Sexual Assault and Higher Education Institutions

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**Introduction**

Sexual assault is increasing at higher education institutions which are demonstrated by daily statistics and increasing incidents reported in the media. According to The Wall Street Journal, the number of forcible sex crimes reported on U.S. college and university campuses more than doubled to 5,000 between 2001 and 2013” (Korn, 2016, p. 1). These alarming statistics illustrate the need to increase research and program efforts to decrease sexual violence on campus. There is a wide array of research surrounding topics of sexual assault in higher education settings. “Within the past 40 years, researchers have examined a wide array of characteristics potentially related to sexual assault perpetration” (Greathouse, 2015, p. 7). However, existing literature has a significant vacancy in examining higher education institutional characteristics regarding high sexual violence. The researcher conducted a quantitative analysis to examine institutional characteristics they may share when explaining sexual assault at universities.

Several variables were investigated when researching universities and characteristics they possess that may related to sexual assault. These variables include student demographics, campus location, size of the institution, to name a few. There are several statistics illustrating the increase and probability of sexual assaults on college campuses. The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) reported that female college-aged students (18-24) are 20% less likely than non-students of the same age to be a victim of rape or sexual assault (2018). The Association of American Universities also found that 27.2% of female college seniors reported that they had experienced some kind of unwanted sexual contact-carried out by incapacitation, and 13.5% had experienced penetration or attempted penetration (2015). President Obama stated that one in five female students will experience sexual violence before graduating (Kessler, 2014). To assist in furthering research efforts to hopefully improve these statistics, a data collection strategy was utilized.

**Data Collection Strategy**

The researcher utilized secondary sources to collect data for this quantitative study. One source of data was the Campus Safety and Security Report provided by the U.S. Department of Education. According to the U.S. Department of Education Campus Safety and Security website, the data that is “drawn are submitted annually, via a web-based data collection, by all postsecondary institutions that receive Title IX funding (i.e., those that participate in federal student aid programs)” (2018). This data collection is required by the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act and the Higher Education Opportunity Act. The researcher will utilized the Campus Safety and Security Report to gather data which encompasses the numbers of sexual assaults that happen on campus, off campus, and in the residence halls.

The above dataset was merged with institutional level data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). “The National Center for Education Statistics is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education in the U.S. and other nations. NCES fulfills a Congressional mandate to collect, collate, analyze, and report complete statistics on the condition of American education; conduct and publish reports; and review and report on education activities internationally” (NCES, 2018). The researcher chose IPEDS because the database includes a wide variety of institutional categories. The researcher chose to institutions that fall in categories of research universities, state colleges and universities, private religious and liberal arts colleges, and for-profit institutions. IPEDS offers demographic information for 7,000+ higher education institutions; however, the sample will consist of 736 universities based on various institutional categories. The researcher chose her sample by selecting the following institutional characteristics: sector of institution, degree-granting status, institutional category, and student population.

According to IPEDS (2018), sector of institution is divided in two categories, control and level. IPEDS define control as a classification of whether an institution is operated by publicly elected or appointed officials (public control) or by privately elected or appointed officials and derives its major source of funds from private sources (private control). All control options were selected including: public, private not-for-profit, and private for-profit institutions. The next parameter of the sample selected is the level of the institution. IPEDS (2018) defines level of the higher education institution as a classification of the length of the program. Options include four year or higher, two but less than four year, and less than two year. For the purposes of this research project only four-year higher education institutions that were of degree-seeking status were chosen for this study. Lastly, out of the population of 7,000 educational institutions, the sample consisted of “large” to “huge” schools. According to the National Association for College Admission Counseling (2018), large schools means more than 15,000 students and huge schools means more than 30,000 students. In IPEDS, the institution population is based on total students enrolled for credit in Fall 2016.

