

A Documentary Analysis on the Impact of Untested Rape Kits on Victims' Psychological Health

Madeline Haynes¹ and Johnny Lopez-Figueroa[#]

¹Commonwealth Parkville School, Puerto Rico

[#]Advisor

ABSTRACT

The rape kit backlog impacts both victims and society at large. This paper delves into the psychological impacts on victims. Due to the justice system's failure to adequately address sexual assault, many people have a natural distrust of the system and its capabilities. An abundance of unprocessed kits have been discovered across the US; however, in this paper, Missouri and Minnesota are the primary examples. There has been an abundance of papers discussing the legal aspects of the backlog; however, victims have been left voiceless, and little academic research has discussed the psychological impacts. By focusing on the way that the rape kit backlog affects the victims, their voices can be included in the conversation about this issue. Furthermore, future research must include examining this issue from the victim's perspective rather than only from the legal perspective. By informing people of this issue and giving a voice to the victims, more funding could be received to test rape kits.

Introduction

The backlog of rape kits is and has compromised the constitutional right of every American citizen to a speedy trial. The rape kit backlog is a problem throughout the United States. A rape kit is an extensive series of tests provided by a medical professional collecting the DNA of the victim; this can include hair, nail clippings, and swaps. The series of tests is grueling and can be a very emotionally harrowing experience for many in the wake of such an already invasive crime. The rape kit backlog is the pileup of kits being untested and abandoned throughout the United States. In numerous police offices, thousands of unprocessed rape kits have been discovered, some of which date back to 1990. It is an ongoing problem that requires action.

Many of the kits are unprocessed because there is a severe lack of funding for testing, as doing so costs around \$1,000 per kit. Many people discuss the legal aspects of why these kits remain unprocessed. However, many do not consider the psychological effects on the victims. This research paper will discuss how victims felt when they discovered their kits were never tested; this is an issue of great importance because not only does it affect the victims, but someone who committed a crime may never be found and could be walking free. Writing a research paper about this issue aims to show how victims feel when they are disregarded. The kits cost around 1,000 dollars to test. However, the root of the problem is not the lack of money; it is the lack of attention to the issue in the first place. If more people understood how these victims feel, then it is possible that more money could go towards the testing of these kits. This paper intends to spread awareness of the backlog and the impacts on victims of sexual assaults. Spreading awareness and informing people on these issues could result in more funding. The more funding received, the more kits can get tested, and the more justice is brought to victims. The backlog has impacted victims of sexual assaults and society at large. More awareness must be spread on the rape kit backlog and mishandling of sexual assault cases in general. If people are not informed of these issues, no funding will be received, and these problems will never be resolved. People have analyzed the legal aspects of the rape kit backlog. However, there is little research surrounding the psychological impacts on victims. By letting the world know about the backlog, more funding can be given to resolve the issue.

Furthermore, by understanding the psychological impacts on victims, the issue becomes more personal. The victim's kits are no longer seen as statistics but as a person who never got the justice or closure they deserved. The voices of these victims are often not recognized in academic literature, and they deserve to be heard.

Research Questions

What are the psychological impacts of the rape kit backlog on sexual assault victims?

Review of Literature

The Backlog and its Origin

There is a critical flaw in the apparatus that is meant to help sexual assault victims assess their trauma. Solving their cases relatively quickly can allow said victims to move on. The investigation aims to educate the public regarding the backlog and its causes. The source describes the issue and the reason for the backlog. The backlog is a result of the court system's inability to prioritize cases involving sexual assault. The source informs readers of the issue's causes and how sexual assault cases are frequently disregarded. The source explains what the backlog is. It also explains how the backlog was caused and how it could be fixed. The source is meant to spread awareness and possibly enough attention to cause changes:

The backlog of untested rape kits represents the failure of the criminal justice system to take sexual assault seriously, prioritize the testing of rape kits, protect survivors, and hold offenders accountable. There are several key contributing factors that create a backlog. Most jurisdictions do not have clear, written policies outlining the testing of rape kits. This results in decisions being made on a case-by-case basis, without any guidelines, and means that individual detectives may have discretion over whether to send a kit for analysis. (Endthebacklog, 2024)

The source is essential to the investigation because it explains why the backlog exists. The backlog exists due to the overlooking and underprioritizing of sexual assault cases. The source goes further into the issues within the legal system that led to the backlog. The information is vital to the investigation because it provides a background. The question of "why does it exist?" must be asked to discuss the impacts of the backlog. Providing a background to the investigation is essential to fully understand the issue and its impacts. The source includes crucial information about the background of the issue and the root of the problem.

