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Sexual Harassment Beliefs and Myth Acceptance Among Hispanic and Indigenous Farmworkers in California (USA) and Michoacán (Mexico)

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Abstract

We explore workplace sexual harassment (WSH) myth acceptance, bystander discomfort, and beliefs among farmworkers in California, USA, and Michoacán, Mexico. Surveys were conducted with the guidance of community advisory boards among 197 farmworkers (38 men and 59 women in California; 40 men and 60 women in Michoacán). Men and women in Michoacán had similar discomfort and myth acceptance. California women reported more discomfort than men but were similar in myth acceptance. The highest levels of myth acceptance ranged from 66 to 88%. The majority (85–90%) believed that something must be done to prevent WSH in agriculture.

Keywords

indigenous, latino, agriculture, sexual harassment, myth acceptance, violence prevention

Workplace Sexual Harassment Among Farmworkers

Workplace sexual harassment (WSH) of women farmworkers is extremely prevalent in agriculture (Flores, 2018). The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission defines it as a form of employment discrimination based on sex that includes unwanted

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sexual behaviors and becomes illegal when it meets at least one of two legal standards. Under the *quid pro quo* standard, there must be an implicit or explicit threat of an adverse job-related consequence if the employee does not submit to a sexual encounter. Under the *hostile workplace environment* standard, the sexual encounter must be repeated or severe enough to create an intimidating or hostile work environment or result in an adverse employment decision. The harasser can be the target's supervisor, coworker, or even a client or customer (McCann et al., 2018).

Eighty percent of women farmworkers surveyed in California's Central Valley experienced WSH (Waugh, 2010). These victims revealed that the majority of perpetrators are men and that the target is usually a woman. Surveys and focus groups among farmworkers further detail WSH as a longstanding and widespread problem in the USA (Kim et al., 2016; Murphy et al., 2015; Waugh, 2010) and Mexico (Andrade-Rubio, 2016; Arellano Gálvez, 2014). Because women are an increasing source of the labor supply in this industry (Hernandez & Gabbard, 2019), more women who work in agriculture are at risk (Hobbs & Cooper, 2017).

The workplace for farmworker women is characterized by a number of situations that promote WSH. Farmworker women face levels of WSH that surpass those reported among other occupational groups such as university faculty, federal employees, and soldiers (Barth et al., 2016; Gurung et al., 2018; Moylan & Wood, 2016; Mulaphong, 2019; Richman et al., 1999). Workplace factors often favor the perpetrator over the victim, and power imbalances based on gender, education, and wage disparities tend to disempower farmworker women, making them vulnerable to sexual exploitation (Kim et al., 2016; Murphy et al., 2015; Prado et al., 2020, 2021; Waugh, 2010). Low wages, weak workplace protections, and lack of work authorization (i.e., "undocumented" status) compound vulnerability, especially among women (Villegas, 2019). Limited access to medical care, poor housing, contaminated water, and rural isolation (Arcury et al., 2017; Pariser et al., 2022) further marginalize these workers and limit their ability to improve their health and safety (Marsh et al., 2015). These social determinants of health characterize the environment in which WSH occurs among farmworkers and complicate comparison to other working groups.

Although women are the most frequent victims of WSH (Waugh, 2010), especially in its most severe forms (Prado et al., 2020), both men and women agricultural workers can be victims of sexual harassment. Moreover, women are a growing segment of crews in the agricultural workplace (Hernandez & Gabbard, 2019) and are typically assigned to entry-level positions under male-dominated leadership (Hobbs & Cooper, 2017). Our previous work invited both women and men agricultural worker participants to provide insight on this issue. Our focus group study has documented men agricultural worker's testimonies of their experience, as targets and bystanders, with sexual harassment (Prado et al., 2020). Focus group results show that both men and women face the issue of not being believed and that they forgo reporting because they feel their organization or their crew would not address their complaints.

WSH Reporting

WSH often goes unreported. Women rarely file formal complaints (Cortina, 2004; Schneider et al., 1997), and women farmworkers often ignore WSH instead of reporting it for fear of losing their job (Murphy et al., 2015). Some women farmworkers try to escape WSH by leaving their job. However, it is often the case that these women end up facing WSH at their next employment (Kim et al., 2016).

Workplace administrative infrastructure and culture can also make it less likely that farmworkers report WSH. Farmworkers are sometimes explicitly and implicitly discouraged from reporting on the job. Women farmworkers forgo reporting when they see leadership perpetrating WSH rather than protecting employees (Kim et al., 2016). Some employers fire a perpetrator only to rehire them in another location (Waugh, 2010). Women farmworkers may also forgo reporting because workplace human resources personnel ignore the incident, lack fluency in Spanish, or because the worker fears shame and stigma from their crew and community (Waugh, 2010). Some men farmworkers may forgo reporting because they think no one will believe them or that workers will laugh at them (Prado et al., 2020).

