



ONCE UPON A TIME... :

IS THERE A HAPPY END IN A HUMAN TRAFFICKING MEDIA STORY?

Elina Paliichuk

Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, Ukraine

OBJECTIVE

To verify whether audiences believe in the happy end of survival stories on the human trafficking situation.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The narrative perspective:

The methods of empirical studies: *Paired Samples Test* before and after being exposed to HT narratives;

Sample: 38 Ukrainian humanity students representing the youth as a vulnerable category (gender 87% of females);

Case study: 35 media stories highlighted by anti-trafficking campaigns were analysed; respondents were exposed to 4 stories in the survey

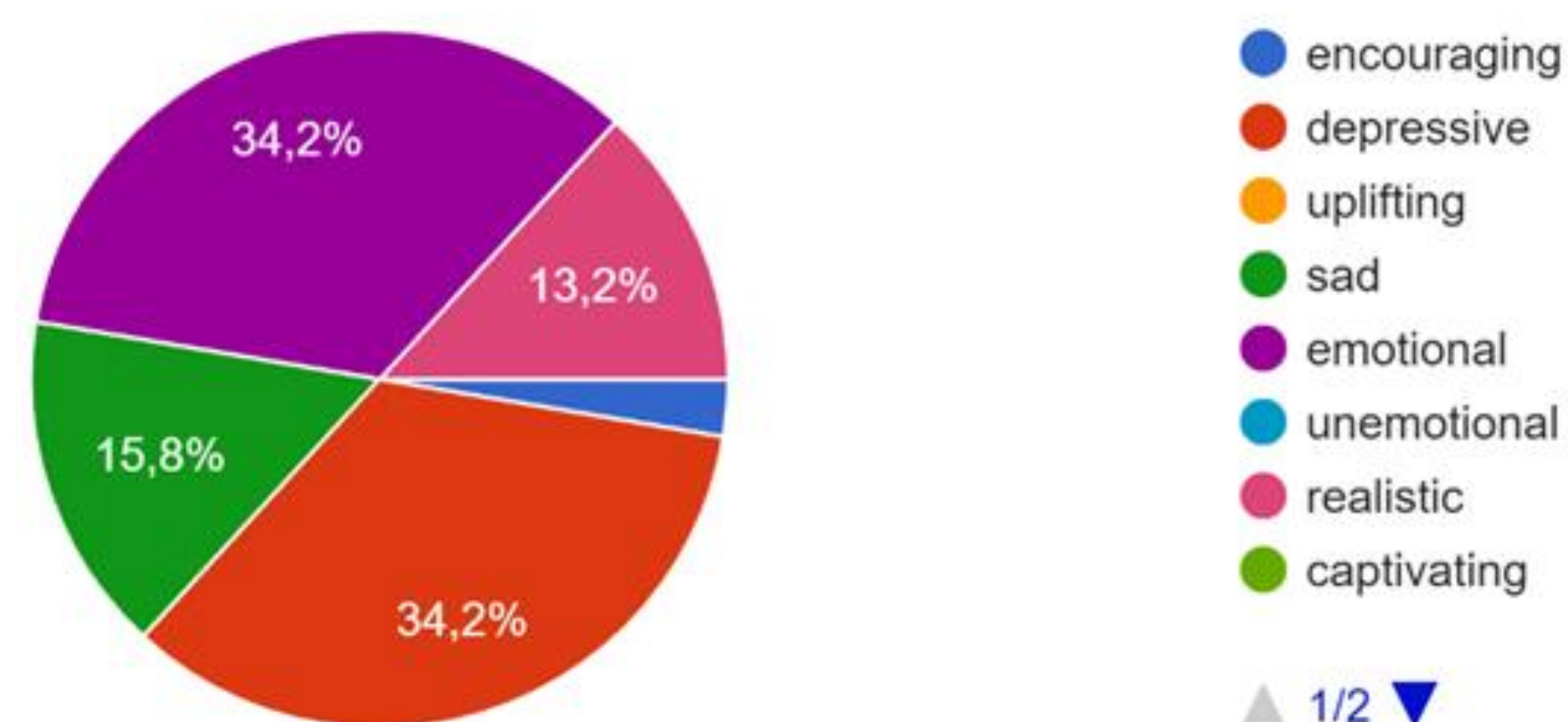
Hypothesis and variables: HT-stories transmit supportive and encouraging messages to victims that 1) survival is possible; 2) it is worth of struggling if anyone gets into slavery conditions; 3) social reintegration is possible. These variables are measured statistically.