The Psychological Effects of Unprocessed Rape Kits on Victims' Mental Health

The backlog of rape kits throughout the United States has resulted in many physical and psychological impacts on the victims of sexual assault. This study aims to investigate how untested rape kits affect victims' mental health. The source conducted interviews with fifteen participants who submitted untested rape kits. It makes an effort to portray the victims' feelings. They discuss potential solutions for the untested rape kits in addition to the psychological effects on these victims. It also outlines how the victims lost faith in the system. The victims felt betrayed and like a part of themselves had been ignored. The investigation is illuminating and provides possible solutions to the existing issue:

Rape survivors who submit to a medical forensic exam generally expect the resulting rape kit to be tested, but hundreds of thousands of rape kits have been left untested in police storage facilities nationwide. The current study sought to understand what the experience of having an untested rape kit was like for survivors. Using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, this study examined narratives of 15 survivors whose rape kits

had been part of the rape kit backlog. Analysis suggested that survivors experience an extreme sense of betrayal and loss of faith in the criminal justice system when their kits are not tested. For these survivors, the rape kit was more than just evidence in a box; it was part of them. Implications are discussed. (Bach et al., 2022)

The source provides essential information for the investigation. The author of this source interviewed fifteen participants and discussed their responses. It analyzes the emotional trauma of completing a rape kit only to find it was never processed. The source discusses how this emotional trauma can result in a loss of faith within the system or a feeling of betrayal. The information within the source shows a small group of people's personal experiences, which can help analyze others. In conclusion, this source is essential to the investigation because of the emotional aspects described by the survivors.

The Backlog and Victims' Decisions

The backlog has not only affected sexual assault victims but also a large portion of society. The backlog causes many people to feel the system is failing and naturally distrust its efficiency. The purpose of the source is to discuss how the backlog of rape kits affects victims and society as a whole. The source discusses the impact of the backlog of rape kits on victims. It also emphasizes how victims may be reluctant to report a sexual assault due to their mistrust of the system as a result of the backlog. The source discusses how the backlog affects victims who do and do not report. Individuals who do report also feel abandoned and have a mistrust of the legal system. The source discusses new laws and remedies. The source also shows how the backlog may improve if more attention and funding are given to the issue:

Sexual assault is a heinous crime that leaves victims traumatized physically, emotionally, and mentally. When a survivor chooses to report the assault to law enforcement, one crucial piece of evidence that can play a pivotal role in pursuing justice is the rape kit. A rape kit is a collection of evidence obtained through a comprehensive medical examination of the survivor's body, clothing, and personal belongings. However, despite their significance, many law enforcement agencies across the world have been grappling with a serious issue: rape kit backlogs. These backlogs have far-reaching consequences, affecting not only the survivors but also the pursuit of justice through sexual assault lawsuits. (KMD Law, 2023)

The source provides information about the impact of the rape kit backlog on victims and society as a whole. It shows how victims whose kits have been untested feel abandoned. It also shows how victims of sexual assault are wary of coming forward because of the failures of the system; this means more perpetrators are walking free. The information helps advance the investigation by providing further insight into the impacts on society of the rape kit backlog. The source also provides how the impact goes further than the victims themselves. It is essential to the investigation because it provides crucial information to help expand on the impacts already discussed.