Antecedents of WSH

Workplace organizational climate of particular jobs influences the occurrence of and response to WSH (Willness et al., 2007). The organizational climate consists of the level of tolerance for WSH and whether harassment remedies exist and are implemented (Fitzgerald et al., 1995). Failure to remedy WSH and rehiring perpetrators reveal a tolerance for this behavior (Kim et al., 2016). In addition, ignoring victims of WSH reduces support for survivors and increases the likelihood of perpetrating WSH among coworkers (Krings & Facchin, 2009; Mallett et al., 2019). Harassment occurs less frequently in groups whose members perceive that the organization will not tolerate WSH and where workgroups are gender balanced (Fitzgerald et al., 1999). Research has shown that male workers likely to harass have a greater proclivity to sexually harass in workplaces that ignore victims (Krings & Facchin, 2009).

The male-dominated and traditional gendered context in the agricultural workplace (Hernandez & Gabbard, 2019; Hobbs & Cooper, 2017; Waugh, 2010) influences the occurrence and response to WSH (Willness et al., 2007). Gendered context of a job comprises the gender ratio of the workgroup, sex of supervisor, and the traditionally male and female duties (Fitzgerald et al., 1995). The workplace culture of organizations where women are the minority is often dominated by "gendered behavior, cultural symbols of masculinity, male superiority, and sexual bravado" (Willness et al., 2007 citing Glick, 1991; Stockdale, 1993). These conditions in the agricultural workplace foster an environment in which WSH thrives.

Characteristics of the employment setting, such as perceptions, response to WSH, and permitted sexist behaviors, affect risk of WSH. A 30-year review of WSH found that perceptions of organizational tolerance have a greater influence on the attitudes and behaviors of employees than the existence of formal rules and regulations

(McDonald, 2012). Ignoring WSH can lead to increased tolerance and effective endorsement of violence (Krings & Facchin, 2009; Mallett et al., 2019). And lastly, WSH arises, in part, because certain environments permit acting out sexist beliefs and encourage others to join in (Godsil et al., 2016).

The perpetrators' beliefs shed light on why they target others. Sexual harassment myths are defined as attitudes and beliefs that are generally false, but widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women (Lonsway et al., 2008). These beliefs also lead to victim blaming (De Judicibus & McCabe, 2001) and pose a serious obstacle for recognition of WSH. Thus, they can hinder reporting and efforts to help victims (Lonsway et al., 2008).

The Spanish-language adaptation of the Illinois Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance Scale (ISHMA) has yet to be applied among farmworkers (Expósito et al., 2014). This is an important instrument to evaluate among other populations because sexual harassment is among the most prevalent forms of sexual aggression (Pina & Gannon, 2009). In addition, sexual harassment is the most reported discrimination issue in the workplace (McCann et al., 2018). A closer look at beliefs and myth acceptance regarding WSH in agriculture can inform policy development to improve prevention, reporting, and response. Whereas victim blaming has been found among both men and women farmworkers (Prado et al., 2020), many other kinds of myth beliefs listed in the ISHMA may also exist.

ISHMA survey items offer a chance to test and develop the theory that men who sexually aggress hold a complex, closely related set of beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors (Lonsway et al., 2008). The set of beliefs and attitudes fall under the recent schema theory applied to sexual harassment myth acceptance (Driesmans et al., 2015). In the schema framework, cognitive structures organize prior knowledge and inform understanding of future encounters in specific domains (Magley & Shupe, 2005). For example, learning about victims' consequences reduces myth acceptance among men, including those likely to perpetrate violence against women (Diehl et al., 2014). Similarly, learning about the seriousness of sexual harassment and perspective of its victims led to lower sexual harassment myth acceptance, particularly in participants low in empathy. Magley's paper states that schemata function as guides that allow individuals to form expectations about and assign meaning to new, unfamiliar situations or recall information related to past encounters. Once a schema is activated, subsequent attention, data interpretation, and memory are likely to be biased toward "schema-consistent" information, which results in the maintenance, and even strengthening, of the schemas. Holding the schema theory as a reference, we explore WSH myth acceptance among farmworkers in our research.

This Study

The work we present here is the first to evaluate myth acceptance among both men and women agricultural workers. To our knowledge, there are also no prior survey studies comparing WSH myth acceptance among farmworkers in the USA and Mexico. Such comparison would offer a transcultural view to deepen understanding of WSH at the

local, national, and global level (Prado et al., 2020; Valentín et al., 2005). The majority of agricultural workers in the USA come from Mexico, and the remainder originate from Puerto Rico, Central America, South America, the Caribbean, Asia, and the Pacific Islands (Hernandez & Gabbard, 2019). Our findings are relevant because we sampled in Michoacán, Mexico, which is the third top source of agricultural labor for the USA. Most immigrant agricultural workers from Michoacán work in California, Texas, and Illinois (Hernandez & Gabbard, 2019; Li et al., 2020). We hypothesized farmworkers in the USA are less accepting of myths than are farmworkers in Mexico because of differences in regulation, culture, and training. In addition, we will evaluate differences between men and women. Comparing myth acceptance between men and women farmworkers in the USA and Mexico will offer valuable information for improving efforts to prevent, report, and respond to WSH in agriculture.

