

SEXUAL VICTIMIZATION OF COLLEGE WOMEN: ARE OHIO UNIVERSITIES USING
BEST PRACTICES IN SUPPORT STRATEGIES?

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ABSTRACT

College women who have experienced sexual violence face the distressing effects it can have on their health. This qualitative research study explores different forms of support for survivors of sexual violence at various universities in Ohio. The goal is to contribute to the development of a program design that aligns with the specific needs of survivors. The best practices and supportive measures that focus on victims of sexual violence from ten different universities in Ohio were analyzed. The supportive measures being examined from these universities were based on five different support strategies which are: safety strategies, legal strategies, medical strategies, preserving education, and mental health. This study will contribute to efforts to successfully support victims of sexual violence by developing a holistic support system based on current best practices. Overall, the program design focuses on incorporating the best and most current strategies into one ideal design to improve sexual violence support programs.

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of Study

Sexual violence against college women is a deeply troubling and pervasive issue. It continues to be a subject that receives attention worldwide. Sexual violence can be described as any form of unwanted sexual activity that is forced upon someone without their consent (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022). Sexual violence is a serious problem that cannot be ignored as it is a violation of the victims' rights and can have a detrimental impact on one's well-being. Sexual assault, rape, and sexual harassment are just a few of the criminal acts that sexual violence encompasses. The United States Department of Justice (DOJ, 2019) defines sexual assault, as "Any sexual act that is nonconsensual and is prohibited by federal, tribal or state law, especially if the victim is incapable of giving their consent." The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI, 2017) defines rape as, "non-consensual penetration of any kind to an individual's vagina, anus, or orally without the victim's consent." An individual can experience sexual victimization whether they identify as being straight or a part of the LGBTQ community, whether they are a student or teacher, whether they are at work or at home. Sexual victimization can occur at any time, any place to anyone. For the purpose of this thesis, I am focusing on the issue of sexual victimization of college women to shed a light on the specific effects they face in relation to sexual violence.

Annually, we are seeing the news and social media covering cases on sexual assault on college campuses. The Department of Justice's primary statistical agency, Bureau of Justice Statistics, measures statistics of crime from different crime databases like the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) and the Uniform Crime Report (UCR). A NCVS report based on reported sexual violence cases conducted by the United States Department of Justice (2015)

indicated that around 26.4% of female undergraduate students encounter instances of rape or sexual assault, characterized by physical force or incapacitation. This statistic is four times higher than that of male college student victimization which was at 6.8% (Department of Justice, 2015). There are many times when sexual victimization occurs where it goes unreported, and the victims have to live with the impact of the assault on their own. Unfortunately, approximately two thirds of sexual violence cases go unreported, and the cases reported to law enforcement are a representation of only about 310 out of 1,000 incidents (Department of Justice, 2015). Dworkin (2020) indicated that there were several psychological effects that could arise after a sexual assault occurred, such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). While there is previous research on this subject, victimization of college women is still a recurring issue in the United States. More research on the subject can bring new information which can allow for updated support strategies and ways to help victims cope and/or overcome the effects.

The research question in this thesis is: *How are Ohio Universities implementing best practices in supporting female victims of sexual violence?* In order to answer this primary question, there are other aspects that need to be addressed first. (1) *What are the best practices dealing with sexual violence survivors?* (2) *What would an ideal support program look like?* The goal of this study is to identify current best practices in dealing with college aged females who have been a victim of sexual violence, evaluate what a sample of Ohio Universities are doing to support female victims of sexual violence, and finally, to create a support system that can be implemented by a university that directly aligns with the best practices previously identified. Best practices can be best described through the core standards that the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence (OAESV) (2022) provides because they are focused on the implementation of evidence-based approaches within the field of sexual violence, representing the most effective

and widely accepted methods for addressing related issues. Knowing that sexual victimization of students will continue on campuses and knowing that it is still an issue to this day is the first step in ongoing efforts to collect new data and develop programs that can help decrease the likelihood of victimization as a whole.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section is a review of previous studies and information on the history and facts of the sexual violence in order to help readers understand the issue at hand. This section will be broken up into two parts: Prevalence of Victimization of Women on Campus, and a review of each of the five categories of support strategies and what the research tells us are best practices in each of those categories.

Prevalence of Victimization of Women on Campus

Throughout the years, there have been many studies done on the prevalence of victimization of women on college campuses. One of the first studies done on campus sexual victimization was completed by Kirkpatrick and Kanin (1957). There were 291 women who were interviewed on different types of aggressiveness that constitute sexual assault, such as forced kissing and fondling. Kirkpatrick and Kanin (1957) stated that, of those women, 55.7% reported experiencing sexual victimization in some form at least once in the span of a year, 20.9% reported forceful attempted sexual assault, and 6.2% reported aggressive forceful sexual assault. Of the sample that was collected, 162 of the women who were victims of sexual victimization reported 1,022 offenses (Kirkpatrick & Kanin, 1957). Overall, the study shows that even in this small sample of women, the likelihood of becoming a victim of unwanted sexual actions is high.

Another study that was posted by the United States Department of Justice, written by Fisher et al. (2000), covered just how prevalent the issue of victimization of college women can be and why it is not reported at times. In this interview, 4,446 women were selected randomly from 2-4 year universities. The data collected by Fisher et al. (2000) showed that if there were 10,000 women on a single campus over the course of a year, there could be more than 350

students who experience rape on that one campus alone. In this study, they also covered why women may not want to report these incidents. The incidents ranged from not wanting family or other people to know it occurred, lack of evidence, to fear of mistreatment by the police (Fisher et al., 2000). Fisher et al. (2000) also stated that half of the respondents reported that they experienced sexist remarks from men, as well as catcalls and whistling. One in five females experiences indecent phone calls and had been asked personal questions about their sex lives and personal lives (Fisher et al., 2000). Even though these actions may not have physically harmed the victim, these women may still experience psychological effects, such as anxiety or depression.

We can see that throughout the years, from one of the first few studies done in 1957 to modern day, that the issue of sexual victimization on campus is reoccurring. The Office of Women's Health (2018) stated that sexual violence is an ongoing issue on college campuses for a number of different reasons, some of which are drugs and alcohol as well as peer pressure. Collington et al. (2019) reported that 20% of college students were sexually assaulted while under the influence. Sexual assault among college students showed that 40% of women experienced sexual assault during their teenage years (Collington et al., 2019). These studies help determine trends in victimization and inform us on all of the ways that sexual assault can affect an individual.

Best Practices for Survivor Support

There are a number of different strategies that universities implement in order to help keep victims of sexual violence safe. This thesis focuses on what these strategies are, how they can affect survivors. There are five support strategies that this thesis will examine: safety strategies, legal strategies, medical strategies, preserving education and mental health. These

categories will be defined as well as describing how they correlate with sexual victimization and the best practices for support for each of these effects.

Safety Strategies

Safety strategies are set in place at institutions in order to allow students to feel safe in their school environment. Focusing on what can be done on campus to allow students the right of feeling safe in their school's community is essential. Garcia et al. (2012) conducted a study on ways to prevent sexual violence proactively rather than reactively. This study was conducted through interviews of current students, with questions based on sexual assault scenarios and what the institution is currently doing/can do to improve safety. The participants in the study stated that some things their institutions do that makes them feel safe on campus are installing safety lights to allow the campus to be well lit, call boxes/blue-light phones that are a direct call to security/police, as well as access to security officers who will walk students to their dorms (Garcia et al, 2012).

Elcessor (2019) highlighted the effectiveness of on-campus safety measures, including blue-light emergency phones and smart device safety applications. These initiatives not only provide direct lines to emergency personnel but also enhance awareness among students, offering services like night illumination, location tracking, and maps." Linder and Lacy (2020) support the statement of blue-light phones bringing a feeling of safety to students on campus, specifically women, stating that if a person feels there may be potential danger, all they have to do is push the button on the phone and campus security will arrive to that location. Results from Linder and Lacy (2020) reported that women on campuses without blue-light emergency phones wanted them on campus just to have that extra sense of safety if they find themselves walking the campus at night by themselves. The feeling of safety is important, and college administrators

and students from the 1980's to present day have reported that the blue-light emergency phones bring a feeling of safety to the campus, although direct lines on universities safety apps are available at some institutions, students still find physical on campus emergency phones comforting (Elcessor, 2019). Although safety measures are important, at the same time they signal that there is a need to implement these measures and thereby can create fear (Elcessor, 2019). Liu et al. (2017) agree that blue-light emergency phones are available on many campuses, but that there can be a disconnect when it comes to the precise location of the victim if the victim is to leave that location. Liu et al. (2017) created a location aware smart phone application (like GPS) that once activated, the university police department is informed and given a geolocation for the victim while also updating their location consistently until police arrive. The results of this study reported that it is essentially a "blue-light emergency phone" but a more updated version that the students have on hand 24/7, which is handier for students and can decrease the time for police to arrive at the specific location (Liu et al. 2017).