Unprocessed Rape Kits in Missouri

While the backlog has been widespread across the United States, this article particularly magnifies Missouri. This study aims to draw attention to unprocessed rape kits' impact on their victims. The source seeks to convey the failures of the system. It emphasizes how challenging it was to assemble the kit and that testing was never done. The intention is to give the impression that the system is ineffective. The article uses forceful language to convey its point. If it is understood that the system is failing, a solution can be made. The article attempts to emphasize the mistakes so they can be resolved:

June 01--Missouri's backlog of nearly 5,000 untested rape kits represents the failure of the criminal justice system to take sexual assault seriously. Shame on law enforcement and health care authorities who have not prioritized the testing of rape kits, protected survivors or gotten offenders off the streets. Each kit means there is a woman who has not received the justice she deserves and lives in fear that her attacker is free to strike

again. Every woman who suffered sexual assault and went to a hospital or police station to be swabbed, scraped and photographed, expected her kit -- with its potential wealth of DNA evidence -- would be tested at a laboratory as a first step toward getting her attacker off the streets. It would be a gross understatement to say these women have been let down. (Editorial, 2018)

The importance of the source is that it provides critical data. The article includes numbers of untested rape kits in different areas of the US. It also discusses the system's attempt at stopping the backlog of kits. The article pushes and shames the system for not giving enough resources/attention to the issue. It is essential to the investigation because of the crucial data provided. Also, because of the persuasion used and information on the system attempts, In conclusion, it is essential to the investigation for many reasons.

3,400 Untested Rape Kits Found in Minnesota

The backlog of kits has affected many states; however, this article focuses on Minnesota and the sheer number of backlogged kits within police stations. The number of unprocessed rape kits in Minnesota is listed in the source. It also shows the date these kits were manufactured. It also discusses reasons why the kits might have yet to be processed. Despite the article's primary focus on Minnesota, some of the information might apply to other places with a kit backlog. The source provides crucial data specific to one place. A closer look at Minnesota can help understand the effects of the backlog elsewhere. While the backlog is not limited to Minnesota, knowing how it affects the victims living there is vital to the investigation:

Sept. 03--More than 3,400 rape kits collected from victims were never tested and sit in law enforcement storage around Minnesota, with some kits dating to the early 1990s. The tally represents the first hard numbers for Minnesota in a continuing national scandal over the neglect of evidence that could put rapists behind bars. The state Department of Public Safety released the tally Wednesday following a Star Tribune data request, but couldn't provide detailed information because it's still analyzing the reports from local law enforcement agencies. At the direction of the Legislature this past spring, the Department of Public Safety's Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) has been taking inventory of sexual assault evidence kits that were used but never analyzed for DNA, and asking why they weren't processed (Webster & Bjorhus, 2015)

The source is essential to the investigation because of the data and numbers included. They also give the dates of the oldest untested kits. The source discusses the issue in Minnesota specifically, which provides a closer look at one place. The rape kit backlog problem is widespread across the US, so a closer look at one place is helpful. The source provides information on attempted solutions to the issue. The source will help advance the investigation because of the crucial data provided.

College Students Not Reporting

The system has proven to be inefficient in handling rape cases which has caused many college students not to report sexual assaults. The purpose of the source is to list possible justifications for why college students do not report sexual assaults. The information from the source discusses the reasons why sexual assaults are not as common in the media, mainly when they involve college students. Despite being a common crime in today's society, sexual assault receives relatively little media coverage. According to the source, college students are less likely to report sexual assault because they do not trust the system. College students also stated that they felt as though a sexual assault was not necessary enough to report. This dismissiveness comes from a general lack of adequately addressing the severity of sexual assault cases. The source discusses these issues to show how strong the media influence is on young minds and the negative impact it can have:

Despite increased attention, education, and prevention programs, sexual assault of college students and underreporting of this victimization remain a pervasive problem. Previous research has examined factors influencing the reporting of crimes by the public to the police, the extent of sexual victimization on college campuses, sexual assault victimization reporting and/or disclosure (for both university victims and non-university victims), and perceptions of police by university students. However, there remains a dearth of research examining whether students' perceptions of police influence their decision to report victimization, in particular sexual assault victimization. (James et al., 2015)

The study investigated college student's perception of the police and whether it influenced their decision to report sexual assaults. Students in the survey said they believed their victimization was "not worth it" and did not need to be registered. The source stated that college students and other victims would feel more compelled to report if educated. The source discusses how the police should inform and educate the public on the importance of sexual assault. It is speculated that if the general public were more educated on the importance of reporting sexual assault, it would receive more justice. The source is vital to the investigation because it discusses how distrust in the police system causes fewer sexual assault reports. Furthermore, this could apply to a distrust in the system from the rape kit backlog and how it could also cause other victims not to report.