We also evaluate bystander discomfort to vignettes or victim's accounts because these responses to WSH can influence intervening and reporting. For example, sexual harassment occurring and witnessed at the crew level may discomfit some workers more than others. When men underestimate their peers' discomfort with certain behaviors, they are likely to refrain from expressing their own discomfort or intervening (Berkowitz, 2010). When women see other women targeted, it increases their response and level of discomfort as a bystander to WSH and can affect their support for the victim (Liang & Park, 2022; Murphy et al., 2015; Prado et al., 2020). Previous focus groups included same-sex perpetrator and victim accounts as well as homosexual workers being targets of sexual harassment. We included such same-sex accounts in our vignettes and address the inclusion of homosexual victim research in our discussion. We attempted to evaluate this discomfort with bystander vignettes because discomfort plays a role in the initiation of bystander intervention (Buckler et al., 2019).

In this study, we developed a survey to investigate WSH myth acceptance, bystander discomfort to WSH vignettes, and WSH beliefs among women and men farmworkers in California, USA, and Michoacán, Mexico. We compare binational findings among men and women farmworkers. The study's findings will support the agricultural community, educators, researchers, and organizations working to prevent and respond to WSH.

Methods

Participants, Community Advisory Board, and Sampling

Our study methods have been previously described (Prado et al., 2021). We briefly summarize below.

Our researchers and community leaders recruited farmworkers in Michoacán and California. We conducted outreach efforts using Spanish and Purhépecha translators. Researchers engaged with local community leaders and traveled to farmworker communities to recruit participants in their homes. Farmworkers in California were

recruited with the help of local farmworker coalitions and migrant housing centers. Farmworkers in Michoacán were recruited with the help of local community leaders. Participants were also reached through community door-to-door canvassing, flyers, and visits in popular areas such as laundromats, worship centers, and housing offices. We left flyers with a phone number for participants to call and set up individual appointments to provide informed consent and complete the interviewer-administered survey. Participants were at least 18 years old and currently employed in agriculture.

Local community advisory boards (CABs; *Mesa Consultiva*) were convened in Michoacán and California. The CABs included farmworkers, farmworker welfare advocates, community-based organizations, legal assistance organizations, researchers, industry officers, and community leaders. CABs offered input for recruitment strategy, survey instruments, and dissemination efforts to ensure that our approach was sensitive to the sociocultural characteristics of the community.

Participants were recruited in the communities they lived in. Researchers visited workers' homes to recruit participants. Local farmworker coalitions and migrant housing centers assisted recruiting efforts in California. Local community leaders and long-standing community members assisted recruiting efforts in Michoacán.

Survey Development

Focus group results (Prado et al., 2020), validated surveys (Expósito et al., 2014), pilot work, binational collaboration, and CAB input informed survey development. Our WSH myth acceptance survey dimensions and items came from the Spanish-language version of the ISHMA. Bystander vignettes and additional WSH belief items were inspired specifically for this study by previous research, farmworker feedback, and CAB input. Focus group results revealed that men and women experienced direct (i.e., were personally targeted) and indirect (i.e., were witnesses of incidents) sexual harassment from same-sex and opposite-sex perpetrators. Focus groups also revealed sexual harassment that homosexual workers face. Accordingly, we included WSH vignettes that described woman-on-woman and man-on-man incidents. We partnered with a local clinic providing primary health care services to northern California farmworkers for a pilot with four women and two men farmworkers. Finally, we presented the survey instrument to our CAB for review and comment.

Data Collection

Farmworker survey recruitment efforts began in June and July of 2017. California ended recruitment in October 2017 and Michoacán in February 2018. Interviews in Michoacán were conducted in participants' homes when no one else was present. All survey facilitators were of the same ethnic and cultural background as participants. Individual interviews in California were conducted in private isolated office space on migrant housing center grounds. All interviews were conducted in Spanish and lasted approximately 1 h. CABs helped researchers choose participant incentives that were appropriate to their locale. California participants received a $50 gift card at a local

department store, and Michoacán participants received a luggage bag worth $25. The study was reviewed and approved by the IRBs at UCD and UMSNH. We conducted 197 surveys (38 men and 59 women in California; 40 men and 60 women in Michoacán).

Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance Scale

The Spanish-language adaptation of the ISHMA has been validated and proved reliable on evaluating overall acceptance of sexual harassment myths in Spanish-speaking men and women populations (Expósito et al., 2014). The Spanish ISHMA supplied at least three items from four dimensions (Table 1): fabrication/exaggeration (FE; belief that women make up, exaggerate, and/or invite sexual harassment), ulterior motive (UM; belief in UM for filing sexual harassment claims), natural heterosexuality (NH; belief that sexual harassment is simply a romantic behavior that women enjoy), and women's responsibility (WR; belief that the responsibility for controlling sexual harassment lies with the targeted woman). Spanish ISHMA authors originally determined instrument reliability among Spanish speakers ($\alpha = .91$ for the total scale and between .77 and .84 for the different dimensions) (Expósito et al., 2014). Internal consistency for the work reported here was .86 for FE, .83 for UM, .81 for NH, and .71 for WR.