*Variables*

The researcher plans to use three dependent variables including: number of rapes on campus, number of rapes off campus, and number of rapes that occur in the dormitories. There are three independent variables that the researcher used for the data analysis. These consist of on campus housing offered by the university, degree of urbanization, and student services expenses. Hindelang, Gottfredson, & Garofalo (1978) use the lifestyle routine activity theory to explain how proximity to sexual offenders can be a factor of sexual assault. This theory states that proximity refers to the location of the potential victim in relation to the location to the motivated offender. According to this theory, “being in a close proximity to potential offenders will increase a person’s likelihood of victimization”. There are numerous studies that concentrate on the relationship of students’ living arrangements on campus and how these arrangements may foster sexual violence. Scherer (2011) found that students that lived off campus were much less likely to report acts of sexual violence. In addition, a study done by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security found that over 80% of all rapes and assaults occurred in residence halls. Shukman (2017) found that just under half of all sexual assaults reported on campus take place in freshman housing, compared to Greek housing and other locations on campus.

The researcher conducted a correlation analysis between the campus living arrangements and sexual assaults reported. On campus living arrangements are defined by whether the institution offers on campus housing and whether they require their first-year students to live on campus. Does the institution offer on campus housing? Data was coded in four categories (-2 = not applicable, -1 = not reported, 1 = yes, 2 = no). Does the institution require first year students to live on campus? Data was coded in four categories (-2 = not applicable, -1 = not reported, 1 = yes, 2 = no). Does the institution provide a board and meal plan? Data was coded in four categories (-2 = not applicable, -1 = not reported, 1 = yes, 2 = no). On campus living arrangements is also defined by the total dorm capacity.

The second independent variable is the degree of urbanization. “Geographic location has been shown to correlate with other key differences in the campus culture of a university or college” (Bègin-Caouette, 2013). There is little research being completed on the degree of urbanization of an area and sexual assault. According to the National Center of for Victims of Crime residents of urban areas experienced the highest rates of victimization in 2014. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2018) reports that over 25 percent of women in rural and more isolated areas live more than 40 miles from the closest violence center, compared with less than 1 percent of women living in urban areas. There are new initiatives that are pending surrounding the level of urbanization and sexual assault. The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey is currently being conducted to see effects of how sexual assault affects rural residents. Although there are studies being developed to understand geographic location and how that affects sexual assault, more research is needed. According to Mcilwaine (2013), the impact of geographic location in regard to sexual assault is limited and of poor quality, therefore, the researcher conducted an in depth analysis of urbanization and sexual assault in higher education settings.

IPEDS has four categories of urbanization including: city, suburb, town and rural. The 2005 U.S. Census provides definitions for city, suburb, town, and rural.

City: A territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city.

Suburb: A territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area.

Town: A territory inside an urban cluster.

Rural: Encompasses all population, housing, and territory not included within an urban area.

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2005).

The location of the college campus was recoded into different categories (-3 = not available, 11 = large city, 12 = midsize city, 13 = small city, 21 = large suburb, 22 = midsize suburb, 23 = small suburb, 41 = fringe rural, 42 = distant rural, 43 = remote rural). The 2005 Census Bureau defines the difference between fringe, distant, and remote.

Rural: Fringe: Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster.   
Rural: Distant: Census-defined rural territory that is more than 5 miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than 2.5 miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster.   
Rural: Remote: Census-defined rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster.

(U.S. Census Bureau, 2005).

The final independent variable was student service expenditures. Student services may encompass several elements. “Student services is defined as anything whose primary purpose is to contribute to students' emotional and physical well-being and to their intellectual, cultural, and social development outside the context of the formal instructional program” (IPEDS, 2018). IPEDS categorizes student services expenses under three subcategories which are defined as salaries and wages, employee fringe benefits, and all other. More common examples include: admissions, registrar, activity boards, student and health services. These student fees also go to programming for sexual assault prevention efforts. This study examines the student service expenses and their effect on sexual assault.