Education can be a form of proactive safety measures. Amar et al. (2012) evaluated bystander education programs to see if they are effective in reducing or preventing the issue of sexual violence of college women. The study consisted of 202 students ages 18-22 who participated in a bystander education program (Amar et al., 2012). They wanted to test the participants attitudes and willingness to help sexual violence victims and participants before the bystander program started and after the completion of the program to see how their attitudes and actions changed (Amar et al., 2012). The result showed significant improvement in all attitude and willingness to help once participants were educated. Student's results confirmed that their acceptance of rape myths decreased, there was a decrease in the denial of interpersonal violence, a significant increase to help victims was reported as well as the recognition of the responsibility

to intervene (Amar et al., 2012). Overall, the bystander educational program showed to have beneficial impacts on the students and their awareness and willingness to help keep themselves as well as other students safe.

Brubaker (2019) examined victims advocacy as it relates to on campus sexual violence. Campus-based victims' advocates are available to support victims in several ways such as safety planning and crisis intervention (Brubaker, 2019). Researchers described that there was an increase in victim safety where the victim was experiencing less violence, increased quality of life and better understanding of available resources on and off campus (Brubaker, 2019). Sabina et al. (2017) reported that some college campuses had an option that assisted victims by changing their living situations on campus. Richards (2019) examined updates in response strategies of institutions of higher education (HEI) in regard to sexual violence and determined that some HEI offered victims the option to rearrange their course schedule as well as living arrangements to increase their sense of safety on campus. Additionally, Eisenberg (2016) analyzed resources available to college victims of sexual violence where it was covered that there were services called "safe walk/escort services" that offered a designated "safe" individual to walk the victim to their next destination on campus.

All institutions of postsecondary education that offer federal student aid are required by the Clery Act to disclose data on certain crimes that have occurred on campus. The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics is defined as promoting campus safety by keeping the public and the students informed of public safety and crime prevention matters of institutions that receive Title IV funds (Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act of 1990 [Clery], 2018). This Act was developed after a college woman named Jeanne Clery was raped and murdered in her dorm room

at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania. Jeanne's parents believed that the rape and murder of their daughter was directly correlated with the lack of security and information about crime on campus (Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act of 1990 [Clery], 2018). This precedent case opened a door for universities, the community, and victims to see the data with respect to crimes on and near college/university campuses.

Overall, implementing best practices for safety strategies on campus can ensure a safe school environment for all students. Ensuring that campuses are staying up to date with federal regulation such as the Clery Act keeps the whole campus community informed and aware of campus crime. Keeping students on campus safe starts with the university implementing preventative measures such as safety lights at night, blue-light phones, safety phone applications, escort services, bystander intervention and primary points of contact for living and class arrangements. These strategies ensure that proactive measures are being taken to improve victims' everyday lives on campus to provide a safer learning environment.

Legal Strategies

Victims of sexual violence will need all the support they can get after a traumatic event, which is why it is important that the universities offer support, guidance, and adhere to local, state, university, and federal policy after such a traumatic experience. Institutions in the United States need to abide by state and federal laws that were enacted to keep discrimination out of institutions. Title IX is a civil rights federal law that was developed in 1972. This law prohibits sex discrimination in education and ensures that there are equal opportunities and resources for all students regardless of sex. This law is essential for the protection of women on campus especially for those who become or will become victims of sexual assault. Title IX requires institutions to respond promptly to reports of sexual assault as well as to provide services for

support and a non-discriminatory environment for survivors. These services can encompass a wide range of assistance such as counseling, medical assistance, and victim legal advocacy (The United States Department of Justice, 2015). Overall, Title IX aims to establish a secure and inclusive atmosphere for all sexes and prioritize the needs of sexual violence survivors, offering support, resources, and avenues for seeking justice. Laws like these are required to make institutions inclusive, safe, and supportive places for any and all students.

Wheatle and Commodore cover how students and their personal experiences have influenced federal policy over the years (2019). New legislation, such as Title IX, was a leap for gender equality in higher education with it preventing sex discrimination while also keeping on campus sexual violence statistics open to the public (Wheatle & Commodore, 2019). New legislation brought to light equality for men and women in areas such as educational access, admissions, as well as in school lead sports opportunities, such as access to facilities and training centers (Wheatle & Commodore, 2019). The Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE) was set in place as an amendment to the Jeanne Clery Act, which mandated institutions receiving federal funding under Title IX to provide education on preventing sexual violence to incoming students as well as to report any statistics to campus or local law enforcement on any sexual violence issues such as domestic violence, dating violence and stalking (Wheatle & Commodore, 2019).

Bennett et al. (2014) examined the standard practices for sexual misconduct on college campuses. Expulsion was listed as the most serious sanction for on campus sexual misconduct while colleges still encourage victims to continue with civil or criminal proceedings with local law enforcement if they wish to do so (Bennett et al., 2014). Bennett et al. (2014) explains that, in accordance with Title IX law, anyone who retaliates against the victim complainant or third-

party reporter is to be dealt with serious repercussions such as suspension, expulsion, and firing staff from the institution. Potter et al. (2021) examined a collaborative prevention and response effort for colleges to implement in order to best protect students in addition to Title IX regulations. A collaboration between institutions of higher education (IHE), law enforcement and local crisis centers results in a beneficial response outcome to sexual violence events and their prevention while also increasing the knowledge of available resources for students (Potter et al. 2021). Overall, universities can best serve students by abiding by the federal regulations and to work in accordance with law enforcement agencies and other agencies on and off campus that promote support and justice for sexual violence survivors.

Medical Strategies

When someone is a victim of sexual violence, there are a number of different reasons they may need medical assistance. The most pressing reason is to treat acute injuries such as open wounds and cuts to prevent infection (Jina & Thomas, 2013). Schou-Bredal et al. (2020) conducted research on sexual assault and its relation to health and found that of 120 individuals who reported sexual assault, 69 being women, reported that they experienced some type of serious injury from the assault. Victims need medical support after such a traumatic experience to prevent or treat health concerns such as sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, or further injuries. Eisenberg et al. (2012) conducted a study on the sexual health resources available on college campuses that consisted of 25, 2–4-year institutions of higher education. The survey included that services such as pregnancy testing, STD testing and OB/Gyn services were present on some campuses (Eisenberg et al., 2012). The results of the study showed that sexual health resources on college campuses were available but varied widely depending on the environment/geography of the school.

McCann et al. (2021) examine how school-based health centers (SBHC) produce effective results for sexual health services. This study spanned over five years and reviewed schools around the United States that implemented these health centers that included reproductive health services such as contraceptive services, pregnancy testing/STD testing and referrals, as well as offering family planning and preventative care classes (McCann et al., 2021). Overall, the results were successful seeing that this study yielded positive feedback from students as well as from institutions attempting to address the issue of high STD and pregnancy rates. Smith et al. (2011) examined the impact that access to contraceptives can have on pregnancy rates from two different institutions, one that has a SBHC and one that gives referrals for health services. The institution with SBHC had a higher number of students seeking contraceptives as well as keeping their appointments which yielded the result that institutions with SBHC are a more convenient and effective approach for students dealing with family planning (Smith et al., 2011).

Nemawarkar (2019) examined the benefits of proposing emergency contraception in vending machines on campus. In this study the researcher conducted their own study to determine if emergency contraceptives in vending machines would be beneficial for the campus community. The research determined that nearby pharmacies were not open late enough for the items that students may need immediately as well as being overpriced (Nemawarkar, 2019). Establishing a wellness vending machine would be beneficial in the sense that it would be 24/7 access as well as low prices that students can afford. Nemawarker (2019) found that most students were for the establishment of the wellness vending machine as it would offer 24/7 service, better prices, and the convenience of being nearby on campus. Knifton and JD (2023) cover that these vending machines are essential for victims of sexual violence because of the

immediate access they offer as well as the avoidance of interference and negative stigmas that an individual may receive at an in-person pharmacy.

Bivins (2023) examined universities responses to sexual violence on campus. Bivins (2023) showed how victims' advocates can help medically with victims by assisting them with the collection of evidence on their body for any forensic medical exams. Thiede and Miyamoto (2021) studied sexual assault nurse examiners (SANEs) and their positive impact on victims. SANEs were described by the International Association of Forensic Nurses (2023) as registered nurses who have undergone additional extensive training in regard to sexual violence cases and the specific needs that are tailored to those victims. Overall, victims that were treated by SANEs overall saw a positive impact on both psychological well-being and medical treatment outcomes (Thiede & Miyamoto, 2021). The best practices for medical strategies would be to offer quality services intended to treat and prevent medical issues such as those that SBHC can provide by having on campus SANE's and wellness vending machines posted around campus.