Responses measured level of agreement with WSH myths. Based on our pilot work, we compressed the original seven Likert-level responses to five for farmworkers. Participants selected responses from our five-level Likert agreement scale (totally agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and totally disagree). We also later dichotomized responses (totally agree or agree vs. neutral or disagree or totally disagree) for logistic regression.

ISHMA Survey Reliability

Our WSH myth acceptance survey section was tested for reliability among farmworkers using principal component analysis and Cronbach's alpha (α) analysis in SAS 9.4. We tested based in the five-level Likert scale (totally agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and totally disagree). Final coefficient α's of each dimension ranged from .46 to .76. Not all the final coefficient alphas measure above .7 for both the total $n = 197$ subjects and the separated binational groups ($n = 97$ in California and $n = 100$ in Michoacán). We attempted to delete items to increase α's. A minimum of three items were kept under each dimension. Eliminating item five under FE slightly increased α's, and further deletions did not improve reliability (Table 2). Eliminating item one under UM also slightly improved α's, and eliminating item three under NH slightly improved α's. The only WSH myth acceptance dimension in which all subscales contained an α of .70 or above was NH. An α level 0.6 for dimensions has been previously used to validate a scale in rural populations or low literacy (Rivera-Heredia & Pérez-Padilla, 2012). Therefore, we restricted analysis to the item level for dimensions with an α of .70 or above (eliminating UM), and we report results based on each item. Indigenous participants were read the survey in their Purhépecha language by survey facilitators/interpreters. Participants did not have any issues understanding

Table 1. Workplace Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance Dimension Items Utilized in a Survey Among 197 Hispanic Farmworkers in California, USA, and Michoacán, México.

Dimension	Item	Myth
Fabrication/ exaggeration	FE1	A woman's report of sexual harassment can only be taken seriously if she loses her job.
	FE2	Women who express having been sexually harassed normally exaggerate.
	FE3	If a woman is sexually harassed, she must have done something to provoke it.
	FE4	If a woman doesn't present a formal complaint, then probably the incident wasn't serious enough to be sexual harassment.
	FE5	Sexual harassment reports that weren't communicated in a timely manner are difficult to believe.
Ulterior motive[a]	UM1	Women often present sexual harassment complaints in a superficial way.
	UM2	Sometimes women report sexual harassment to obtain money from their employers.
	UM3	Women who are discovered having an affair with their boss occasionally report that it was sexual harassment.
	UM4	A woman could easily ruin her boss's professional career if she reports that he made sexual advances towards her.
Natural heterosexuality	NH1	The majority of women feel flattered when men at work notice them sexually.
	NH2	Deep down most women enjoy it when men at work make sexual advances toward them.
	NH3	It is inevitable that men flirt with women sexually in the workplace.
	NH4	Women shouldn't be so quick to consider it offensive when a man makes sexual advances toward them at work.
Women's responsibility	WR1	Women can usually make men stop looking at them sexually by asking them to stop.
	WR2	Women can usually make men stop looking at them sexually by complaining about it to their boss.
	WR3	Almost all sexual harassment cases would end if the women would simply tell the men to stop.

[a]Ulterior motive dimension and item analysis were eliminated. For UM item information, please contact first author. FE = fabrication/exaggeration; UM = ulterior motive ;NH = natural heterosexuality; WR = women's responsibility.

the items in the instrument. No analysis was conducted on the removal of our indigenous participants from the sample.

Bystander Effect Vignettes

Participants were presented with WSH vignettes to assess level of discomfort among bystanders, i.e., those witnessing the WSH incident. Farmworkers were asked to

Table 2. Evaluation of Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance Reliability on Five-Level Likert Scale Among 197 Hispanic Farmworkers in California, USA, and Michoacán, Mexico.

Dimension	Items	α for total population ($n = 197$)	α for California population ($n = 97$)	α for Michoacán population ($n = 100$)
Fabrication/ exaggeration	FE1, FE2, FE3, FE4, FE5[a]	.69	.68	.70
Ulterior motive	UM1[b], UM2, UM3, UM4	.50	.54	.46
Natural heterosexuality	NH1, NH2, NH3[c], NH4	.75	.73	.76
Women's responsibility	WR1, WR2, WR3	.67	.70	.62

Note. Ulterior motive dimension was eliminated. For UM item level analysis, please contact first author.
[a]Dropping FE5 changes α to .70, .66, and .73 (values do not further increase with any more deletions).
[b]Dropping UM1 changes α to .59, .53, and .57.
[c]Dropping NH3 changes α to .77, .66, and .80.

imagine themselves at work witnessing the event before vignettes were read. Responses were measured on a Likert scale to indicate their level of discomfort (very comfortable, comfortable, neutral, uncomfortable, to very uncomfortable) with standardized vignettes of WSH situations (Table 3). We also later dichotomized responses (totally agree or agree vs. neutral or disagree or totally disagree) for logistic regression.