Institutional Trauma and Sexual Assault Cases

A sexual assault committed in a workplace where the victim continues the work has been proven to worsen trauma and other psychological issues post-assault. This article discusses institutional trauma with sexual assault cases and how trauma theory accounts for this. The goal is to present and evaluate the research on systematic flaws that make rape and sexual assault victims' post-traumatic stress disorder worse. Through data tables and research, the source explains how victims of sexual assault or rape experienced additional trauma due to issues within the system. The source also discusses how rape and sexual assault incidents that take place in institutions can result in more severe trauma-related issues. The source explains trauma theory and how it accounts for institutional trauma suffered by staff members of an institution who continue to work there or provide services to it despite being abused; this shows how physical and mental symptoms worsened due to institutional trauma. The source explains institutional trauma with trauma theory. Trauma theory is the attempt to understand the ways trauma is shown, processed, and repressed and its effects on everyday life:

Research has documented the profound negative impact of betrayal within experiences of interpersonal trauma such as sexual assault (Freyd, 1994, 1996; Freyd, DePrince, & Gleaves, 2007). In the current study of college women ($N = 345$, 79% Caucasian; mean age = 19.69 years, $SD = 2.55$), we examined whether institutional failure to prevent sexual assault or respond supportively when it occurs may similarly exacerbate post-traumatic symptomatology-what we call "institutional betrayal." Almost half (47%) of the women reported at least one coercive sexual experience and another 21% reported no coercion, but at least one unwanted sexual experience (total reporting unwanted sexual experiences, $N = 233$). Institutional betrayal (e.g., creating an environment where these experiences seemed more likely, making it difficult to report these experiences) was reported across different unwanted sexual experiences (47% and 45% of women reporting coercion and no coercion, respectively). Those women who reported institutional betrayal surrounding their unwanted sexual experience reported increased levels of anxiety ($R(2) = .10$), trauma-specific sexual symptoms ($R(2) = .17$), dissociation ($R(2) = .11$), and problematic sexual functioning ($R(2) = .12$). These results suggest that institutions have the power to cause additional harm to assault survivors. (Smith et al., 2013)

The source is essential to the investigation because it discusses institutional trauma. People who work in institutions and experience an assault tend to experience more severe physical and emotional effects post-assault; this applies to the rape kit backlog because it shows the impact institutions have on victims of sexual assault. Those who work in an institution and victims who do not are equally affected by the system's overlook

of sexual assaults. By not funding the rape kit backlog or properly addressing assaults in an institution, many victims experience severe mental health issues, such as feelings of abandonment. The source shows yet another way victims are overlooked/ignored by the system and how they are negatively affected. The rape kit backlog is not the only product of the institution's failure to adequately address sexual assault.

The Overlooked Evidence

The collection of sexual assault kits is traumatic in itself; however, often, jurisdictions will overlook them as substantial evidence. This results in fewer prosecutors being convicted. The purpose of the investigation is to gather data and information regarding the callous way in which the legal system handles victims of sexual assault. The source claims that collecting rape kits significantly increases the possibility that a case will be prosecuted and that charges will be filed. Despite this, many jurisdictions have amassed rape kits without considering the possibility that they would be used as evidence. The source discusses how the court system treats cases of sexual assault with indifference. The source also explains how rape kits are disregarded as evidence in court. Rape kit collection is a highly violating process for victims. The source shows how, despite survivors going through the trauma of an assault and then rape kit collection, many courts do not check kits:

Sexual assault is a significantly under-reported, -investigated, and -prosecuted crime in the United States, which criminal justice and advocacy actors across the country are working to address. Law enforcement procedures often involve providing crime victims, including sexual assault victims, with written notification by mail about the status of their case, but little is known about the best practices for victim notification in sexual assault “cold” cases. This qualitative research explored whether this standard law enforcement practice was appropriate for sexual assault victims in “cold cases” particularly when there had been no contact from law enforcement, despite forensic evidence having been tested. The research questions were what do sexual assault victims in cold cases have to say about victim notification protocols and practices? and What do sexual assault victims in cold cases have to say about hypothetical written victim notification protocols? Twenty-three sexual assault victims were asked in focus groups and individual interviews to respond to hypothetical written notification letters for content and the sending authority and to give input on alternative modes of communication. The data were analyzed using grounded theory. (Sulley et al., 2018)