Preserving Education

Preserving education is established by promoting a safe and inclusive environment for a student who has been a victim of sexual violence. Students experience traumatic events on campus and schools need to implement protocols to help victims maintain their grades as well as enrollment at the institution. Molstad et al. (2023) examined how sexual violence can have negative implications on victim's academics. This study consisted of 13 articles where the researchers examined the consequences to academics that resulted from sexual violence (Molstad et al. 2023). The overall outcome of the research was that students reported having lower grade point averages (GPA), dropout rates increased, and self-regulated learning problems increased such as academic delay and nonattendance (Molstad et al., 2023).

Voth Schrag et al. (2022) examined ways to intervene and improve sexual violence survivors' academic success. Advocates and service providers were interviewed on the practices provided by institutions for academic safety planning which addressed the need for advocates to work directly with faculty and programs in order to find the best accommodations for students (Voth Schrag et al., 2022). The accommodation could lie anywhere in the realm of class changes, increased/flexible time for assignments and tests, excused absences, flexible/weighted grades and allowing retakes on exams and assignments (Voth Schrag et al., 2022). Overall, the study reported having faculty and advisors on board with academic accommodations for victims of sexual violence is essential in a successful academic journey after victimization.

Sabina et al. (2017) examined how campuses respond to issues of sexual assault and dating violence. This study included phone interviews with 45 universities and their security officers who answered 15 open-ended questions about the issue such as services for assault and abuse and how services were communicated to students. Sabina et al. (2017) reported that, from the 45 university security officers in the study, 38% reported having some form of academic assistance for the survivors of these crimes. A direct quote from one of the security officers on the university's stance about academic assistance states: "If there is something that has inhibited their ability to focus on school, we will work with them to get extra time to complete assignments or make other arrangements" (Sabina et al., 2017, p.93). 53% of the universities that did include academic assistance for survivors reported that they handled the needs of each individual on a case-to-case basis in order to tailor it directly to each individual's situation (Sabina et al., 2017). There were several ways in which survivors could be academically assisted such as schedule changes, withdrawal without penalty, leave of absence and temporary grades and extensions (Sabina et al. 2017). Overall, the universities best practices for preserving

educations for victims of sexual violence would be the academic support accommodations they have instilled by their advisors and faculty in regard to resources aimed to promote academic success for the survivors such as excused absences and additional time on assignments and tests.

Mental Health Strategies

Psychological effects can vary from individual to individual and case to case. Proper psychological health is essential in order for an individual to function properly in everyday life. Sexual victimization on campus can be a driving factor of an individual's declined psychological health. Brown et al. (2009) conducted research that focused on the psychological effects that can result as a product of sexual victimization. In this research, two separate studies were conducted in order to decipher the psychological consequences of incapacitated rape (rape while intoxicated) forcible rape (rape against ones will), and verbal coercion (psychological pressure). Brown et al. (2009) focused on psychological effects like PTSD, self-blame, self-criticism, helplessness, and hopelessness. Incapacitated rape and forcible rape were shown to have more psychological effects such as PTSD and anxiety than that of verbal coercion. The researchers state that, "Forcible rape victims perceived more trauma at the time of the event and were more likely to report that the incident had affected their social lives and relationships" (Brown et al., 2009, p.913). This is as expected, but this also shows how different types of victimization can affect an individual psychologically.

Depression

Depression is a neurobiological condition that is associated with physiological and cognitive irregularity (Kaltenboeck & Harmer, 2018). Kaltenboeck and Harmer (2018) examined the past and future of depressive disorders and reported that people with depression tend to have irritable moods and feelings of sadness and emptiness. Depression was seen to have a strong

negative impact on students' lives and could lead to an increase in drop out and suicide rates (Bukhari & Saba, 2017). Li et al. (2022) covered that in the United States, 33% of college students reported having strong symptoms of depression. Bukhari and Saba (2017) examined the role of life satisfaction of college students with mental health issues. Depression brought along several negative symptoms related to being in college, such as increased academic stress, lack of sleep, increased alcohol and drug use, and negative eating habits (Li et al. 2022). These depressive symptoms should be cared for by either a professional counselor or medication when necessary.

Carey et al. (2018) conducted research that focuses on the psychological consequences that sexual assault can have on woman who are first year college students, as well as their need for support and intervention to address these issues. In this study, 483 first year female students completed health questionnaires when they arrived on campus as well as when they ended their first semester. The results show that of the participants in the study, 12% reported sexual assault during their first semester (Carey et al., 2018). When it comes to how they were affected psychologically, there was a significant increase of anxiety and depression toward the end of the semester. When it comes to college women and their depressive symptoms, Carey et al. (2018) stated that, "Women who experienced first-semester sexual assault were approximately 2.5 times more likely to have meaningful depression symptoms" (p.483).

Mondin et al. (2016) examines the mood disorders that sexual violence can produce. The research included 1,560 subjects, ages 18-24, 56% being women, who were asked about their sexual victimization and the depressive mood changes that occurred after the incident (Mondin et al., 2016). The prevalence of depression was twice as common in those who suffered sexual violence than not, as well as there being a strong correlation between depression episodes and

sexual violence in general (Mondin et al., 2016). Overall, depression was shown to be a significant psychological issue after an encounter with sexual violence.

Anxiety

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2023) describe anxiety as a feeling of uneasiness or worry, and can be mild or severe, and can progress overtime. Sexual violence on campus can lead to anxiety of college students just based on the fear of the likelihood of it occurring. Manigilo (2012) covered in his study on sexual abuse and anxiety disorders that there is a strong correlation with sexual victimization and increased anxiety. It is also stated that when looking at gender, there tends to be higher rates of anxiety in women (Manigilo, 2012). Suhita et al. (2021) examined the psychological impact that sexual violence can have on victims. Anxiety was one of the top impacts seen in victims of sexual violence. The researchers concluded that when dealing with anxiety, the best way to remedy it was to get counseling and to join programs such as the SAFE project which is an advocate run therapy project that aids in the healing process of sexual violence by providing trauma informed care as well as confidential shelters for victims (Suhita et al., 2021).

McQueen et al. (2021) conducted a study that focused on the impact that sexual assault and victim-blaming from law enforcement can have on women's health. In this study, 23 women were interviewed on their personal victimization in regard to sexual assault. Of the 23 women that were interviewed, 100% of them reported experiencing negative effects on their mental health (McQueen et al., 2021). The negative effects that most women reported were PTSD and depression. This study also showed the negative mental health effects that came as a result of the dismissive police interaction with respect to the sexual assault. The victims stated that on top of the mental health effects from the sexual victimization, they felt they developed an even lower

self-esteem, less self-worth as well as secondary victimization due to the lack of investigation and insensitivity from law enforcement (McQueen et al., 2021). Overall, there are many psychological effects that a victim can incur after the victimization, and these can build up over time and create additional issues within oneself.

PTSD

PTSD is a fairly common psychological issue that usually arises due to the occurrence of a traumatic event/experience and can persist for years. Dworkin et al. (2023) found that almost 75% of sexual violence survivors experiences PTSD symptoms after their attack. Hyperarousal where one is persistently irritable or angry, numbness to emotions, and unwanted reexperience of the event are common symptoms of PTSD. Ehlers and Clark (2000) developed a cognitive model that explains how our thoughts and beliefs after a traumatic event can affect the maintenance of PTSD symptoms. PTSD in victims tends to persist if the victim believes negative appraisals after the victimization such as the victim thinking that others can see that they are a victim and as a result, that will attract more danger and disaster in their life. (Ehlers & Clark, 2000). After these traumatic experiences, individuals may develop negative intrusive thoughts, avoidance behavior and heightened emotional response, all of which are characteristics of PTSD, and that these need to be challenged through therapy and other intervention programs to promote recovery (Ehlers & Clark, 2000).

Post-traumatic stress disorders after victimization can be a significant issue and can affect at least one third of all sexual assault survivors (Murn & Schultz, 2022). Negative social reactions from friends and family can contribute to the likelihood of depression, anxiety, and PTSD (Campbell et al., 2009). An example of this can be seen when friends or family do not believe the victim or when the victim's actions are being blamed for the attack. Zoellner et al.

(2000) stated that when PTSD comes as a result of victimization, other effects tend to arise as well like interpersonal stress, anxiety, anger, depression, and alcohol/drug abuse. Female students are more likely to experience higher rates of PTSD as well as more severe depression and anxiety compared to other students (Kammer-Kerwick et al., 2021). Although anxiety can be a short-term effect, the severity can fluctuate from person to person. Overall, the psychological effects of sexual victimization often involve significant psychological impacts that require appropriate treatment and recovery.