Additional WSH Belief Items

Additional items (A1–A6, Table 4) were designed to report farmworkers' beliefs, fears, concerns, and barriers faced by farmworkers in the prevention and response to WSH in agriculture.

Analysis

Descriptive Analysis

Frequencies were calculated for all measures to characterize demographic characteristics. We also examined frequencies under sexual harassment myth acceptance, bystander effects, and beliefs. We stratified results by country and gender.

Table 3. Workplace Sexual Harassment Bystander Vignette Discomfort Items Utilized in a Survey Among 197 Hispanic Farmworkers in California, USA, and Michoacán, Mexico.

Item	Vignette
V1	"A woman on her first day notices men staring at her hips and giggling …"
V2	"A look of admiration from head-to-toe asking if they are single …"
V3	"Gay worker rejects hug advances from another male worker …"
V4	"Women rejects kiss advances from another women …"
V5	"Supervisor demands sexual favors from woman worker trapped in truck …"
V6	"Boss trains woman farmworker and presses his body against hers while cutting …"
V7	"Women's behinds are video recorded as they work …"

Note. This table displays a shortened version of the vignettes. Please contact first author.

Table 4. Additional Items on Workplace Sexual Harassment Beliefs Utilized in a Survey Among 197 Hispanic Farmworkers in California, USA, and Michoacán, Mexico.

Item	Beliefs
A1	"It isn't worth reporting WSH because no one does anything."
A2	"It isn't worth reporting WSH because you would lose your job."
A3	"It isn't worth reporting WSH because the people will speak badly about the victim."
A4	"WSH only happens to the young and pretty."
A5	"If someone reports WSH they will have problems with immigration."
A6	"Something must be done to prevent WSH in agriculture."

Table 5. Selected Demographic Characteristics of 197 Hispanic Farmworkers Evaluated for Workplace Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance in California, USA, and Michoacán, Mexico.[a]

Variable	USA		Mexico	
	Women ($n = 59$) *n* (%)	Men ($n = 38$) *n* (%)	Women ($n = 60$) *n* (%)	Men ($n = 40$) *n* (%)
Country of birth				
MEX	47 (80)	33 (87)	58 (97)	40 (100)
US	12 (20)	5 (13)	2 (3)	0 (0)
Age				
Median	34	42.5	30.5	31.5
IQR	27–53	32–54	24–44	23.5–41
Education				
0–3 years	7 (12)	4 (11)	8 (13)	9 (23)
4–7 years	10 (17)	15 (39)	21 (35)	16 (40)
8–11 years	11 (19)	6 (16)	28 (47)	13 (33)
12 years, trade, college	31 (53)	13 (34)	3 (5)	1 (3)
Have children				
≥1	46 (78)	34 (89)	49 (82)	30 (75)
Civil status				
Married	46 (78)	36 (95)	21 (35)	31 (78)
Single	12 (20)	1 (3)	17 (28)	5 (13)
Living with your partner	1 (2)	0 (0)	20 (33)	3 (8)
Widow	0 (0)	1 (3)	1 (2)	1 (3)
Language				
Spanish	58 (98)	37 (97)	57 (95)	26 (65)
English	1 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Purhépecha	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (5)	14 (35)

[a]Originally published (Prado et al., 2020)

Statistical Analysis

Summary statistics, chi-squared, and Fisher's exact tests were calculated for WSH myth acceptance, bystander effects, and beliefs. Statistical testing was conducted in SAS 9.4. All variables were evaluated against country and gender. An $\alpha < .05$ was considered statistically significant. Odds ratios included 95% confidence intervals. Preliminary results were presented to CAB members for review and comment.

Results

Demographics

Demographic variables for farmworkers have been previously described (Prado et al., 2021). We briefly summarize that they were similar across country and gender (Table 5). Most participants in California and Michoacán were born in Mexico.

Table 6. Crude Odds Ratio for Female Sex and Acceptance of Selected Sexual Harassment Myths, by Country, Among 197 Hispanic Farmworkers in California, USA, and Michoacán, Mexico.

