

## **FACTORS THAT PROMOTE HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOURS IN WOMEN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED SPOUSAL VIOLENCE: ROTARY FSC'S PERSPECTIVE**

### ***Background***

Family violence is a social phenomenon that adversely impacts the functioning of a family as well as the safety and well-being of its members. The most severe form of family violence can cause serious injuries or death. The Singapore government has adopted an integrated approach involving multiple agencies in the management of family violence. Rotary FSC is one of 47 FSCs in Singapore that serve as community touchpoints for individuals and families in need. The Centre sees individuals and families seeking assistance for a wide range of issues, including family violence. A client profile analysis shows that more than one third of clients who experienced family violence sought assistance on their own. This study aims to examine the factors that promote help-seeking behaviours in female clients who have experienced spousal violence. It also hopes to find out how the clients overcome barriers to seeking help in the multicultural context of Singapore.

### ***Research Method***

This study is a qualitative research on the help-seeking behaviours of 10 female Rotary FSC clients of different ethnic backgrounds, who have experienced spousal violence. Each respondent was invited to share her experience in an in-depth semi-structured interview conducted between May and July 2017. All the respondents had experienced physical violence from their spouses. More than half had also experienced verbal/emotional and psychological violence.

### ***Summary of Findings***

The key challenges faced by the respondents in seeking help were their belief systems, concern for their children, lack of knowledge of where to get help, and being trapped in the cycle of violence. The common factors that had promoted their help-seeking behaviours were reaching the tolerance threshold, concern for safety, and strong social support. Cultural factors seemed to discourage help-seeking behaviour in general.

### ***Conclusion***

The findings will enhance the knowledge and practice in supporting female clients who experience spousal violence. It also provides direction for culturally sensitive initiatives that will encourage clients to reach out for help.

*The findings of this study were presented at the 24th Asia Pacific Joint Regional Social Work Conference in Shenzhen, China.*