

Title:

The Impact of College Policies and Legal Frameworks on the Prevalence and Reporting of Sexual Assault on Campuses

Introduction:

Sexual assault (SA) remains a significant and pervasive issue on college campuses, affecting students regardless of their gender, socioeconomic background, or academic standing. The range of non-consensual behaviors, from harassment to rape, has profound and lasting effects on victims, including physical, emotional, and psychological trauma. Although awareness of the issue has grown, many cases of sexual assault continue to go unreported. This may be due to a lack of faith in the legal and institutional responses or a perception that speaking out will not result in meaningful change.

This issue is personal to me, as I have experienced sexual assault firsthand. As a result, I started therapy and took steps to regain control of my life, even graduating high school early. While I am fortunate to have gone through this process of healing, I understand the deep hesitation that others may feel when considering reporting an assault. I know how easy it is to think that nothing will be done or that the system will fail to provide the support and justice needed. This is why I believe strengthening the legal consequences for perpetrators and improving institutional policies are essential to creating safer campuses and supporting survivors of sexual assault.

Research Question:

What impact do college policies and legal frameworks have on the prevalence and reporting of sexual assault on campuses?

Purpose and Goals:

The primary goal of this research is to examine the effectiveness of college policies and legal frameworks in addressing sexual assault on campuses, with a particular focus on how these frameworks influence the prevalence of sexual assault and the likelihood of it being reported. I will:

- Investigate the role that current college policies play in preventing and addressing sexual assault.
- Analyze how legal frameworks, including Title IX and state laws, affect the reporting of sexual assault incidents.
- Identify gaps in the legal and institutional responses to sexual assault on campuses, and propose reforms to enhance support for survivors.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of punitive measures versus preventive approaches in reducing sexual assault.

Ultimately, this research will argue that a combination of stronger policies, legal reforms, and institutional support is necessary to effectively address the ongoing issue of sexual assault on campuses and ensure justice for survivors.

Audience:

This research is intended for policymakers, college administrators, legal professionals, and advocacy organizations focused on sexual assault prevention and survivors' rights. It is also relevant to law enforcement, campus security personnel, and the broader public. The findings aim to inform those in positions to create or influence policy changes and foster an environment where survivors feel empowered to report assaults without fear of retaliation or indifference. By targeting key stakeholders, this research strives to create a comprehensive, actionable dialogue around improving legal and institutional responses to campus sexual assault.

Inquiry Process:

To address the research question and achieve the outlined goals, I will:

- Review peer-reviewed studies on the effectiveness of current campus policies and legal frameworks in preventing and addressing sexual assault.
- Analyze legal frameworks like Title IX, state and federal laws, and international approaches to sexual assault on campuses
- Examine survivor testimonials and case studies to understand the challenges in reporting sexual assault and navigating institutional responses
- Compare crime and conviction rates on campuses with varying policies to assess the correlation between stricter policies, better reporting rates, and lower incident rates
- Investigate the broader impact of legal and policy frameworks on campus culture, survivor support systems, and the long-term impact on students' well-being

Through this process, I will use data from multiple sources to offer recommendations for improving college policies and legal frameworks. The research will provide a understanding of the complex issues surrounding campus sexual assault, highlighting the need for systemic change to protect students.