	USA ($n = 97$)			Mexico ($n = 100$)		
Myth	Women ($n = 59$) *n* (%)	Men[a] ($n = 38$) *n* (%)	OR (95% CI)	Women ($n = 60$) *n* (%)	Men[a] ($n = 40$) *n* (%)	OR (95% CI)
FE1	12 (20)	7 (18)	1.13 (0.40, 3.19)	23 (38)	20 (50)	0.62 (0.28, 1.40)
FE2	12 (20)	11 (29)	0.63 (0.24, 1.61)	9 (15)	14 (35)	0.33 (0.13, 0.86)*
FE3	7 (12)	9 (24)	0.43 (0.15, 1.29)	11 (18)	14 (35)	0.42 (0.17, 1.05)
FE4	15 (25)	11 (29)	0.84 (0.34, 2.09)	13 (22)	25 (62)	0.17 (0.07, 0.40)*
FE5	24 (41)	17 (45)	0.85 (0.37, 1.93)	47 (78)	31 (78)	1.05 (0.40, 2.75)
NH1	14 (24)	9 (24)	1.00 (0.38, 2.61)	23 (38)	19 (48)	0.69 (0.31, 1.54)
NH2	7 (12)	5 (13)	0.89 (0.26, 3.03)	19 (32)	13 (33)	0.96 (0.41, 2.27)
NH3	20 (34)	11 (29)	1.26 (0.52, 3.05)	32 (53)	17 (43)	1.55 (0.69, 3.46)
NH4	6 (10)	6 (16)	0.60 (0.18, 2.03)	24 (40)	19 (80)	0.74 (0.33, 1.65)
WR1	33 (56)	25 (66)	0.66 (0.28, 1.54)	37 (62)	32 (80)	0.40 (0.16, 1.02)
WR2	43 (73)	24 (63)	1.57 (0.65, 3.76)	43 (72)	35 (88)	0.36 (0.12, 1.08)
WR3	27 (46)	23 (61)	0.55 (0.24, 1.26)	41 (68)	34 (85)	0.38 (0.14, 1.06)

Note. *P*-values based on chi-squared tests of association. Cells at or smaller than 5 *P*-values based on Fisher's exact tests. FE = fabrication/exaggeration; NH = natural heterosexuality; WR = women's responsibility.

[a]Men are the reference group.

*$P < .05$: women significantly different from reference men's group in chi-squared test (cells < 5 with *F* test).

Participants in California were older than those in Michoacán. Workers in California had more years of education than workers in Michoacán. A high proportion of all workers had children. Women farmworkers in Michoacán were the only group in which the majority was not married. These women also had the youngest median age. Most farmworkers spoke Spanish. Purhépecha was only spoken among Michoacán participants.

Sexual Harassment Myth Acceptance

Farmworkers' sexual harassment myth acceptance differed by country but was similar by gender (Table 6). Agreement levels among Michoacán farmworkers were generally higher than those among California workers. Acceptance of myth items in California ranged from 10 to 73% for women farmworkers and 13 to 66% for men. Among California women, the WR2 myth ("Women can usually make men stop looking at them sexually by complaining about it to their boss") showed the greatest acceptance. The NH4 item ("Women shouldn't be so quick to consider it offensive when a man makes sexual advances toward them at work") was the least accepted. Among men in California, the WR1 myth ("Women can usually make men stop looking at them sexually by asking them to stop") yielded the greatest acceptance, and the NH2 myth ("Deep down most women enjoy it when men at work make sexual advances toward them") yielded the least acceptance.

Acceptance for myth items in Michoacán ranged from 15 to 78% for women and 33 to 88% for men. Among these women, the FE5 myth ("Sexual harassment reports that weren't communicated in a timely manner are difficult to believe") yielded the greatest acceptance, and the FE2 myth ("Women who express having been sexually harassed normally exaggerate") yielded the least acceptance. Among these men, the WR2 myth ("Women can usually make men stop looking at them sexually by complaining about it to their boss") yielded the greatest acceptance, and the NH2 myth ("Deep down most women enjoy it when men at work make sexual advances toward them") yielded the least acceptance. Only two sexual harassment myths showed significantly different acceptance between men and women in Michoacán: FE2 (35% vs. 15%, $P = .03$) and FE4 (62% vs. 22%, $P < .0001$).

Notable differences by country included significantly greater acceptance in Michoacán compared to California for seven myths. These included two FE items (FE1 and FE5), four NH myths (NH1, NH2, NH3, and NH4), and one WR myth (WR3). The proportion of farmworkers who accepted two or more myths (WR, NH, or FE) were 63% of men and 81% of women in California and 100% of men 97% of women in Michoacán.

Bystander Discomfort

Bystander discomfort on WSH vignettes for men and women farmworkers was generally high and similar within each country (Table 7). We did not find significant differences among all seven vignettes between men and women in Michoacán. All women farmworkers in Michoacán were uncomfortable with vignettes V5 ("sexual demands from leadership") and V6 ("physical sexual harassment"). Men reported significantly greater discomfort than women in California for V2 ("being the object of sexual

Table 7. Crude Odds Ratio for Female Sex Discomfort With Selected Sexual Harassment Bystander Vignettes, by Country, Among 197 Hispanic Farmworkers in California, USA, and Michoacán, Mexico.