*Statistical Models*

There were different statistical models. First, the differences between the institutions who require their first year students to live on campus and students who provide a board and meal plan versus the institutions who do not require their first year students to reside in the residence halls will be assess using a multivariate analyses of covariance (MANCOVAs). The first set of analyses controlled for sexual assault and investigated if living arrangements are associated with sexual assault. Another MANOVA was ran to see if the urban status of the university campus is associated with sexual assault. Multivariate linear regression was also performed to predict if campus locale can significantly add to the prediction of sexual assault.

Yj = β0 + β1Urban + β2Suburb + β3Rural + €, where Yj indicates number of sexual assaults.

A second multiple regression model was completed to see if living in the residence halls is associated with sexual assault.

Yj = β0 + β1Students required to live on campus the first year + β2Institution provides on campus housing and meal plan+ β3Instiution provides on campus housing + €,

where Yj indicates number of sexual assaults.

The last multiple regression model that was completed by the researcher is associated with student expenditures for student services. Multiple regression allows to see if there is greater expenditure on student service, there will be less likelihood of sexual assault.

Yj = β0 + β1Student Services Salaries and Wages + β2Student Service Employee Fringe Benefits + β3All Other + €, where Yj indicates number of sexual assaults.

IPEDS defines fringe benefits include retirement plans, social security taxes, medical/dental plans, guaranteed disability income protection plans, tuition plans, housing plans, unemployment compensation plans, group life insurance plans, worker's compensation plans, pension, and other benefits (2018).

**Results**

Decisions on Reject/Accept the Null Hypothesis – Results and Discussion

1. Does the percentage of students living on campus relate to the rate of sexual assault per 1000 students (IV: % of total students living on campus, DV: # of sexual assaults per 1000 students)?
   1. Ho: There is no relationship between the percentage of students living on campus and the number of sexual assaults per 1000 students).
   2. Ha: There is a relationship between the percentage of students living on campus and the number of sexual assaults per 1000 students).

Reject Ho. There was a significant relationship between the percentage of students living on campus and the number of sexual assaults per 1000 students. The more students living on campus, the more sexual assaults there were.

1. Is student service expenditure correlated with sexual assault rates? (IV: SS expenditures per student, DV: # of sexual assaults per 1000 students)
   1. Ho: There is no relationship between student service expenditure per student and the number of sexual assaults per 1000 students).
   2. Ha: There is a relationship between student service expenditure per student and the number of sexual assaults per 1000 students).

Fail to reject Ho. Student service expenditure per student was unrelated to sexual assault rates.

1. Does the degree granting status of the university relate to sexual assault rates? (IV: highest degree offered, DV: # of sexual assaults per 1000 students)
   1. Ho: There is no relationship between highest degree offered and the number of sexual assaults per 1000 students).
   2. Ha: There is a relationship between highest degree offered and the number of sexual assaults per 1000 students).

 Reject Ho. The highest degree granted by the university was related to assault rates. Schools with master’s as the highest had the highest assault rates.

1. Does the urbanicity of the university relate to sexual assault rates? (IV: Urban/Suburban/Rural status, DV: # of sexual assaults per 1000 students)
   1. Ho: There is no relationship between degree of urbanicity and the number of sexual assaults per 1000 students).
   2. Ha: There is a relationship between degree of urbanicity and the number of sexual assaults per 1000 students).

Reject Ho. The rural/urban/suburban location of a university was related to assault rates. Suburban schools had the highest assault rates.

**Limitations**

As with any study, limitations exist. The numbers of sexual assaults that happen on campus can be inaccurate due to underreporting. According to the Rape Abuse Incest National Network (RAINN), more than 20% of sexual assault victims on college campuses do not report the assault (2016). Using secondary data also has a share of limitations. Secondary data can foresee potential trends but according to Smith (2008), secondary data has to be treated with a level of skepticism. Another limitation is that several schools had to be excluded because data was non-existent so the potential for a true representation of the data can be affected. Lastly, this complex study relies on documentation from students and staff and are self-reported. These documents may not be representative of the entire population. Additionally, the 2015 U.S. Census Bureau data will be utilized so current years are not captured therefore, the data not be completely recent.

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