

Evaluation Findings from the FRIEND Program for Black/African American Middle School Youth

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Introduction

- Florida youth engage in high rates of sexual risk taking (Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance, 2015) and have high rates of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV (Florida Department of Health, 2014).
- Given the impact of racism on health, Black/African American youth are at particularly high risk for negative outcomes associated with sexual behavior (Reif et al., 2014).
- There is a need for sexuality education programs targeting Black/African American youth.

Methods

Participants

- The Fabulous Relationship and Intimacy Education that Nurtures Development (FRIEND) program was delivered to 201 middle school-aged youth from January to December 2021.
- The FRIEND's program was implemented in predominately Black neighborhoods in south St. Petersburg, Florida.
- Participants were primarily Black/African American, Non-Hispanic Latin boys and girls aged 11 to 14 years.

Procedures

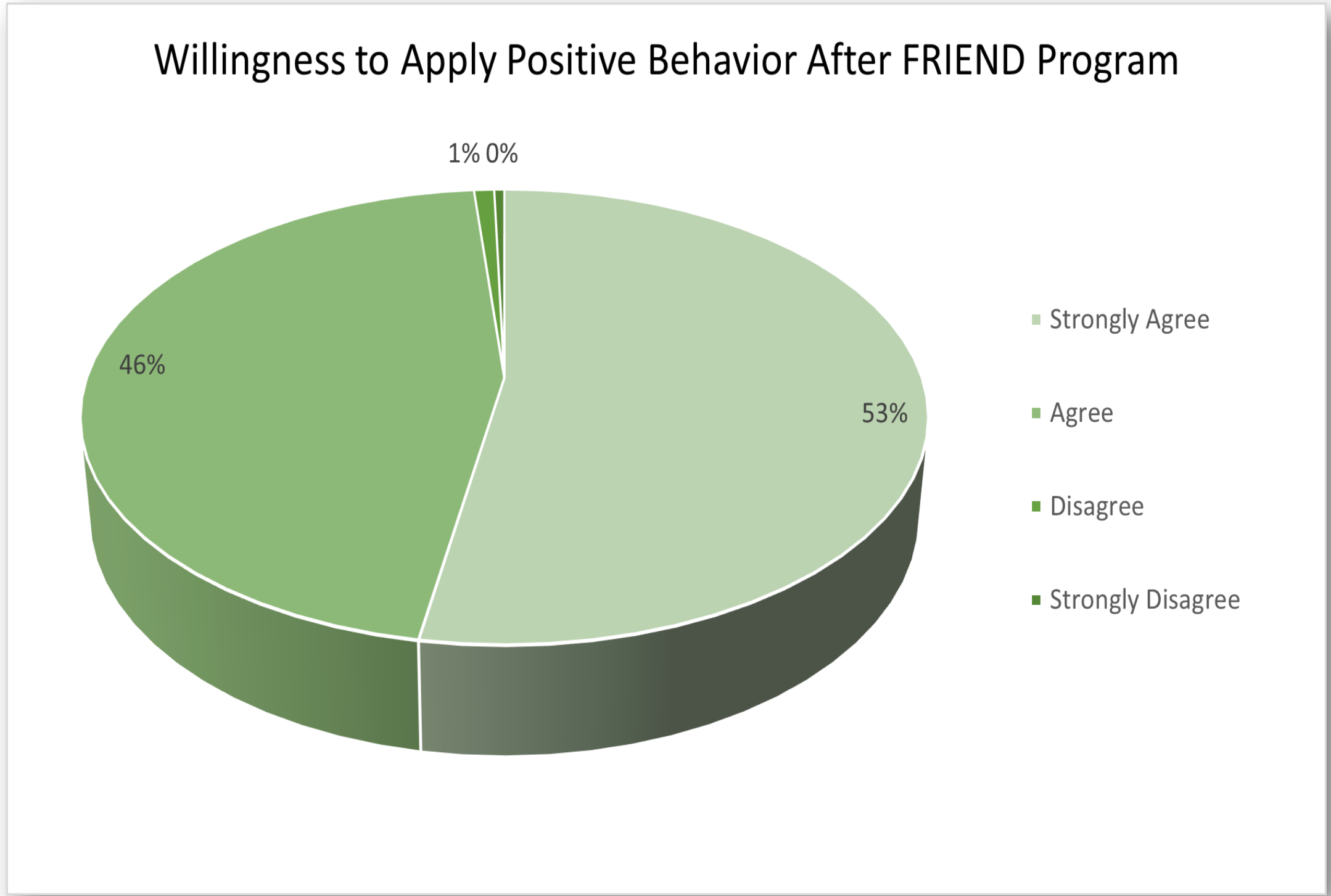
- The FRIEND program was delivered "camp style" on two consecutive Saturdays to youth who were recruited from local faith-based institutions and community organizations.
- Youth completed entry and exit surveys assessing substance use; peer pressure, relationship dynamics, and emotional regulation; and goal setting and behavioral intentions.
- Youth also completed satisfaction surveys at the end of the program.

Findings reveal satisfaction with, and benefits from, a community-based relationship education program for Black American middle school-aged youth in Florida.

Survey Rating	Entry Survey	Exit Survey
Much more likely	~30	~90
Somewhat more likely	~60	~65
About the same	~65	~25
Somewhat less likely	~35	~10
Much less likely	~5	~5

Results

- Preliminary findings revealed high levels of satisfaction among youth and the potential for positive behavioral outcomes such as regulated emotions.
- At post-assessment, most youth reported being less likely to use alcohol, tobacco products, or marijuana or to take prescription pain medicine without a prescription or differently than how a doctor prescribed it.
- At post-assessment: most youth reported being more likely to resist peer pressure; manage their emotions in a healthy manner; work to find solutions when encountering disagreements with friends; and choose to spend time with friends that keep them out of trouble.



Discussion

- Preliminary program evaluation data from FRIEND program suggests that participation may yield benefits for middle school-aged youth recruited from a predominantly Black/African American community in Florida.
- However, findings are limited by several factors related to design and implementation.
- Future research that employs an experimental design is needed to assess the efficacy of the FRIEND program for Black/African American youth.

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