	USA ($n = 97$)			Mexico ($n = 100$)		
Vignette	Women ($n = 59$) *n* (%)	Men[a] ($n = 38$) *n* (%)	OR (95% CI)	Women ($n = 60$) *n* (%)	Men[a] ($n = 40$) *n* (%)	OR (95% CI)
V1	54 (92)	31 (82)	2.44 (0.71, 8.34)	58 (97)	35 (88)	4.14 (0.76, 22.51)
V2	20 (34)	23 (61)	0.33 (0.14, 0.78)*	40 (67)	30 (75)	0.67 (0.27, 1.63)
V3	49 (83)	29 (76)	1.52 (0.55, 4.18)	55 (92)	38 (95)	0.58 (0.11, 3.14)
V4	54 (92)	30 (79)	2.88 (0.86, 9.59)	59 (98)	38 (95)	3.11 (0.27, 35.44)
V5	59 (100)	36 (95)	NA	60 (100)	39 (98)	NA
V6	58 (98)	36 (95)	3.22 (0.28, 36.83)	60 (100)	38 (95)	NA
V7	59 (100)	36 (95)	NA	59 (98)	39 (98)	1.51 (0.09, 24.91)

Note. *P*-values based on chi-squared tests of association. Cells at or smaller than 5 *P*-values based on Fisher's exact tests. V1 = sexualized staring; V2 = sexual staring and asking relationship status; V3 = male-on-male harassment; V4 = women-on-women harassment; V5 = sexual demands from leadership; V6 = physical sexual harassment; V7 = sexualized staring and harassment.

[a]Men are the reference group.

*$P < .05$: women significantly different from reference men's group in chi-squared test (cells < 5 with *F* test).

staring and asking relationship status") ($P = .01$). All women farmworkers in California were uncomfortable with V5 ("sexual demands from leadership") and V7 ("sexualized staring and harassment") vignettes. Notable differences were seen by country. Michoacán farmworkers reported significantly greater discomfort than California farmworkers for V2 ("sexual staring and asking relationship status"), V3 ("male-on-male harassment"), and V4 ("woman-on-woman harassment") vignettes.

Additional Farmworker Beliefs

Additional questions on farmworker beliefs revealed greater agreement between men and women in California compared to Michoacán (Table 8). Agreement with item A1 ("It isn't worth reporting WSH because no one does anything") was significantly higher among men than women in Michoacán. Over 85% of all farmworkers agreed with item A6 ("Something must be done to prevent WSH in Agriculture"). Beliefs were significantly different by country. Specifically, all Michoacán farmworkers were in significantly greater agreement with five (A1, A2, A3, A4, and A5) belief items than were California farmworkers.

Discussion

In this study, we developed a survey for a cross-sectional study to examine WSH myth acceptance, bystander discomfort, and beliefs among 197 women and men

Table 8. Agreement With Selected Workplace Sexual Harassment Beliefs by Country and Gender Among 197 Hispanic Farmworkers in California, USA, and Michoacán, Mexico.

	USA ($n = 97$)		Mexico ($n = 100$)	
Additional belief items	Women ($n = 59$) *n* (%)	Men[a] ($n = 38$) *n* (%)	Women ($n = 60$) *n* (%)	Men[a] ($n = 40$) *n* (%)
A1 "It isn't worth reporting WSH because no one does anything."	9 (15)	7 (18)	17 (28)*	20 (50)
A2 "It isn't worth reporting WSH because you would lose your job."	9 (15)	5 (13)	19 (32)	14 (35)
A3 "It isn't worth reporting WSH because the people will speak badly about the victim."	10 (17)	4 (11)	19 (32)	20 (50)
A4 "WSH only happens to the young and pretty."	5 (8)	6 (16)	16 (27)	14 (35)
A5 "If someone reports WSH they will have problems with immigration."	6 (10)	5 (13)	22 (37)	18 (45)
A6 "Something must be done to prevent WSH in agriculture."	54 (92)	33 (87)	51 (85)	34 (85)

[a]Men are the reference group.
*$P < .05$: women significantly different from reference men's group in chi-squared test (cells < 5 with *F* test).

farmworkers in California, USA, and Michoacán, Mexico. We found that myth acceptance existed among all farmworkers and that there was greater acceptance in Michoacán compared to California. We did not find differences in discomfort felt between men and women in bystander WSH vignettes. Lastly, we found overwhelming agreement with the belief that something must be done to prevent WSH in agriculture.

Demographic findings offer valuable information. Lower education levels in México can disempower and increase workers' vulnerability to exploitation. Farmworkers in the USA report very low levels of education (Anthony et al., 2008). Access to education and training should be considered in developing prevention programs, including engaging and accessible educational materials available in Spanish and indigenous languages. Other forms of popular education in video, audio novella, or virtual form would help engage workers and address disparities in access to occupational health information (Mitchell et al., 2015; Ramos et al., 2020).

