RISK FACTORS FOR SEXUAL VIOLENCE PERPETRATION AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Overview of presentation

What is a risk factor?

Research rationale

Present original research: systematic review and meta-analyses of risk and protective factors for male-perpetrated sexual violence at higher education institutions

Apply research knowledge to practice

Questions
Intended takeaways for practitioners

Learn best practices for collecting and reporting institutional data on sexual violence

Highlight evidence that can inform sexual assault prevention and programming initiatives on campus
What is a risk factor?

- A variable associated with a higher likelihood of a negative outcome (Jessor, Turbin, and Costa, 1998)
  - *In this case, a factor that leads to a greater likelihood of an individual committing sexual violence.*

- Risk factors have two distinguishing characteristics:

  1. The factor must be measured before the outcome occurs
  2. They divide a population into high-risk and low risk sub-groups

(Offord and Kraemer, 2000)
Rationale
Why is it important to look at risk factors?

- Essential for prediction and prevention
- To aid in developing effective interventions
Rationale

Why is it important to look at risk factors?

- Effective interventions for sexual violence must be holistic and target the environment and context an individual lives in.
- Risk factors help us understand what aspects of an individual’s context put them at a higher risk of perpetrating sexual violence.
Rationale

Why is it important to look at risk factors of sexual violence perpetration?

- There are two recent studies which systematically review the available evidence on the effectiveness of sexual violence prevention programming at HEIs
  - DeGue et al., 2014
  - Jouriles et al., 2018

- These authors have found that there is scant and inconclusive evidence that sexual violence prevention programmes at colleges and universities change attitudes or reduce violence.

- By completing a systematic review and meta analyses of risk factors of sexual violence my research: aims to identify the factors which are most strongly associated with sexual violence perpetration so that prevention programs may better target these factors.
My research

What are the risk and protective factors for male perpetrated sexual violence toward female peers, at higher education institutions?
Research method:

**Systematic review**: Meticulous summary of all the available primary research in response to a research question.

**Meta-analysis**: Statistical procedure for combining data from multiple studies to find a common effect and establish statistical significance across studies with conflicting results.
Method

Methodological Steps:

1. I searched all major relevant electronic data bases to find articles that address risk factors for male-perpetrated sexual violence at HEIs.
2. I screened the retrieved articles, selecting those that answer my research question.
3. I extracted the data from the studies.
4. I meta-analysed (combined) the odds ratios of risk factors that appeared in one or more studies.
What studies were included:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Any male student attending any higher education institution.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Risk</td>
<td>Any condition associated with an increase in the likelihood of a male committing sexual violence against a female peer.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>An act of male perpetrated peer-to-peer sexual violence committed <strong>while the male is attending a higher education institution</strong>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Study design</td>
<td>Prospective longitudinal studies (<strong>interviewed sample at more than one time point</strong>)</td>
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Results

- 15282 articles screened, 16 papers included in the review (7 distinct cohorts)
  - Most research focuses on victimization rather than perpetration
  - Most research is cross-sectional
- Common standard for measuring sexual violence: The Sexual Experiences Survey Long Form Perpetration (SES-LFP) (Koss et al., 2006)
- Studies were published between 2003 and 2019, and sample sizes ranged from 197 to 851 males.
- No studies examined protective factors
Risk factors

- Each study reported on an average of eight risk factors.
- Little consistency between studies on the risk factors they chose to measure. Broad categories of risk factors include:
  - Demographics, Personality traits, Sexual history, Sports/fraternity membership, Alcohol use/substance abuse, Peer norms and pressure/social norms and pressure, Hostile gender role beliefs, Rape supportive beliefs.
Risk factors that were meta-analysed

■ Rape myth acceptance
■ Hostility toward women
■ Alcohol consumption
■ Delinquency
■ Fraternity membership
■ Peer approval of sexual violence
■ History of perpetration
WHAT DOESN’T PREDICT SEXUAL VIOLENCE PERPETRATION...
Rape-myth acceptance

- Rape-myth was not a statistically significant predictive factor for sexual assault perpetration
- Example of a rape-myth: “In most cases, when a woman gets raped, she was asking for it”
- Combined 1755 participants
Hostility toward women

- Hostility toward women was not a statistically significant predictive factor for sexual assault perpetration
- Combined 2218 participants
WHAT DOES PREDICT SEXUAL VIOLENCE PERPETRATION...
Alcohol consumption

- Alcohol consumption is a small but statistically significant predictive factor for sexual violence perpetration
- Odds ratio: 1.13
- Students with high-levels of reported alcohol use were 1.13 times more likely to perpetrate sexual violence
- Combined 2554 participants
Delinquency (General offending)

- Delinquency is a small but statistically significant predictive factor for sexual assault perpetration
- Odds ratio: 2.01
- Students who have committed a non-sexual offence over the past year were 2.01 times more likely to perpetrate sexual violence
Fraternity membership

- Fraternity membership is a small but statistically significant predictive factor for sexual assault perpetration
- Odds ratio: 2.65
- Students are a member of a fraternity were 2.65 times more likely to perpetrate sexual violence
Peer approval of sexual violence

- Having peers who approve of sexual violence is a small but statistically significant predictive factor for sexual assault perpetration
- Odds ratio: 1.93
- Students who had peers who approved sexual violence were 1.93 times more likely to perpetrate sexual violence
History of sexual violence perpetration

- History of sexual violence perpetration emerged as the strongest predictor of sexual violence perpetration at a HEI.
- Odds ratio: 3.97
- Students who perpetrated sexual violence prior to attending university/college were 3.97 times more likely to perpetrate sexual violence
- Strong evidence for this: combined 1894 participants
Turning research into practice

For those designing and implementing prevention programming at institution you could consider:

■ The importance of peers in influencing behaviours of students: fraternity membership, peer approval of sexual violence, and alcohol consumption.
■ Developing strategies for targeting students who are entering your institutions having already perpetrated sexual violence
■ 3 minutes to talk with people beside you about if/how this research could impact your work
3 MINUTE SHARING:
DISCUSS IF/HOW THIS RESEARCH COULD IMPACT YOUR WORK WITH PEOPLE AROUND YOU
Turning research into practice

For those working on data collection or survey design at their institutions you could consider:

- **Longitudinal study designs** (surveying the same students more than once over time)
- **Collaborating with other schools** to increase **consistency** in measurement tools and survey designs
- **Examining perpetration** in addition to victimization in campus surveys
- Reporting on the **severity of sexual violence** perpetrated/experienced
- Conducting surveys that measure protective factors
QUESTIONS AND FEEDBACK

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References