Mental health strategies are set in place to provide students with the assistance and resources needed to improve their mental health. Sexual victimization can bring up a tremendous number of mental health issues which is why it is essential for universities to provide the resources necessary for victims to improve their health. Stoner and Cramer (2019) examined the presence of health services on campus as well as their barriers. The mental health services that were provided for students on campus were student health centers, crisis response centers, counseling and psychological services, and women's resource centers. In the study, females indicated that when they were encouraged by friends and family, they utilized these services and received encouraging information from their first introduction which increased the likelihood to consider seeking help (Stoner & Cramer, 2019). Prince (2015) also covered in his study on college counseling and mental health that 44% of students reported having some emotional or stress related problem that was affecting their academic success and well-being and that the counselors at these institutions have become chief mental health officers for the campus and its safety. The best practices for mental health strategies are to provide any form of professional psychological help such as professional counselors/psychologists that can provide medication to

students, while offering other therapy resources such as mental health programs like SAFE that uses a trauma informed approach to encourage improved mental health.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a content analysis methodology. Once again, the purpose of this study is to identify best practices in dealing with college aged females who have been a victim of sexual violence while evaluating what a sample of Ohio universities are doing to support female victims of sexual violence. Finally, this paper will offer an ideal support system that can be implemented by a university that directly aligns with the best practices previously identified. The research will include both public and private universities with the largest attendance in all five regions of Ohio, northeast (NE), northwest (NW), southeast (SE), southwest (SW) and central. In the NE region of Ohio, the private school chosen was Case Western Reserve University, and the public school was Cleveland State University. In the NW region of Ohio, the private school chosen was Mount (Mt.) Union, and the public school was Miami University. In the SE region of Ohio, the private school chosen was Marietta College, and the public school was Ohio University. In the SW region of Ohio, the private school chosen was University of Dayton, and the public school was University of Cincinnati. In the central region of Ohio, the private school chosen was Ohio Wesleyan University, and the public school was The Ohio State University. The data was gathered through the examination of the university's official websites and based off of what is currently posted for the year 2023. The content analysis involved a systematic review of these university's sexual violence survivor support measures and programs and examined the differences and similarities between them. By synthesizing and interpreting the findings, I aimed to develop a comprehensive design that aligned with the needs of survivors by providing the best practices from each of these universities into one ideal design. This qualitative approach allows for an in-depth insight to ensure the programs relevance and effectiveness.

FINDINGS

The Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence (2022) established core standards that are rooted in evidence based best practices with the field of sexual violence. These standards should be implemented when developing programs for victims of sexual violence such as standards of service provided, ancillary services as well as state and national resources. In this section, I will examine ten different universities, comprising both public and private institutions from various regions of Ohio. The goal is to analyze and compare how they are currently applying the five support strategies being assessed.

TABLE 1:

University Support Strategies

Institutions	Safety Strategies	Best Practices (X=no) (✓=yes)	Legal Strategies	Best Practices (X=no) (✓=yes)	Medical Strategies	Best Practices (X=no) (✓=yes)	Preserving Education	Best Practices (X=no) (✓=yes)	Mental Health Strategies	Best Practices (X=no) (✓=yes)
Case Western Reserve University	Office of Equity, Blue-light Emergency Phones, Spartan Safe App	✓	Campus Police and Local Law Enforcement Collaboration, CWRU Law Clinic	✓	Sexual Wellness Vending Machines	✓	Office of Equity	✓	SAFE Line, University counseling services, Student Advocate for Gender Violence Prevention, Education and Advocacy	✓
Cleveland State University	Office of Equity, Campus Watch Program, Empower Bystander Education, Blue-Light Emergency, Phones, RAVE Guardian App	✓	Campus Police and Local Law Enforcement Collaboration, Pro Bono Program	✓	No SANE or On-Campus Sexual Wellness Vending Machine	X	Office of Equity	✓	In-person and Virtual Counseling services, Reach Out App	✓
University of Mount Union	Title IX Coordinator, Blue-Light Emergency Phones, Safety Escort Service, Crime Prevention Programming, Bystander Educations,	✓	Campus Security and Local Law Enforcement Collaboration	✓	No SANE or On-Campus Sexual Wellness Vending Machine	X	Title IX Coordinator	✓	Office of Counseling Services, The Office of the Chaplain,	✓
Miami University	Office of Equity, Blue-Light Emergency Phones, RAVE Guardian App, Bystander Education,	✓	Campus Police and Local Law Enforcement Collaboration, Women Helping Women	✓	No SANE or On-Campus Sexual Wellness Vending Machine	X	Office of Equity	✓	Women Helping Women, Sexual Assault Survivor Support (SASS),	✓

Marietta College	Title IX Coordinator, Blue-Light Emergency Phones, Pioneer Alert System,	✓	Campus Police and Local Law Enforcement Collaboration,	✓	No SANE or On-Campus Sexual Wellness Vending Machine	X	Title IX Coordinator	✓	Dr. J. Michael Harding Center for Health and Wellness, The CARE Team, Prio-to-Prio Peer Support Center, SAFE Line	✓
Ohio University	Office of Equity and Civil Rights Compliance, Blue-Light Emergency Phones, Bobcat Safe App, Prevention Education Program	✓	Campus Police and Local law Enforcement Collaboration, SAP	✓	No SANE or On-Campus Sexual Wellness Vending Machine	X	University Equity and Civil Rights Compliance	✓	SAP, THRIVE, The Women's Center	✓
University Of Dayton	Equity Compliance Office, Blue-Light Emergency Phones, Flyer Safe App, PAVE	✓	Department of Public Safety and Local law Enforcement Collaboration, YWCA Dayton	✓	No SANE or On-Campus Sexual Wellness Vending Machine	X	Equity Compliance Office	✓	Campus Ministry, Women's Center, Seminars and Group Therapy	✓
University of Cincinnati	The Office of Equity and Inclusion, Blue-Light Emergency Phones, Bearcat Guardian App, Bearcat Bystander	✓	Campus Police and Local law Enforcement Collaboration, UC Domestic Violence and Protection Order Clinic/Legal Aid	✓	SANE	✓	The Office of Equity and Inclusion	✓	Women Helping Women, UC Psychiatric Emergency Services/ Mobile Crisis, Group Therapy, ARISE	✓
Ohio Wesleyan University	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Department, Escort Service, Blue-light Emergency Phones, Campus Shield App	✓	Department of Public Safety and Local law Enforcement Collaboration	✓	No SANE or On-Campus Sexual Wellness Vending Machine	X	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Department	✓	Virtual Care Group, University Chaplain	✓
Ohio State University	Office of Institutional Equity, Blue-Light Emergency, Phones, RAVE Guardian App, Escort Services, Bystander Intervention Workshop	✓	Campus Police and Local law Enforcement Collaboration, Student Legal Services, SARNCO	✓	No SANE or On-Campus Sexual Wellness Vending Machine	X	Office of Institutional Equity, Student Advocacy Center	✓	STAR, STAR TRC, Let's Talk, MIND-STRONG	✓

Northeast

Private

Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), a private institution in Northeast Ohio with around 6,000 undergraduates, provides an array of supportive strategies for survivors of sexual violence. These strategies encompass safety measures, legal compliance, medical services, educational support, and mental health assistance. Safety measures at CWRU are produced by

the Office of Equity¹. The Office of Equity is an administrative office responsible for promoting and ensuring fair and inclusive practices within the university community. While its primary focus is on addressing issues related to discrimination, equity, and diversity, it plays a vital role in creating a safer and more supportive environment for victims of sexual violence through things like tailored living and class arrangements and access to victim advocates. CWRU also implemented blue-light emergency phones that illuminate the area at dark and offer a direct line to emergency personnel. Similarly, CWRU offers an application for smart devices called Spartan Safe which is also a direct line to emergency services which can be used by the user at any location. These resources contribute to a safer environment by providing direct access to emergency personnel, increasing visibility, and empowering victims to report incidents while maintaining their privacy.

Legal support at CWRU can be seen through their collaborative efforts with their Campus Police and Local Police. This collaboration is essential in order to provide a coordinated and effective response, access to legal processes, and enhance accountability for offenders. Additionally, victims have access to legal assistance and representation at the CWRU Law Clinic which is a “law firm” within the law school that deals with a handful of legal issues such as civil, criminal, and disability related matters. This collaborative approach is crucial for addressing such serious and sensitive legal matters as sexual victimization.

Medical services at CWRU are implemented in their 24/7 available wellness vending machines that contain items such as condoms, pregnancy tests and emergency contraception. These medical resources are accessible to students at any time of day and offer a sense of

¹ <https://case.edu/studentlife/healthcounseling/counseling-services/advocate>

confidentiality seeing as though students do not have to interact with anyone but the machines. Education related support starts with the Office of Equity that offers services such as tutors, class withdrawal without penalties, and schedule changes. These services offer victims the flexibility and support necessary for them to continue their educational journey after a traumatic event.