RESULTS

A. Narrative features of HT media stories:

- 1) simple narrative monomyth structure;
- 2) reiterated cyclic construal;
- 3) the 1st person narrative perspective;
- 4) connotative and figurative language passive voice for showing dependent state of victims.

B. Reading perceptions: tone of stories

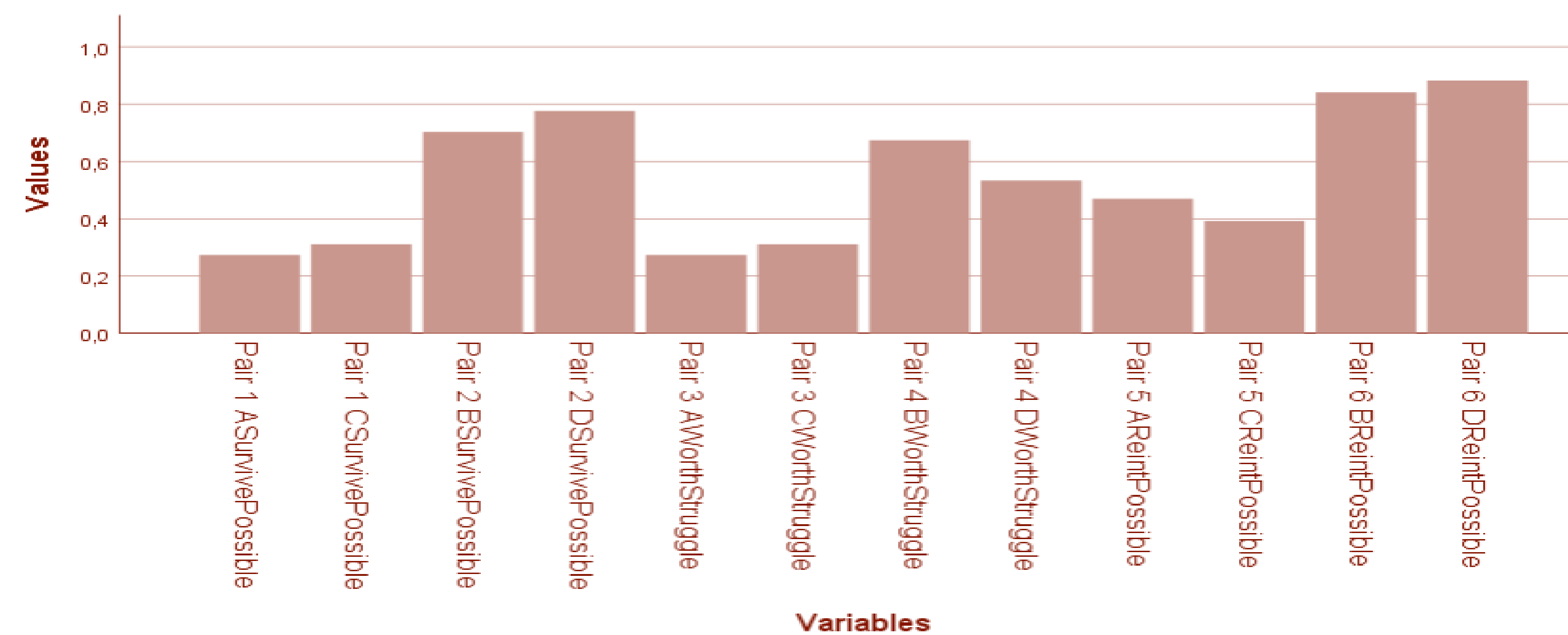


C. Paired Samples Statistics

Pair	Variable	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	ASurvivePossible	1,0789	38	,27328	,04433
	CSurvivePossible	1,1053	38	,31101	,05045
Pair 2	BSurvivePossible	3,2105	38	,70358	,11414
	DSurvivePossible	3,1316	38	,77707	,12606
Pair 3	AWorthStruggle	1,0789	38	,27328	,04433
	CWorthStruggle	1,1053	38	,31101	,05045
Pair 4	BWorthStruggle	3,6316	38	,67468	,10945
	DWorthStruggle	3,6579	38	,53405	,08663
Pair 5	AREintPossible	1,3158	38	,47107	,07642
	CREintPossible	1,1842	38	,39286	,06373
Pair 6	BReintPossible	2,6842	38	,84166	,13654
	DReintPossible	3,2368	38	,88330	,14329

