



Help-seeking after intimate partner or sexual violence

EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT WOMEN IN
AUSTRALIA

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Overview

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- ▶ Methodology
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 - ▶ Help-seeking and social isolation
 - ▶ Help-seeking and systemic issues
 - ▶ Finding ways to manage
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Related studies

- ▶ Few studies undertaken
- ▶ Existing literature relies on opinions and perceptions of service providers
- ▶ Structural and systemic barriers to timely help-seeking have been identified
 - ▶ Lack of culturally appropriate services and resources in tertiary institutions (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland 2008; Todorova et al. 2022)
 - ▶ Insecure migration status (Forbes-Mewett & Nyland 2008; Todorova et al. 2022)
 - ▶ Concern about losing respect among cultural group (Zark et al. 2022)
 - ▶ Temporary visa status, insurance and financial constraint may prevent ISW from accessing support services (e.g. Becker et al. 2018; de Moissac et al. 2020)

Methodology

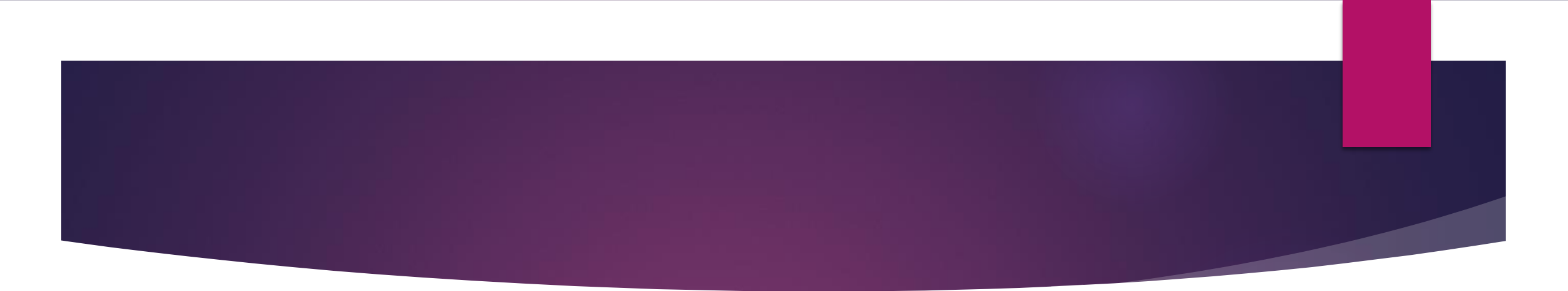
- ▶ Qualitative
- ▶ Social constructionist/interpretive epistemology
- ▶ Underpinned by an intersectional feminist framework (Armstrong et al. 2018; Davis 2008)
- ▶ Violence against ISW understood as occurring within co-occurring oppressions – gender, race/ethnicity, migration status (Forbes-Mewett & McCulloch 2016)
- ▶ Context – part of a larger study lead by Laura Tarzia (Uni of Melb)
- ▶ Participants – 30 ISW aged 18+ from 16 different countries
- ▶ Researchers included two former international students, one who conducted the interviews

Ethical considerations

- ▶ Best practice trauma informed interview principles
 - ▶ Aware of power differentials between research and participants
 - ▶ Interviewer experienced in carrying out interviews with people who have histories of trauma
 - ▶ Information about specialist domestic violence , sexual assault and mental health services provided
 - ▶ Culturally consistent pseudonyms used to protect privacy