Mental Health assistance is provided to students in numerous ways, one being a 24/7 SAFE Line that is accessible anytime of the day and is equipped with trained professionals and advocates. These conversations are confidential and provide assistance with emotional support, crisis intervention, safety planning and so much more that can improve the safety and quality of life for victims. CWRU also has on-campus student advocates who are trained in supporting victims of gender violence through crisis intervention techniques. These offer victims of sexual violence a means to address their mental health struggles and concerns by offering a supportive and confidential environment with proper resources for improving mental health. In entirety, CWRU provides a comprehensive range of support services for survivors of sexual violence.

Public

Cleveland State University (CSU), a public institution in Northeast Ohio with around 10,000 undergraduates, has a range of support strategies for survivors of sexual violence. Safety measures at CSU are produced by the Office of Equity to allow victims the sense of safety at their on-campus community by tailoring victims' schedules and living arrangements in a way that avoids their accused parties. ²CSU implemented a Campus Watch Program that enhances campus safety by increasing security and police presence and other safety resources, like safe transportation while also educating the university's community on how to prevent crime. CSU also educates students through their Empower Bystander Education program which shows

² <https://www.csuohio.edu/studentwellness/sexual-violence-prevention-sexual-health-education>

bystanders how to notice signs of violence and how to assist victims. Two other resources CSU implements are blue light emergency phones that illuminate the area and the RAVE Guardian application for students to download on their smart devices and both of these have direct lines to emergency services where confidential tips can be submitted on any suspicious or dangerous behavior and emergencies. These resources contribute to a safe environment by providing access to help, increasing visibility, and empowering victims to report incidents while maintaining their privacy. Legal support is provided through a collaboration between the CSU police department and local law enforcement. This collaboration can increase students' sense of safety knowing that the two coordinate to provide effective services for the university community. The Pro Bono Program at CSU is a partnership where law students work with the Legal Aid Society to offer legal services to the Cleveland area offering free legal advice to the community. These services offer legal professionals and victim advocates that can inform and assist sexual assault victims, which contributes to a more comprehensive and supportive response to victims' legal needs.

In the absence of on-campus Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners or a sexual wellness vending machine, the university addresses victims' academic needs through the Office of Equity. This department is instrumental and initiates education-preservation strategies, connecting students with the appropriate departments and individuals to accommodate academic struggles such as assignment and test extensions, accommodated testing location/environment, and the option to retake a course or withdraw without penalties.

Mental Health assistance is provided to students in numerous ways, the first being in-person and virtual counseling that work with student's schedules and comfort levels while offering support, intervention techniques, and additional resources when necessary. CSU also offers a free application on smart phones called Reach Out which is a one stop connection to

mental health services available both on and off-campus as well as tips and videos that can extend support and inspire optimism. These resources offer victims a means to address their mental health concerns and get reliable information and care on how to improve for the future. As a whole, CSU provides an extensive array of support services for survivors of sexual violence.

Northwest

Private

University of Mount Union (UMU), a private university in Northwest Ohio with around 2,000 undergraduates, implements various support measures for survivors of sexual violence. Safety measures at UMU are produced by the Title IX Coordinator which include tailored class and living accommodation for victims of sexual violence³. UMU also has blue-light emergency phones which are strategically placed around campus to increase illumination when dark and offer direct lines to emergency personnel. Safety efforts are also seen through the university's escort services provided by campus security who assist students around campus at any time of the day. Two programs UMU has set up for safety efforts on campus are the Crime Prevention Programming and Bystander Education. The Crime Prevention Programming is run by their campus safety and security director where they discuss campus safety and crime prevention as well as ways to improve each. The Bystander Education program is delivered to every new student on campus at orientation and explains how to identify cases of violence and how to offer help in these situations. These resources contribute to a safe environment by providing access to help, increasing visibility, and empowering victims to stand up to violence and report incidents while maintaining their privacy. UMU does not have their own police department because it is a

³ <https://www.mountunion.edu/campus-life/safety-and-parking/sexual-misconduct/title-ix/sexual-misconduct-process>

smaller university, however legal compliance is provided through a collaboration between the campus security and local law enforcement. This collaboration benefits students by ensuring legal protocols are being followed through the expertise of each department.

Although on-campus medical services presently do not have Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners or sexual wellness vending machines, the university guarantees academic success for victims by providing academic accommodations through the Title IX coordinator. This includes options such as extensions for assignments and tests, withdrawal from class without penalty, and the possibility of taking a leave of absence. These accommodations allow victims to work on their own health while also trying to reach their academic goals and having support from the university and its faculty. Mental health services are provided through the Office of Counseling which is an on-campus resource that allows victims to speak their concerns, issues, or questions to licensed professionals who can further assist and help them in their healing journey or offer additional resources for mental health assistance. The Chaplain is another on-campus recourse that victims of sexual assault can utilize which can offer another form of healing through spiritual guidance after a traumatic event. These resources allow victims a safe space to express their thoughts and feelings and receive feedback or treatment on how to improve their current situation to better their future. The University of Mount Union is a smaller institution but still provides a comprehensive range of support services for survivors of sexual violence.

Public

Miami University (MU) of Ohio, a public university in Northwest Ohio with around 17,000 undergraduates, has various support strategies for survivors of sexual violence. Miami University implements several strategies for safety, one of which is The Office of Equity who

supports victim's safety by offering tailored housing and course schedules⁴. Miami University implemented blue-light emergency phones that are strategically placed around campus and offer illumination when dark as well as a direct line to emergency personnel. Similarly, Miami University encourages students to download the RAVE Guardian application for smart devices that allows students to have access to emergency personnel at any location of the campus. Miami University also focuses on bystander education and offers specific process and resources to intervene safely and efficiently when they hear about or see acts of sexual violence in progress on campus. Miami university places an emphasis on the safety and security of victims of sexual violence through these supportive resources. Legal compliance at Miami University is observed through the collaboration of Miami University Police and local law enforcement who provide efficient and effective response to on campus issues while following legal protocols. Women Helping Women is another resource at Miami University which provides legal advice and advocacy to victims of sexual violence on campus. These resources ensure legal compliance is upheld and offer legal education and support to victims.

While medical services currently lack an on-campus Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners or sexual wellness vending machines, the university ensures academic success for victims through academic accommodations offered by The Office of Equity at Miami University who provide academic support to victims of sexual violence through education preservation measures such as ability to reschedule tests and assignments, change class schedules, and access tutoring. Offering accommodation to academics can empower victims to continue their educational goals and offer a sense of support from the university. Miami University focuses on bettering the mental health of sexual violence victims by offering programs and resources for support, assessment, and

⁴ <https://miamioh.edu/life-at-miami/health-well-being/student-wellness/involvement-opportunities/sass.html>

treatment. Miami University has a student run program called Sexual Assault Survivor Support (SASS) that is an online blog intended to be a safe space for survivors of sexual assault that empowers, heals, and supports. Additionally, Miami University partners with Women Helping Women which is a non-profit organization that focuses on the support of gender-based violence and offers resources and guidance for mental health concerns. These resources offer victims immediate assistance as well as collaborative efforts with the university's counseling center to offer effective therapy or treatment for victims. Miami University provides a comprehensive range of support services for survivors of sexual violence.

Southeast

Private

Marietta College, a private university in Southeast Ohio with around 1,000 undergraduates, implements a variety of support strategies for survivors of sexual violence. Safety measures at Marietta College are produced by the Title IX Coordinator which include tailored class and living accommodation for victims of sexual violence⁵. Safety measures are also implemented around campus through blue-light emergency phones that allow for illumination at night and direct calls to emergency personnel as well as through the Pioneer Alert System which texts students about emergencies and threats on campus. Legal compliance at Marietta College can be seen through the collaboration between the Marietta College police department and local law enforcement who ensure that legal protocols are being implemented. On campus legal services and advocates lack at Marietta College which can hinder students access to crucial support and resources.

⁵ <https://www.marietta.edu/safety-well-being-campus#:~:text=Pioneer>

While on-campus medical services presently lack Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners or sexual wellness vending machines, Marietta College prioritizes the academic success of victims by providing academic accommodations through The Title IX Coordinator. They provide academic support to victims of sexual violence through education preservation measures such as ability to reschedule tests and assignments, change class schedules, and access tutoring. These accommodations empower victims to continue their academic goals while receiving a sense of support from the institution and flexibility in their class schedule to work through their trauma. Marietta College focuses on bettering the mental health of sexual violence victims by offering programs and resources for support, assessment, and treatment. The on-campus Dr. J. Michael Harding Center for Health and Wellness offers access to counselors who provide professional support and options to victims. Marietta College offers a program called The Collaboration, Assessment, Response, Engagement (CARE) Team, that helps at-risk students reach their academic goals to success and to offer support. Another program that also focuses on victims' mental health is called Pio-to-Pio Peer Support Center, that is a student run program with trained peers that can be a way for victims to socialize, de-stress and share struggles and success in a safe space. Marietta College offers a support hotline called SAFE Line for victims of sexual violence that has 24/7 access is a confidential line that is accessible anytime of the day and is equipped with trained professions and advocates. Marietta College takes a thorough approach to helping victims of sexual violence in their healing journey by offering expertise and support for victims. Overall, Marietta College provides a comprehensive range of support services for survivors of sexual violence.