Results are significant for “social reintegration is possible” variable (Pair 5 and Pair 6): $p < 0.29$; $p < 0.015$

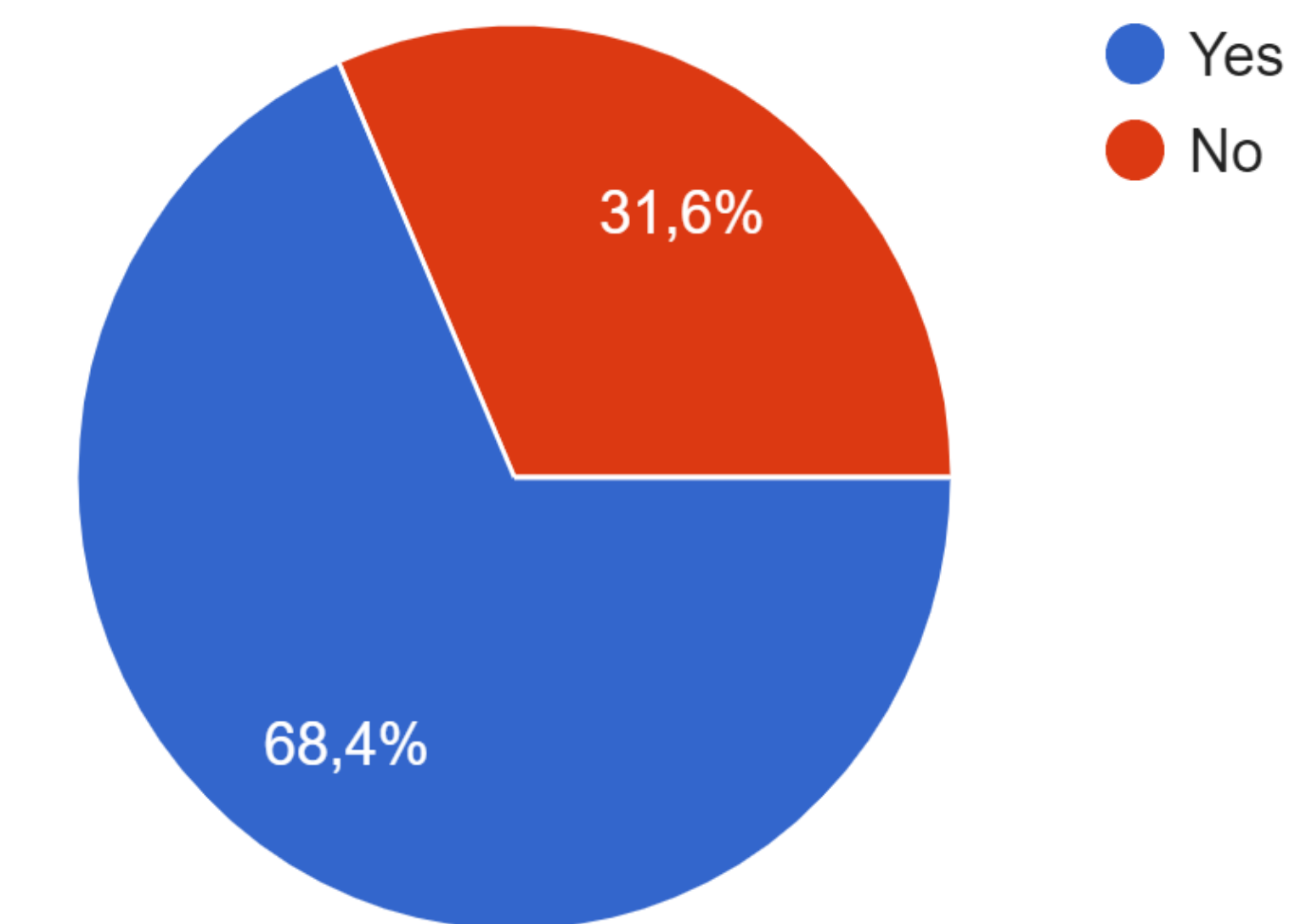
Paired Samples Statistics Std. Deviation



