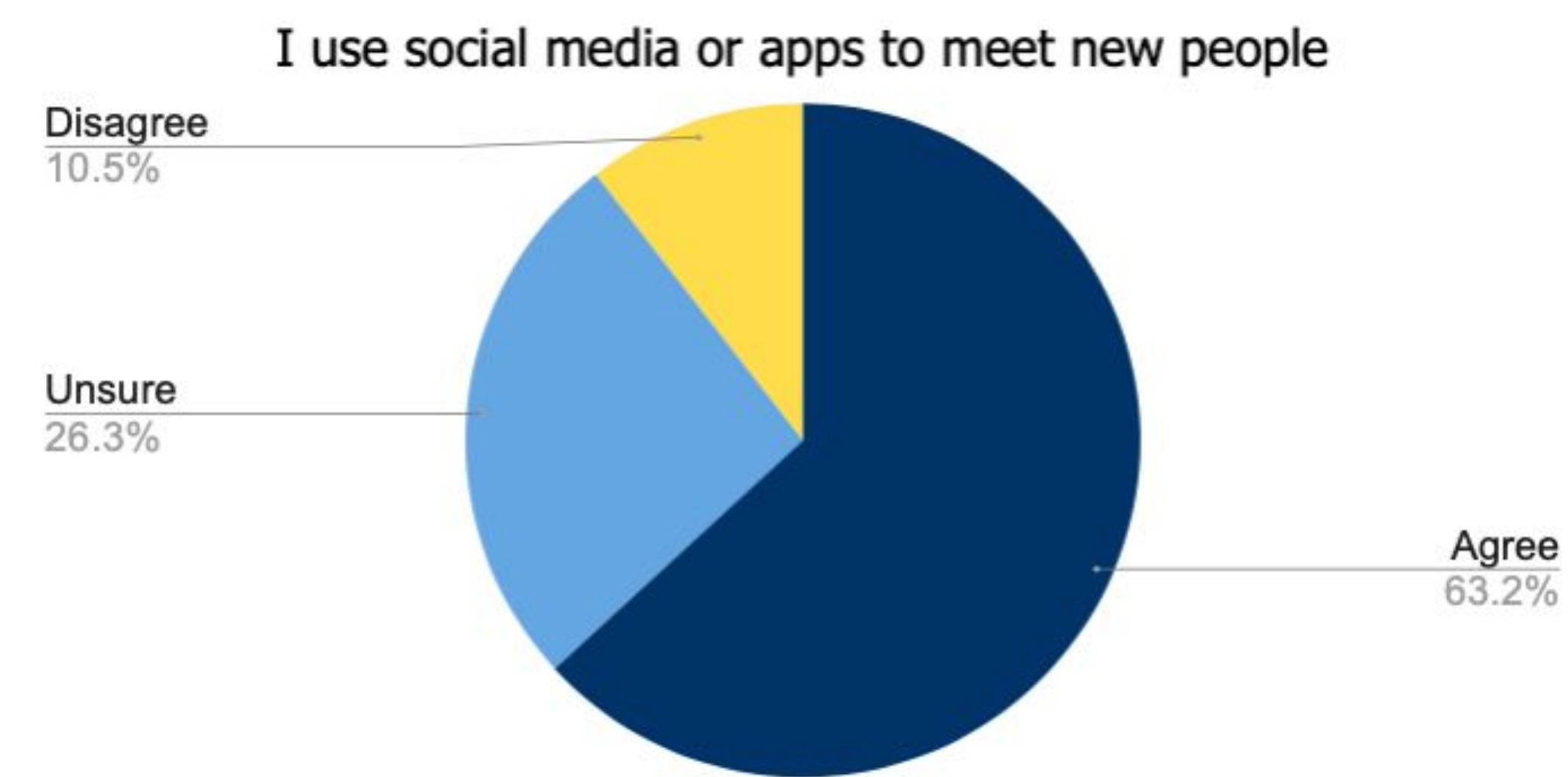
METHODS

1. Grace Zachar, MS2 and Jamie Dowling, PhD of the University of Toledo College of Medicine and Life Sciences created two lesson plans to be taught separately at the Kobacker center, an inpatient adolescent psychiatry unit in Toledo, Ohio. The Kobacker Center hosts inpatient psychiatric care for children ages 13-17 suffering from moderate to severe mental illness. The lessons were entitled "Consent and Boundaries" and "Social Media Safety."

2. Paired pre and post surveys were made for both lessons in order to measure the effectiveness of the lessons and improve their quality. No identifying or demographic information was collected.

3. Participants included all patients in attendance at the Kobacker center at the time of the lessons. Surveys were given directly before and after the lessons.

4. Answers were assigned scores and pre and post data was analysed using paired t-tests.

RESULTS

o 19 and 25 patients completed the Social Media Safety and the Consent and Boundaries surveys, respectively

o The subjects' understandings of consent, coercion, and the situational limitations of consent significantly improved (p<0.05) in the post surveys, as did their confidence in resisting peer pressure.

o Most patients reported using social media to meet new people and feeling safe doing so, however the amount responding that they had previously posted something they regret increased significantly.

Please list some ways you have previously learned to be safe on social media:
"seeing other people's personal info get leaked,"
"my brother got arrested for nudes"

My feelings are as important and worth talking about as other people's feelings (explain if you disagree):
"I can do it on my own," "I'm just not sure,"
"I know it's true but I don't really care"

I use social media or apps to meet new people

Disagree 10.5%
Unsure 26.3%
Agree 63.2%

I have shared information or images on social media that I wish I haven't shared.

Is it legal to have sex with someone under the influence of alcohol or other drugs?

How comfortable are you telling a peer you don't want to do something they want you to do?

Do you think you could explain the concept of consent to another person?

Do you know what the word coercion means?

DISCUSSION

Our results indicate that there may be gaps in adolescent psychiatry inpatients' education surrounding consent, coercion, and healthy boundaries. Our results also suggest that these gaps can be effectively addressed with focused group lessons. It is also worth considering if group lessons are more effective than solo counseling for these topics due to the positive effect of peer affirmation.

The importance of this education is emphasized by the finding that the majority of these patients were using social media to meet new people online, and expressed more regret over photos and information they had posted online after the social media safety lesson.

While resistance to peer pressure was increased by the lesson, measures of self worth and importance remained fixed and the group lessons did not demonstrate any significant improvement in that area, suggesting that this teaching format does not improve individual perception of self worth.

Limitations of the study include its small sample size and its short observation span. Investigation into knowledge gaps of other adolescents in inpatient programs is warranted based on these results.

CONCLUSIONS

Both lessons seem to have effectively taught the majority of the intended content. Surveys demonstrated gaps in education within this patient population regarding consent and social media safety. Filling these gaps could help to improve patient safety and future outcomes and should be of interest to other institutions.

Future research should focus on whether or not these learning gaps are present in other regions of the state, and if so, to identify the best way to meet these learning needs.

REFERENCES

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2) Pistoni, C., Martinez Damia, S., Alfieri, S., Marta, E., Confalonieri, E., & Pozzi, M. (2023). What are the predictors of sexting behavior among adolescents? The positive youth development approach. *Journal of adolescence*, 10.1002/jad.12142. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1002/jad.12142