Public

Ohio University (OU), a public university in Southeast Ohio with around 18,000 undergraduates, provides an array of supportive strategies for survivors of sexual violence. Sexual violence safety measures at Ohio University are produced through the University Equity and Civil Rights Department⁶. The safety measures that are implemented by this department are extensive, but they focus on safety measures such as tailored living and class arrangements to improve students' on campus sense of safety. Blue-light emergency phones are strategically placed around campus and allow for illumination when dark as well as a direct line to emergency personnel. Similarly, the Bobcat Safe Application is encouraged for students to download on their smart devices because it offers a direct line to emergency services no matter the user's location on campus as well as interactive maps and location services. OU also offers a Prevention Education Program that incorporates bystander intervention, rape myth education and victim-blaming attitudes to educate and empower the campus community to take a stand against violence. These resources contribute to a safe environment by providing direct access to help, increasing visibility, and educating and empowering victims and bystanders to stand up to violence and report incidents while maintaining their privacy.

Legal compliance is provided through a collaborative effort between campus police and local law enforcement. This collaboration ensures that the legal protocols and procedures for handling criminal incidents are consistently followed. OU also provides an on-campus program called the Survivor Advocacy Program (SAP) which offers a range of support from licensed professionals such as crisis intervention, legal education and support, and counseling. These resources ensure legal compliance is upheld and offer legal education and support to victims through licensed professionals.

⁶ <https://www.ohio.edu/student-affairs/dean-of-students/sexual-misconduct>

While medical services currently lack an on-campus Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners or sexual wellness vending machines, the university ensures academic success for victims through academic accommodations offered by The Office of Equity and Civil Rights Compliance. This office preserves education by providing academic accommodations such as extensions for test and assignment deadlines, leave of absence, and withdrawal from class without penalty. These accommodations empower survivors, cultivating an environment that not only supports them but also believes in and actively promotes their educational aspirations. OU offers mental health services on-campus through the SAP program as well. SAP's licensed professionals offer an on-campus or virtual visit that is confidential and provides support where survivors can be validated for how they feel as well as offering recommendations for additional assistance if/when necessary. THRIVE is another program that OU implements that offers counseling services that understand that each person, relationship, and scenario is different and therefore the needs of students are different. Additionally, The Women's Center at OU offers survivors a safe space, empowerment and motivation through support groups, workshops as well as referrals to mental health resources. Ohio University prioritizes the well-being of survivors by offering a comprehensive range of accessible mental health support services and programs that are tailored to each student's needs. Overall, Ohio University delivers a broad range of support services for survivors of sexual violence.

Southwest

Private

University of Dayton, a private university in Southwest Ohio with around 8,000 undergraduates, implements various support measures for survivors of sexual violence. Sexual violence safety measures at the University of Dayton are produced through the Equity

Compliance Office who ensure measures are being implemented to increase campus safety such as a tailored living and class arrangements to avoid the accused parties⁷. Additionally, blue-light emergency phones and the Flyer Safe app are direct lines to emergency personnel and the blue-light phones increase illumination at night on campus. The University of Dayton also has a program called Peers Advocating for Violence Education (PAVE) that informs the campus community on bystander intervention by providing inclusive education talks about well-being on campus and empowers the community to take a stand and make a change. These resources enhance safety by offering direct support, increasing awareness, and educating and empowering victims and bystanders to report violence while ensuring confidentiality. Legal compliance can be seen through the University of Dayton's Department of Public Safety collaboration with the local law enforcement which ensures that legal protocols and procedures are being implemented properly. University of Dayton partners with YWCA Dayton which is an organization based on eliminating racism and empowering women. This organization has an on-campus advocate who can help explain victims their rights and legal options or next steps. Legal compliance is essential in order to provide victims justice and education through the legal process to understand their rights and needs.

Although on-campus medical services presently do not feature Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners or a sexual wellness vending machine, the University of Dayton prioritizes the academic success of victims by providing academic accommodations through The Equity Compliance Office. This is the central point of contact for ensuring educational success by offering academic accommodations such as dropping a class, requesting an incomplete, and changing classes after the deadline. Academic accommodations empower victims to reach their

⁷ <https://udayton.edu/womenscenter/education/info/violence/sexual-harassment.php>

academic goals by offering support that will assist with helping victims stay on track with their academic goals. The University of Dayton is a Catholic institution and therefore have a Campus Ministry that can offer mental health assistance in a spiritual manner to victims of sexual violence. The Women's Center, seminars and group therapy also offers on-campus victims support for their mental health by providing safe places for victims to express how they feel as well as offering resources for where to get treatment if needed. These mental health services allow for safe and confidential spaces for victims to express their thoughts and concerns while having support on campus and access to resources off campus as well. Overall, the University of Dayton provides a comprehensive range of support services for survivors of sexual violence.

Public

University of Cincinnati (UOC), a public university in Southwest Ohio with around 30,000 undergraduates, offers a diverse set of support initiatives for survivors of sexual violence. Sexual violence safety measures at the University of Cincinnati are produced through the Office of Equity who ensure measures are being implemented to increase campus safety such as a tailored living and class arrangements to avoid the accused parties⁸. Blue-light emergency phones are strategically placed around the school in case someone needs a direct call to emergency services as well as assisting in illuminating the walkways at nighttime. The Bearcat Guardian application is a free service that students can download on their smart devices and have 24/7 access to emergency services at any location on campus. Additionally, the UOC bystander education program called Bearcat Education is another resource that increases awareness of the issue, how to approach the situations, and where and who to go to for assistance. These resources enhance safety by offering direct support lines to emergency services, increasing awareness, and

⁸ <https://www.uc.edu/about/equity-inclusion/gender-equity/title-ix/sex--and-or-gender-based-misconduct-policy-and-procedure.html>

educating and empowering bystanders with essential information to help keep their campus community safe and informed. Legal compliance is upheld at the University of Cincinnati by ensuring legal protocols are followed through a collaborative effort between campus police and local law enforcement. Legal assistance is also offered at UC Domestic Violence and Protection Order Clinic/Legal Aid where victims have a chance to discuss their case and increase their education on the steps they can take legally and for their safety. Ensuring legal compliance and assistance are being implemented is essential for victims of sexual violence in order to get justice and support from their institution.

Medical services are provided through the University of Cincinnati Medical Center which is the only academic medical center with a Level 1 adult trauma center which has on site SANEs to assist in sexual violence cases. The availability of medical services and resources is essential when providing confidential, responsive, and supportive care to victims of sexual violence and having SANEs who are certified and trained on the subject is essential to providing exceptional care. The University of Cincinnati's Office of Equity and Inclusion serves as the primary resource for victims seeking academic accommodations, providing tailored solutions such as temporary living arrangements and adjusted class schedules. This allows students to stay on track to meeting their academic goals while allowing a sense of support and understanding from the University.

Mental health services at the University of Cincinnati are offered in several ways, one being the collaboration between Women Helping Women and the university. Women Helping Women offer an on-campus advocate that assists with one-on-one support with victims and offers support, encouragement, and resources for mental health. A crisis hotline is also available called the UC Psychiatric Emergency Services/Mobile Crisis which operates 24/7 to offer

support to victims at any time of the day. ARISE is a group on campus that is gender-inclusive for all sexual and/or relationship violence survivors. This group allows victims to speak on their experiences while connecting with other survivors and identifying what they need to move forward in their healing journey. Extensive mental health support is provided at the University of Cincinnati which is essential to empower survivors to get the help they need in order to live their life to its fullest potential. The University of Cincinnati ensures a comprehensive set of support services for survivors of sexual violence.

Central

Private

Ohio Wesleyan University (OWU), a private university in Central Ohio with around 1,500 undergraduates, offers a variety of support strategies for survivors of sexual violence. Safety measures at Ohio Wesleyan University are produced through the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Department, which improve victims' sense of safety on campus in ways such as accommodations to students' class and living arrangement and offering escort services from campus security⁹. OWU has blue-light emergency phones placed around campus that both increase visibility when dark and offer direct access to emergency personnel. Similarly, the CampusShield App contains a direct line to emergency personnel while also incorporating things like sending anonymous tips, safety/AED map, and friend watch that allows friends to see the user's location until the time allotted or the user marks that they are safe. These comprehensive efforts enhance safety and offer an environment that promotes students' well-being. Legal compliance is upheld through a collaborative effort between OWU's Department of Public Safety and Local law Enforcement. This collaboration ensures that protocols are being followed

⁹ <https://www.owu.edu/about/title-ix-sexual-misconduct-and-the-clery-act/title-ix-and-sexual-harassment-policy/#supportive>

and offers a swift and coordinated response to incidents, as well as offering a supportive and legally sound environment for victims of sexual violence at OWU.

