

## INTRODUCTION

Sexual violence (SV) is a highly prevalent public health problem at the university and college education level<sup>1</sup> with research showing that over a quarter of women will experience sexual assault in their college years.<sup>2</sup> In 2005 a report recommended that all colleges should introduce comprehensive SV prevention programming.<sup>3</sup> In 2011, the US Department of Education declared SV to be in violation of Title IX, (i.e. legislation that guarantees Americans the right to discrimination free education).<sup>4</sup> Universities and colleges were given directives to follow in relation to allegations of SV on campuses and institutions which failed to address these issues could have their Federal funding withheld (<http://www.nsvrc.org/publications/dear-colleague-letter-sexual-violence>). This move signalled a shift in the awareness of SV on campuses and heralded a university-wide determination to prevent and prosecute SV.<sup>4</sup>



These US legislative and policy changes have prompted a renewed focus on SV primary prevention efforts within third level institutions in Ireland too. To date, several national universities in Ireland have introduced sexual consent programmes (e.g. Trinity College Dublin; University College Cork; National University of Ireland Galway) and many others are considering implementing one. In November 2016, the RESPECT Network ([www.respectnet.org](http://www.respectnet.org)) was launched; a collaborative and multi-disciplinary research group aimed at generating high-quality research evidence related to issues associated with healthy relationship behaviours, attitudes and available support for individuals in the North and South of Ireland.

Primary prevention programmes for SV perpetration are usually aimed at reducing SV by changing factors such as behavioural intentions and attitudes in potential SV perpetrators, or risk reduction strategies aimed at victims, and bystanders.<sup>5</sup> Previous reviews examining the effectiveness of SV primary prevention programmes have found that there is some variation between programmes and their implementation settings, and that these impact on their ability to achieve their desired outcomes.<sup>5</sup> Some programmes have even been found to have increased the risks of SV perpetration in their program participants.<sup>5</sup> In view of this, a systematic review of the effectiveness of university-based primary prevention programs for sexual violence perpetration would be the first logical step for any university considering implementing a primary prevention program for SV in their institution.

## AIMS

The protocol for our study, which will conduct a systematic review of the effectiveness of university-based primary prevention programs for sexual violence perpetration, is presented here. The purpose of this review is to:

- Identify the most effective university-based primary prevention programs for sexual violence perpetration
- Identify which moderators, such as, gender and ethnicity of the audience, gender, ethnicity, and status of the facilitator, and duration of the intervention, have the most impact on rape-related attitudes

**Review Question:** How are rape-related attitudes in university students who have participated in primary prevention programs for sexual violence perpetration different from rape-related attitudes in university students who have not participated in these programs?

## METHODS

The search strategy included defining the following criteria:

### Population

Students at a college/university/third-level institution who have participated in a SV primary prevention programme

### Interventions

University-based class or seminar programmes, of any length with the goal of decreasing SV perpetration and victimization.

### Comparator groups

Students who did not participate in any SV programming.

### Context

University/college/third-level institutions who have organised or mandated primary prevention programmes for SV perpetration

### Outcome

Effect sizes of outcomes related to SV programming. Pre- and post-intervention measures.

### Inclusion criteria

- Primary research examining the effectiveness of SV primary prevention programmes in universities/colleges/third-level institutions will be included.
- Studies in which a SV program is compared to a control group. Interventions must have comparison groups, pre and post-design, and have a randomised controlled trial or quasi-experimental study design.
- Unpublished works such as abstracts and thesis's will be included if they present primary research that fits inclusion criteria.
- Articles must have been published since 1986.
- Non-English articles will be included when translation is possible or available.

### Search terms

- Primary prevention/program\*/intervention\*/prevent\*/effectiveness/efficacy/evaluation
- Rape\*/sexual violence/sexual assault\*/consent/sex offense\*/coercion/rapist\*/sex\*/assault\*/violence/aggression/offender\*/abuse\*
- College/university/third level/third tier/campus\*/student health services/ /student\*

### Databases searched

- Pubmed; Scopus; Embase; Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL); Google Scholar; Web of Science; PsychInfo.

### Data Collection

Titles and abstracts will be scanned for potential suitability. The resulting studies will be examined in more detail against the inclusion/exclusion criteria to yield the final group of included studies by using Covidence. Discrepancies will be discussed and resolved through agreement. Following quality criteria assessment, data will be extracted from included articles using a data sheet.

### Bias assessment

Quality assessment of studies to be included in the final review will use the Crowe Critical Appraisal Tool (Version 1.4). Studies with a score of more than 60% will be included and those with a score under 60% will be excluded.

## RESULTS

Scoping searches have already been carried out and a protocol, for registration with Prospero, has been prepared.

Table 1. Results of initial scoping searches of databases

Database	Results	Date Searched (2016)
Pubmed	3,770* 2,006**	August 10
CINAHL	5,266* 594**	August 11
PsycInfo	2,950* 1,098**	August 9
Web of Science	2,103**	August 9
Embase	3,277* 1,181**	August 9/10
Scopus	4,000**	August 9
Google Scholar	66**	August 9

\* Subject headings (or equivalent) search

\*\* Free text searches

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Previous research has shown that not all programs are created equal, and that the context programs are implemented in, can often impact on their ability to elicit change in participants.<sup>2</sup> As well as making a timely contribution to the literature, the findings from this work could be used to inform the development and implementation of an effective university-based primary prevention program for SV perpetration. In particular, we expect that our review will provide a valuable evidence-base for Irish universities, colleges and third-level institutions considering implementing such a programme for their students.

## CONCLUSION & REFLECTION

- The opportunity to participate in the early stages and creation of a systematic review has allowed me to improve my skills set in several areas.
- I have learned how to effectively perform complex literature searches in a number of databases.
- I worked in a team setting, collaborating and sharing ideas with my supervisor.
- I was able to improve upon my abilities to work independently for large portions of my work, and so was able to improve on my organization and time management skills.
- I was able to broaden my knowledge in the field of SV primary prevention. My reading of the literature on SV prevention also gave me insight into the broader field of programming aimed at changing health related attitudes and behaviours.
- I am grateful to have been able to contribute to the body of scientific research supporting primary prevention of sexual violence.

## REFERENCES

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