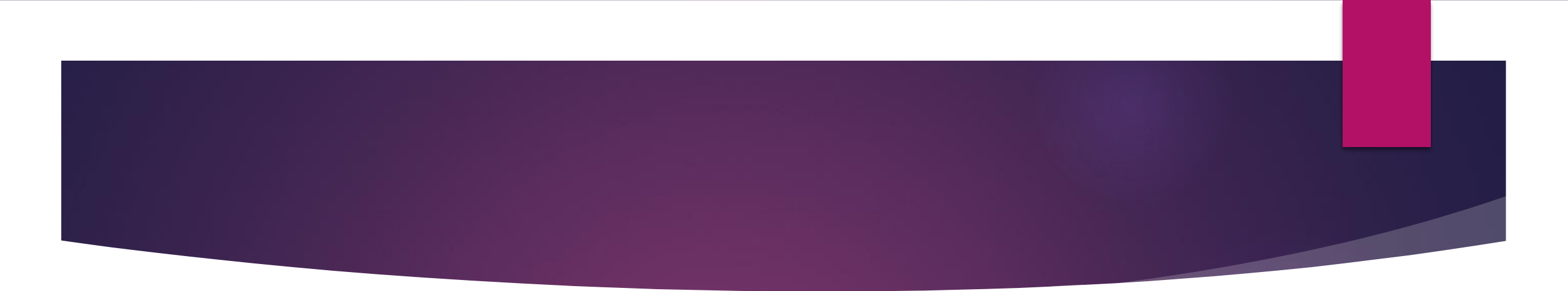
Help-seeking and isolation

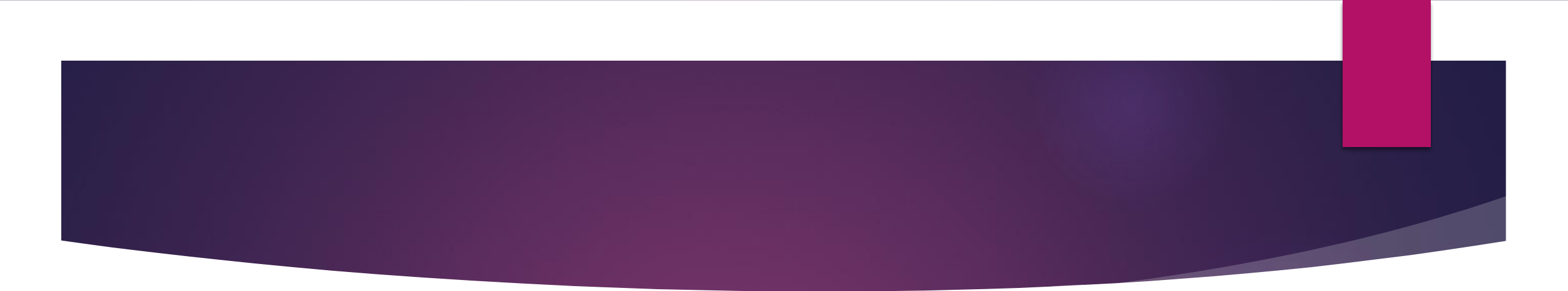
- ▶ Social isolation and loneliness – many expressed a loss or weakening of social connections back ‘home’ due to distance and COVID-19
 - ▶ When you come to a new country, you need to put [nominate] your emergency contact. For me, **I don't have anyone. I don't know anyone.** So, that's kind of hard... It's very difficult. So, I can see that **loneliness is very common among the female students...** every now and then I see some posts like: Is anyone living [in] the city? Want to go for dinner together? I would say it's really sad because you cannot find any close friends to do things. You're only limited within your apartment. It's very difficult for you to make any new friends. (Yue, Chinese)

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- ▶ Many kept information from families:
 - ▶ **Because I was so worried for my mum and my family because I'm the only child.** I was just scared if the information went to my family...my mum may have some health issue if she got such information [experiencing IPV]. **I was so scared, and I felt like I didn't know how to protect myself. Yeah, it [her relationship] was very toxic. I did think of suicide too. But I am the only child...my mum would feel very hurtful.** About having the daughter, sending to study overseas and facing such a [bad] thing and I could not tell it to anyone, and I had to deal with everything alone. So I didn't tell her about that, up to now. She didn't know anything. (Mai, Vietnamese)

Help-seeking and systemic issues

- ▶ Shaped by multiple factors including individual, relationship, community and system levels
- ▶ In particular, the availability and accessibility of support services
- ▶ Participants noted the complexity of health and legal systems
- ▶ Seeking support considered to be a long and tiring process, often inaccessible

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- ▶ **It was very challenging to find a mental health nurse** at the end actually, because I had to go through a lot of processes... It took me two months and a half [for the whole process]. (Hạnh, Vietnamese)
 - ▶ I learnt pretty quickly that when you go to a legal system ... you need to have a record. You need to have this. You need to have that. **It's just too much process ... what I learned is just to run away as soon as possible.** (Yi, Taiwanese)

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- ▶ I did not have much money, and I had to spend a lot of money on bills, pretty much on doctor [hospital/medical] bills because I had to go to the emergency room, and I was pregnant. The bill that I received was \$2,000... **economically it was very hurtful.** (Giana, Italian)
 - ▶ **I don't feel Australia cares about me or has any concern about me...** All the services are not eligible for me. I'm struggling to pay my simple accounts, my simple bills... [I need] type of support to make my life work. I don't know [crying]. (Raissa, Brazilian)

Finding ways to manage

- ▶ **I started to pay for a psychologist in Brazil because it's cheaper** for me to pay in dollars. The psychologist that I found, she started to help me on call [two times per month]. (Raissa, Brazilian)
- ▶ **[I sought] help in Italy just because here I'm a bit lost in a matter of who I can talk to.** Especially for these things like I'd rather speak in Italian because I can express my feeling in a better way than speaking in English...Then when I moved here I kind of was looking for someone to help me further, so I went to this Italian therapist. She helped me a lot actually. (Paola, Italian)

Trust and cultural familiarity

- ▶ I am now working [15 hours/per week] in the morning as a cleaner.
[Facilitator: at the time you work who takes care of your baby?] My friend.
Yeah, **my friend gave me a house** because I didn't have place to live when I have my baby, so you imagine, I was pregnant and...Just my friends. **They are helping me with a lot with money, with clothes. My two friends gave me cot [for the child] and other things.** (Mariana, Colombian)
- ▶ Yeah, and why I said **using the same language is good** because some experience could be very emotional and, in that emotion, you cannot use English very well, so in that context **you just can speak your mother language** [laughs].... (Mei, Chinese)

Conclusion and recommendations

- ▶ Need for institutions to have clear guidance for ISW about support services and how to seek help after SV/IPV
- ▶ This information needs to be clearly communicated
- ▶ Deliver trauma informed care for ISW and be aware of their cultural and emotional safety
- ▶ Ensure the physical setting is welcoming for culturally diverse clients
- ▶ Ensure culture is reflected in data collection processes
- ▶ Services need to be affordable and accessible
- ▶ **Thank you for your interest!**