While medical services currently lack an on-campus Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners or Sexual wellness vending machine, the university ensures academic success for victims through academic accommodations offered by The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Department. OWU encourages students to meet their academic goals by offering academic support such as leaves of absence and deadline extensions on assignments. These encourage victims' success by offering them a sense of support and encouragement while empowering them to reach their goals. Mental health services are offered to victims through a partnership between OWU and the Virtual Care Group which is a crisis intervention service that is available on any device 24/7 and offers medical and mental health support and they also have an office on campus as well. Additionally, mental health services are provided through the university Chaplain who offers support by listening to victims and offering spiritual guidance. Mental health support is necessary for victims in order to get them started with their healing journey and help the victim improve over time and know that there are safe places that will listen and offer guidance and support. Ohio Wesleyan University delivers a broad range of support services for survivors of sexual violence.

Public

The Ohio State University (OSU), a public university in Central Ohio with around 46,000 undergraduates, implements a variety of support strategies for survivors of sexual violence. Safety measures at OSU are produced through their Office of Institutional Equity which implement safety measures to improve victims' sense of safety on campus like making arrangements to their class and living schedules¹⁰. Additionally, blue-light emergency phones are

¹⁰ <https://titleix.osu.edu/navigation/get-help/>

placed around campus to both increase visibility when dark and to offer a direct line to emergency personnel. Similarly, OSU has a smart device application called RAVE Guardian that also offers a different line to emergency personnel as well as informing chosen friends and family to have access to the user's location until time has lapsed or the user has informed that they have arrived at their destination. Escort services are also offered on campus to both students and faculty who feel unsafe at any time on campus. Campus security provides this service, and they can be informed in advance or on the spot and are available 24/7. OSU offers all students a bystander intervention workshop by zoom that provides tools to recognize and address bias incidents, fostering a more inclusive environment through practical intervention in real-life scenarios. These comprehensive safety measures allow victims to have direct access to emergency personnel while empowering students to speak up and educate themselves on the issue. Legal compliance is upheld through a collaborative effort between OSU Police Department and Local law Enforcement which ensures that legal protocols and procedures are implemented. OSU also partners with the Sexual Assault Response Network of Central Ohio (SARNCO) which provide on-campus advocacy services and education on the legal process of victim's cases. These collaborative efforts are essential to provide extensive knowledge and ensure protocols and procedures are being implemented, followed, and understood.

Although on-campus medical services currently do not include Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners or a sexual wellness vending machine, the university prioritizes the academic success of victims through academic accommodations provided by the Office of Institutional Equity and the Student Advocacy Center. These departments ensure that victims academic needs are being met and offer accommodations accordingly such as extensions for tests or assignments, grade grievances, withdrawals without penalty and leaves of absence. Academic support encourages

victims of sexual violence to push through their trauma and meet their academic goals and to promote a supportive environment that strives for success. Mental health services at OSU can be seen through the programs they have implemented like Stress, Trauma, and Resilience Program (STAR) and The STAR Trauma Recovery Center (STAR TRC) which recognize the importance of addressing and healing trauma using evidence-based trauma-informed practices. Let's Talk is another program available by zoom or phone, that deals with mental health by allowing students to drop-in on a first-come, first-served basis where confidential, informal mental health consultations take place. Additionally, the MINDSTRONG program is focused on behavioral skill building that uses a theory-based approach to improve mental health like reduce stress, enhance emotion regulation, and improve mental resilience. These offer victims of sexual violence a means to address their mental health struggles and concerns by offering supportive programs with proper resources for improving mental health. The Ohio State University offers an extensive array of support services for survivors of sexual violence.

In general, these Ohio institutions employ numerous resources for victims of sexual violence. Where some institutions lack resources, others are abundant in them and vice versa. Institutions need to take into consideration the needs of their victims which can vary from those at other institutions depending on things like the location of the institution, its class sizes, as well as the prevalence and severity of the sexual violence cases on campus. What one institution does, may not work for the other based on their guidelines or policies therefore it is necessary to offer an ideal program design that is inclusive to all victims and their needs at any institution.

CONTRIBUTIONS

This research provides valuable insight on the issue of sexual violence on campus and the impacts it can have on victims. It also connects university strategies and resources to evidence based best practices in sexual violence support. There are several contributions from this study that can be beneficial in regard to recovery, healing, and even prevention of sexual violence victimization. First, the outlined information in this study has the ability to further explain just how big of an issue campus victimization continues to be. This in effect can allow for the development or the shaping of campus supportive measures to try and mitigate these issues. If the assault cannot be prevented from new strategies set in place before a crime occurs, institutions should work on updating campus policies for victims as well as speaking with counselors as to what the next best steps are in order to help heal current victims and to prevent future victimization.

Second, this study can help support groups or programs administered by colleges and universities because it allows them to see what effects sexual violence has on victims which can hopefully motivate them to incorporate better practices for those specific effects. Lastly, this study contributes to current literature by trying to rectify the on-campus issues with sexual victimization of women as well as updating strategies to make programs align with current best practices in supporting female victims of sexual violence. Previous literature talks about the importance of victim healing programs (Murn & Schultz, 2022) and with the incorporation of best practices in one design, there can be positive impacts to not only the victim and their health but to all healing and support programs/groups as well.

Ideal Program Design

This section will explain how this research can contribute to the production of an ideal program design for institutions that work in the best interest of the needs of victims of sexual violence. The design will incorporate ideal practices from each of the support strategies based on the empirical research from the institutions and previous research on the subject.

Safety Strategies

- Blue-light emergency phones
- School safe applications
- Escort services
- Campus advocate
 - Class/living arrangements
- Bystander intervention
 - Consent
 - De-escalation

Ensuring the safety of all students on campus is essential to both getting students to enroll at an institution and to finish out their degrees or certifications there. When victimization is involved, there are additional safety precautions and procedures that should be implemented in order to provide a safe, welcoming, and resourceful environment. The ideal practices for ensuring the safety of students at an institution would be to incorporate ample resources that are both accessible to students and educate the campus community on the issue. Whether the institution implements blue-light emergency phones, smart device applications, or escort services, these allow students the comfort of knowing that at any time and location on campus, emergency personnel can be reached with the push of a button. Campus advocates craft

individualized plans tailored to the specific needs of victims, aiming to enhance their safety and well-being. (Voth Schrag et al. 2023). Ensuring the safety of victims involves providing accommodations, such as adjusting class and living arrangements, to prevent any potential encounters between the victim and the offender in both academic and residential settings. Participation in campus advocate programming emphasizes educational components, fostering supportive connections, and facilitating access to resources. Safety is seamlessly integrated into campus advocacy, encompassing not only the support for physical security but also the establishment of a secure and confidential environment conducive to sharing information and expressing needs (Wood et al. 2021). This engagement results in heightened empowerment concerning safety, subsequently positively influencing enhancing overall safety (Voth Schrag et al. 2023).

Bystander intervention programs are key for campus safety as they incorporate education on what victimization is and what it can look like as well as the safety steps that the campus community can take to acknowledge the violence when they see something. The bystander intervention program should include two main educational components of consent and de-escalation (Pettegrew, 2021; Mental Health Matter, 2023). Consent education which would describe what exactly it is and why it is important. Real life scenarios of consent situations would be shown for students to see what it can look/sound like, what can impair one's consent as well as to determine what they can do to help a situation or who they can contact when they see that someone is not consenting or not able to consent. Additionally, de-escalation education would take the C.A.F approach (Mental Health Matter, 2023). "C" is calm, meaning that you stay calm, talk slow and low to decrease the heightened emotions. "A" is assess, meaning that you should be using active listening to determine what they are thinking or feeling. "F" is

facilitated, meaning that based on the facts presented, present the best resolution. This type of program allows for a preventative approach to sexual violence while simultaneously offering a corrective approach by increasing students' knowledge of consent and de-escalation and what red flags to look for with victimization. The focus on education in consent and de-escalation allows for a more proactive approach to avoid sexual violence cases but to also inform the community on what it looks like and how to de-escalate a scenario if things start to escalate. Overall, an ideal safety design would incorporate ample resources to ensure that victims and students have abundant support options when safety is in question.