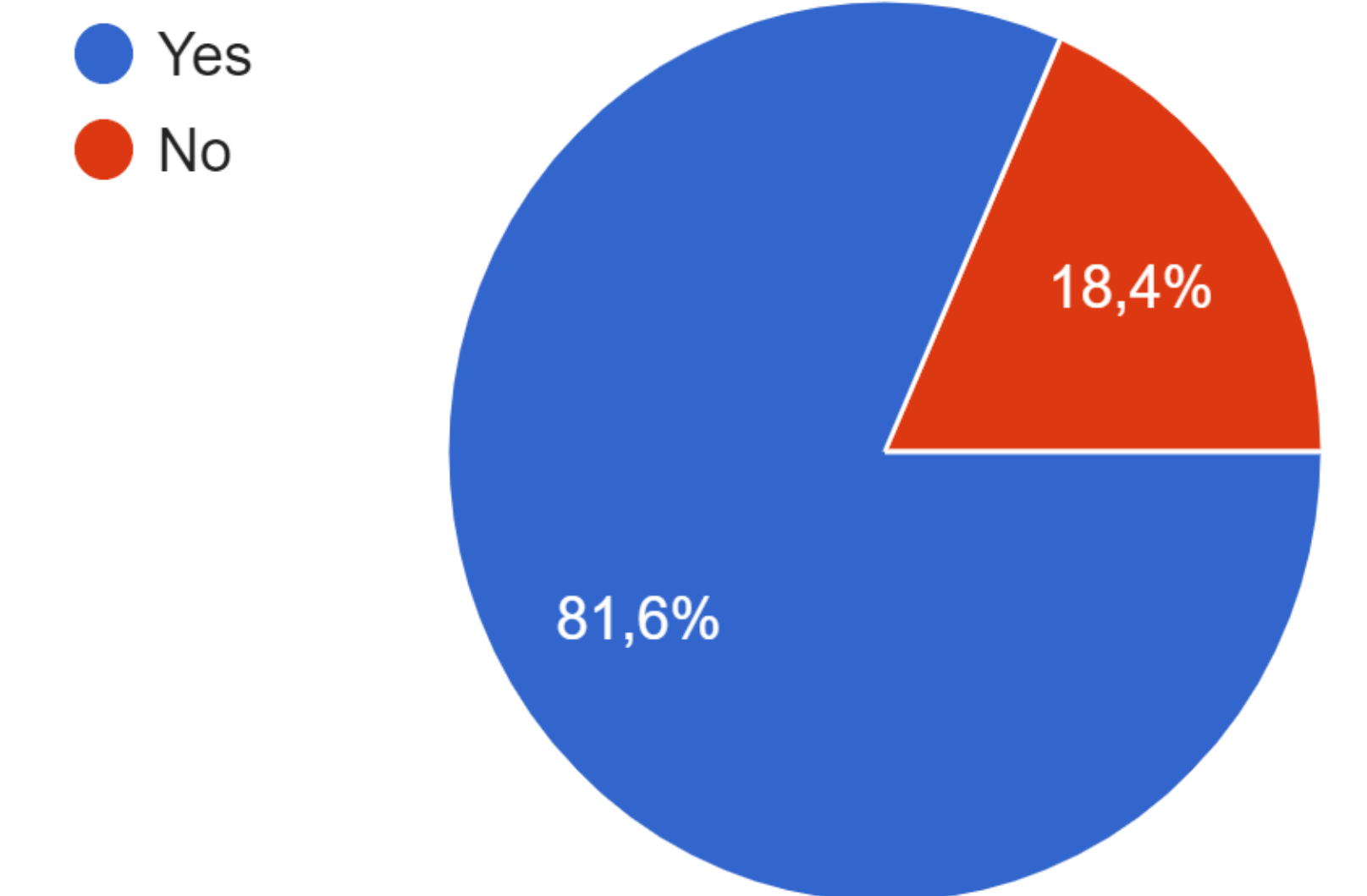
CONCLUSIONS

- No “happy-end” beliefs; no strong evidence for “survival is possible”, no confidence that it is worth struggling;
- + high level of tolerance manifesting in acceptance that social reintegration of victims is positive.