Acceptance of sexual harassment myths among farmworkers differed by country more so than by gender. Men and women similarly agreed with WSH myths in California groups and similarly agreed in Michoacán groups. Research has shown that men's sexually harassing behaviors are associated with sexual harassment myth acceptance (Hardies, 2019). Myths around WR can also reduce the support that women farmworkers offer victims (Murphy et al., 2015). Organizations can strongly influence individual beliefs, attitudes, and responses to WSH (McDonald, 2012). Accordingly, we recommend trainings include debunking of WSH myths.

Discomfort with bystander WSH vignettes was similar among men and women in Michoacán and California. Women in California reported significantly more discomfort with the vignette in which a male worker asked a woman coworker if she had a boyfriend. All Michoacán women reported discomfort with bystander exposure to sexual demands from leadership and physical sexual harassment. All women in California reported discomfort with bystander exposure to sexual demands from leadership and sexualized staring and harassment. Almost all men in both countries reported discomfort with all vignettes. These results show that both women and men are adversely impacted by WSH in agriculture.

Bystander responses are valuable and important. It has been shown that men in particular do not intervene as bystanders because they believe their peers are not equally bothered (Berkowitz, 2010). Conversely, women may blame women victims, believing that the targeted women are not bothered but enjoy the attention (Murphy et al., 2015). These results may help in the development of policies and educational materials to improve bystander intervention among farmworkers.

Additional belief item questions posed by farmworkers and CAB members further demonstrate the fears, concerns, and barriers related to WSH in agriculture. Women in Michoacán reported a significantly greater feeling of helplessness than men. This helplessness can come from the fact that women are often given entry-level positions despite extensive job experience (Hobbs & Cooper, 2017),

Both men and women believe that reporting WSH can lead to job loss, public shaming, and problems related to work authorization, reducing the likelihood they will seek help and improve their health (Marsh et al., 2015). These findings and the high rates of WSH reported among farmworkers in other studies (Waugh, 2010) suggest that many agricultural employers are not addressing WSH, thereby increasing the risk of violence in the workplace (Krings & Facchin, 2009; Mallett et al., 2019). These results on the overwhelming agreement among all farmworkers that "something must be done to prevent WSH in agriculture" support the need for leadership to take a stronger stance and active role in training crews with bystander strategies, supporting victims, and punishing offenders.

Our binational comparisons on myth acceptance, bystander discomfort, and belief items offer a transcultural view of social norms. These comparisons inform efforts that can have an impact at the local, national, and global level (Valentín et al., 2005). This is important because agricultural workers from Mexico travel to and throughout the USA. Those originating from Michoacán travel not only to California but also to Chicago and Texas (Li et al., 2020). The higher level of discomfort with bystander vignettes and higher agreement with myths and beliefs among participants in Mexico may relate to stronger social norms of WR, male privilege, patriarchal customs, and more rigid gender roles than in the USA. For example, both vignettes that included WSH on homosexual participants invoked greater discomfort among farmworkers in Mexico than in the USA (Diaz & Bui, 2017; Oswald, 2019). This may be due to farmworkers in Mexico being less accustomed to discussing homosexuality and associated WSH (Prado et al., 2020). WSH against Hispanic women agricultural workers in Canada who identified as homosexuals has been documented (Villegas, 2019), and it is important to shed light on this topic globally.

Our findings regarding WSH myths suggest that both men and women would benefit from training that debunks myths and provides facts to reduce social barriers to WSH prevention. Developing programs that promote "caballerismo" to replace machismo is worth mentioning because of myths documented in this paper that are rooted in NH (Prado et al., 2020). WSH bystander discomfort levels across genders show that both women and men are negatively affected by WSH on the job. However, because women are affected by WSH more than men and, increasingly, more women are being hired in agricultural labor, levels of WSH may be on the rise. Men in previous focus groups have reported that these experiences bother them because the victim could be their daughter, wife, or sister (Prado et al., 2020). Lastly, results on beliefs offer insight in farmworker's fears, concerns, and barriers to reporting.

Conclusion

Study strengths include the use of a CAB consisting of farmworkers, advocates, nonprofit representatives, researchers, legal entities, industry officers, and community leaders to contribute expertise and input for study strategies and materials. Additionally, this study used surveys to look at WSH myth acceptance, bystander impact, and other beliefs in agriculture among both men and women farmworkers. We also compare findings binationally in Michoacán, Mexico, and California, USA. These findings offer valuable information on the ISHMA's application among farmworkers, perspectives that form social barriers to WSH prevention, and the adverse impact of WSH on both men and women. Limitations include potential volunteer bias among participants and limited geographic scope.

Farmworker health is affected by personal, social, economic, and environmental factors. Workers endure occupational hazards, rural isolation, crowded housing, and limited access to medical care. It is important to consider the violence farmworkers face in the context of their lived experiences because these social determinants of health influence their circumstances and determine many aspects of their quality of life.

Survey results reported here can inform the development of educational materials and policies for the prevention of and response to WSH in agriculture. Binational comparison is relevant because Mexico is the country that most frequently sends farmworkers to California and the rest of the USA.

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