Legal Strategies

- Campus police/public safety partnership with local police
 - Trauma informed training
- Legal services/advocates
 - Rape and crisis centers
 - Legal Aid

Legal compliance is essential to providing an equal and fair environment to all students on campus. When victimization is in question, institutions must make sure that all legal protocols are implemented in order to provide justice to the victims. In order for institutions to best serve victims of sexual violence they must abide by the federal regulations and work in accordance with local law enforcement agencies and other legal service providers that support, educate and advise victims. The implementation of a trauma informed training approach for all emergency personnel at universities is necessary to the safety of students (Reynolds, 2021). Trauma informed training would educate emergency personnel of why trauma is important to consider, how to know when there is a presence of trauma symptoms, acknowledge the effect that sexual

victimization can have on victims and proceed in their investigation based on this knowledge. It is important for those going through the training to understand why it is essential to follow guidelines when assisting with victims who have gone through trauma as well as the best ways to approach situations effectively.

The four Rs would be the golden rule in this type of training (Reynolds, 2021). The first is realization, meaning that you are aware of how trauma can affect people. Second is recognize, meaning that you can see the signs of trauma. Third is respond, meaning to follow training on trauma while taking into consideration the last “R” is resisting re-traumatization, meaning to be aware and avoid actions or words that can create stressful and escalated situations. This training allows for a coordinated response with enhanced trauma education and consistent trauma informed training standards between agencies. Additionally, on-campus legal services and advocates provide a crucial role in educating victims on their right and legal actions that they can pursue if they choose to do so. Institutions creating partnerships with local crisis agencies and organizations like Legal Aid in Ohio, would allow for more equip resources to assist victims with their legal proceedings. Overall, an ideal design for support strategies would incorporate these protocols and supports to ensure the rights of victims are being upheld and that the victims are knowledgeable in all the legal aspects of the case.

Medical Strategies

- SANE office on-campus
- Wellness Vending machines
 - Products: Pregnancy tests, Contraceptive medication, Plan B and STI tests

Medical services are essential to improving the health of sexual violence victims therefore it is crucial that institutions implement necessary resources. The ideal practices for

ensuring that the medical needs of victims are met can be seen through staffing an on-campus SANEs as well as installing 24/7 wellness vending machines. The deployment of skilled SANEs ensures that victims receive not only prompt medical attention but also compassionate care from individuals who are knowledgeable about the intricacies of their experiences. These nurses have certifications indicating their proficiency in collecting forensic evidence, conducting thorough examinations, and offering support tailored to the emotional and physical needs of survivors (Campbell et al. 2005). Such comprehensive training guarantees that victims receive the highest standard of care during their recovery process. The presence of SANEs on campus not only brings to light a sense of support but also signifies a commitment to the well-being and specialized care for victims of sexual and relationship violence (Campbell et al. 2005).

The implementation of 24/7 wellness vending machines on college campuses contributes to a comprehensive approach in supporting victims. These machines offer a discreet and convenient avenue for obtaining essential wellness products, including but not limited to contraceptives and emergency contraception like Plan B. Their strategic placement across campus ensures widespread availability, creating a safe and accessible resource for individuals in need. The confidential nature of these machines aims to mitigate any potential discomfort or stigma associated with seeking such products, fostering an environment that prioritizes the well-being and autonomy of survivors of sexual violence. Sexual victimization is widespread and can occur at any moment, making the affordability, accessibility, and impartiality of these resources crucial. This ensures that victims can promptly access what they need without the concern of exorbitant prices, or the potential judgment often linked to conventional channels.

Preserving Education Strategies

- Campus advocate

Ensuring that students have the resources necessary to achieve their academic goals is important and mandated by Title IX. When victimization is involved, there are additional strategies that must be implemented in order to ensure that victims going through trauma can achieve their goals. The ideal practice for ensuring sexual violence victims reach their academic goals is to implement academic supports through campus advocates. The campus advocates would be the direct point of contact that victims reach out to where they can receive accommodations such as extensions on tests and assignments, grade grievances, withdrawal without penalty, class changes and leaves of absence.

Campus advocates not only ensure that victims have the tools necessary to reach their goals, but also serve as a primary point of contact for all their needs. In addition to championing educational initiatives, campus advocates also facilitate a secure space that fosters trust for sharing information and expressing needs thereby fostering a holistic and empowering environment for individuals to thrive. (Woods et al. 2021) Advocates serve as an all-encompassing resource hub, delivering not only support, encouragement, and empowerment but also ensuring victims have readily accessible and comprehensive resources throughout their journey. (Woods et al. 2021; Voth Schrag et al. 2023). These accommodations are offered on a case-by-case basis depending on the needs of the victim and are personalized based on the information gathered. Overall, an ideal design to academic accommodations would involve a direct point of contact that supports victims and ensures that academic goals are attainable.

Mental Health Strategies

- Counseling services
 - Medication
 - Anti-depressants & Anti-anxiety

- Empowerment
 - Mental health programs
 - Peer-to-peer support groups

Mental health services are essential to improving the overall health of sexual assault victims therefore it is crucial for institutions to offer necessary resources for support. The ideal practices for ensuring that mental health needs of victims are being met can be seen through the implementation and availability of on-campus counseling services and mental health programs (Abrams, 2022). In doing this, institutions provide mental health care through licensed psychiatrists and/or psychologists that are supportive listeners and offer guidance and/or medication when/if necessary. Medications that psychiatrists can prescribe victims of sexual violence would be determined on a case-by-case basis depending how severe the victims depression, anxiety or PTSD symptom are. The most common medications that psychiatrists prescribe according to the Mayo Clinic (2019) tend to be anti-depressants, such as sertraline, and anti-anxiety, such as serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs). Additionally, mental health programs offer trained staff that offers safe spaces for victims to socialize, decompress and share struggles with the other victims in the program. A peer-to-peer program would allow for victims to reduce isolation and have a support system who understands what they went through which can allow for rebuilding trust in people and a safe space to express one's experiences and feelings. These programs offer a sense of empowerment and support from peers and the faculty which also provide additional resources necessary to improve mental health (Abrams, 2022). Overall, an ideal medical design would incorporate licensed professionals that offer support and medication as well as empowerment through programs that encourage socialization and a stress-free environment and state of mind.

This program design is based on the empirical research completed throughout this thesis. This program offers a comprehensive way in which support programs at universities should be designed. This design is based off the current needs of sexual violence victims and what works best in each of the five support strategies mentioned. Overall, the implementation of this program design would not only benefit survivors of sexual violence but the campus community as a whole, as it provides education and information on how to approach sexual violence scenarios and avoid them, as well as the resources necessary to prevail through them.

CONCLUSION

Limitations

It is important to mention that there are a few limitations to this study. Firstly, this information focuses exclusively on colleges in Ohio and does not include data from institutions outside of Ohio. The study's findings may not be universally applicable, as they are specifically tailored to the context of Ohio colleges and may not accurately represent support measures implemented at institutions outside of this region. Second, the sample size of universities that were chosen is small and is not representative of the population or even college population. This thesis only included ten Ohio colleges therefore the information may not be representative of the overall college population due to the small sample. Third, this thesis takes a focus on sexual victimization and does not mention other types of victimization like relationship violence. Since the thesis focuses specifically on sexual violence, the findings may not fully capture the broader spectrum of safety concerns that students might face on college campuses. Lastly, sexual violence can happen to anyone, but this thesis focuses on college women and the effects that they experience. The scope of this study may not encompass the needs of all survivors since it is geared toward a certain sex.

In order to overcome these limitations, there are a few steps that need to be taken. Firstly, the study could include institutions from other states in order to see how best practices could fluctuate and affect the results of the program design. Second, to improve the sample size to be more representative of the population or college population, more institutions could be incorporated in the research to better reflect a best practices design. Third, to expand the research other types of violence can be incorporated as well like relationship violence. Lastly, the study could include more than one sex and focus on sexual violence and its effects as a whole. Overall,

the study does have limitations, but steps can be taken to limit these and make the information and study more inclusive and representative of the population.

Future Research

The objective of this study is based more on a reactive approach where effective strategies for supporting college-aged females who have experienced sexual violence were implemented. Future research should adopt a proactive programmatic approach aimed at preventing sexual victimization rather than relying on reactive measures. Universities should strive to address the roots causes of sexual victimization to prevent violence on campus. Given the complexity and prevalence of sexual violence, it is imperative for future research to emphasize a proactive approach to mitigate this issue within the campus environment.

Summary

The goal of this study was to identify best practices in dealing with college aged females who have been a victim of sexual violence, evaluate what a sample of Ohio universities are doing to support female victims of sexual violence, and finally, to create a support system that can be implemented by a university that directly aligns with the best practices previously identified. The literature revealed the prevalence of the issue and its effects as well as the current best practices for support strategies. The research focused on if Ohio institutions currently offer the best practices for five areas of support and what an ideal program design would look like based on those best practices. Although these universities are following current federal guidelines in the sense of Title IX and the Clery Act, the findings determined that a comprehensive program design that incorporates all five support strategies is beneficial when supporting survivors of sexual violence and surpassing the scope of the current federal guidelines.

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APPENDIX

A: Conceptual Model

Conceptual Model