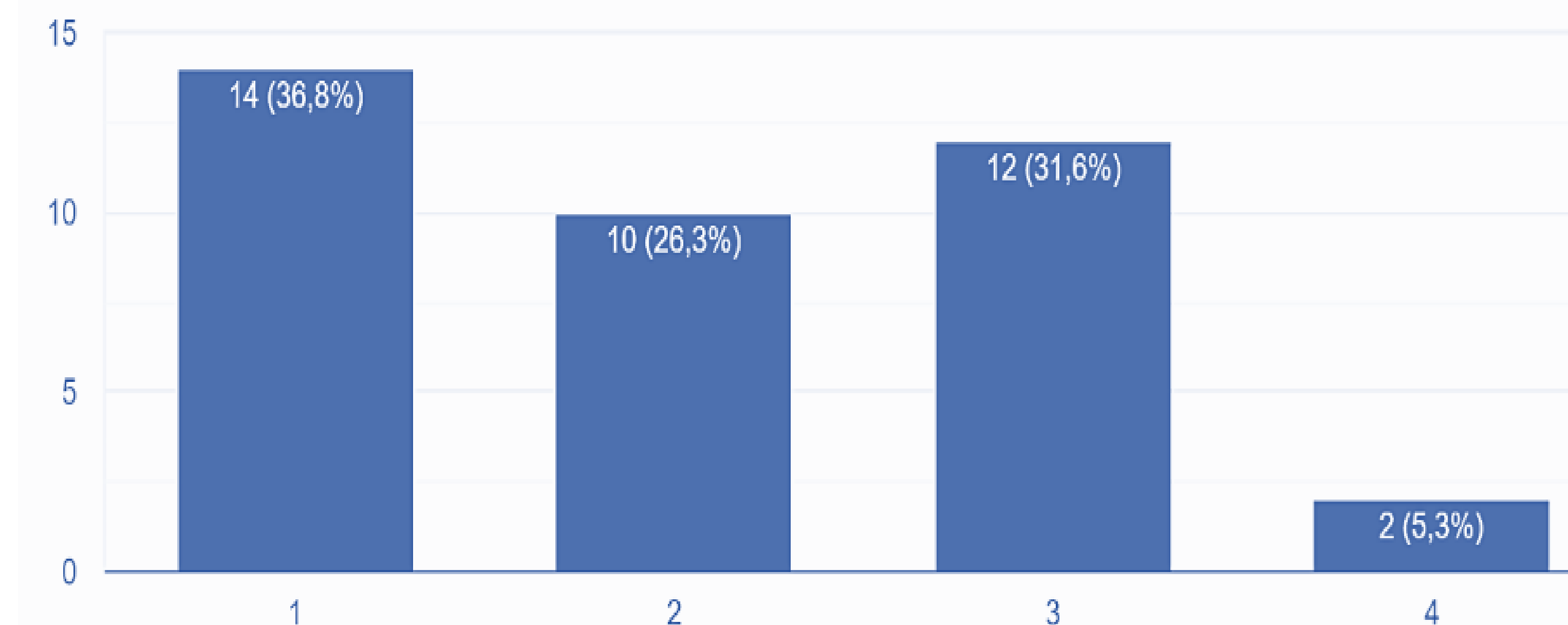
Before



After



D. “Which fragment impressed you most of all?”



Fragment 1

I knew that if I didn't leave now, I would not be able to keep my son safe. My life meant nothing to me but his life meant everything. I was 20 years old and pregnant by my pimp. The further I got along in my pregnancy, the less I was able to “work” (sell sex) and the more violent he became. At around 7 months, he beat me so severely I was taken to the hospital. It was clear I had experienced violence of some kind. My teeth had been kicked in and my face was bruised and bloody. Despite my visible injuries, I wasn't sure what to say to the hospital staff when they asked me if I needed help. I knew the consequences of outing my pimp for what he was and I was scared of what would happen if I told them the truth. So instead, dropping my head to avoid eye contact, I just told them that I was fine and didn't need help. I want other survivors who may be considering leaving but are not sure where to turn or who may be afraid to call the hotline to know this: Making that first call is scary but nothing changes if you don't change something yourself.

Fragment 2

After six long years trapped in the human trafficking networks that brought me to the United States – thanks to God – I got out alive. With the help of a good Samaritan, I'm now free from that world, where I was forced to sell my body. It wasn't easy to leave. I tried to commit suicide several times, thinking that was my only way out. I wasn't going to give my traffickers the pleasure of killing me – I would rather have done that myself. But my attempts were never successful, and only God knows why. One day, a stranger approached me in a public place and struck up a conversation. I ignored her at first because I was afraid to even speak to anyone. I felt like I was being watched by my traffickers at all times, no matter where I went, but this time that woman would change my life for the better. My story doesn't end there. I'd survived human trafficking, but the emotional trauma buried me deep, and I needed psychiatric help to get out. However, I was able to recover and find the will and strength to go on living. As part of the process, I also had to overcome my fear of trusting people. I've achieved all of this, and much more, thanks to God. He's put people in my life for a reason, and through them, he's shown me his love to this day, and in this same way he'll also allow me to help others.

KEY WORDS:

human trafficking, media storytelling, monomyth, empirical study, survival stories