The source is vital to the investigation because it provides data on cold cases. Cold cases are cases that have been left unsolved for a significant time. It also discusses the backlog of SAKs (sexual assault kits). The source discusses how, despite having a trained Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner, many women feel that the process of creating an SAK is as invasive as the crime itself. The source discusses victim notification or how the victims are notified of the progress of their case. It is shown that the method for informing victims often leaves them with many questions and or concerns. The source helps advance the investigation by giving details on the impact of insufficient victim notification.

Completed and Released Kits

Often emergency rooms are the first places that rape victims contact after an assault. The correlation between the completion and release of kits is analyzed in this article, as well as emergency room services and their impact on the decision to complete and release a sexual assault kit. The purpose of the source is to investigate whether just results are attained and the relationship between police release and rape kit analysis. The source gives an overview of the information about sexual assault cases that have been reported, prosecuted, and found guilty. The advantages of having a sexual assault nurse examiner in emergency rooms are also discussed in the article, including how it can increase victims' sense of security and motivate them to complete their kits. The source claims that most people who finish the kit do not turn it into the police. For survivors, calling the emergency room is a frequent occurrence. The source highlights the necessity for emergency rooms to offer victims

of sexual assault more comprehensive services, therefore resulting in more completed and released kits. The more kits are completed, the more prosecutors will be convicted:

Background: Achieving just outcomes in sexual assault cases is one of the most serious and complex problems facing the healthcare and justice systems. This study was designed to determine the prevalence and correlates of Sexual Assault Evidence Kit (SAEK) completion and release to police among sexual assault cases presenting to the ED.

Methods: Data for this retrospective study come from the Sexual Assault and Partner Abuse Care Programme (SAPACP) case registry (1 January to 31 December, 2015) at The Ottawa Hospital, a unique medical-forensic access point and the only facility offering SAEK collection in Ottawa. Bivariable and multivariable logistic regression models were conducted using ORs, adjusted ORs (AORs) and 95% CIs.

Results: In 2015, 406 patients were seen by the SAPACP and 202 (77.1%) were eligible for a SAEK. Among eligible cases, 129 (63.9%) completed a SAEK and 60 (29.7%) released the SAEK to police for investigation. Youth cases (≤ 24 years) had the highest odds of completing a SAEK (AOR 2.23, 95% CI 1.18 to 4.23). Cases who were uncertain of the assailant (AOR 3.62, 95% CI 1.23 to 10.67) and assaults that occurred outdoors (AOR 3.14, 95% CI 1.08 to 9.09) were most likely to release the SAEK to police.

Conclusion: Even with access to specialised forensic evidence collection, many sexual assault survivors do not complete a SAEK, and even fewer release the evidence to police for investigation. The ED is a common entry points into the healthcare system, and this study has highlighted the need to strengthen services and reduce attrition along the health-justice continuum. (Muldoon et al., 2018)

The source is essential to the investigation because of the correlation shown between the completion of sexual assault kits and the resources provided at emergency departments. The connection established proves how the resources provided have a significant impact on whether survivors pursue justice for their assaults. This further shows how strong the impact and influence of the systems on victims. The mishandling of sexual assault cases within the justice system is shown in many ways. In this article, it is prevalent that the emergency department's lack of proper resources causes victims not to feel safe enough to pursue justice. The rape kit backlog also shows how the justice system again lets down those who do seek justice and answers. The information provided helps show the lack of resources within the emergency department and their influence on victims' decisions to complete and release a sexual assault kit.

Seeking Justice

After a sexual assault, some survivors choose to seek justice; this is, however, not accessible due to adverse reactions, dismissiveness, and questioning. The source is interested in learning how adverse reactions affect rape survivors who are able and willing to come forward. According to the source, rape is described by feminist scholars as "keeping them in their place" and as sustaining a woman's sense of powerlessness. The source claims that despite this, many women can speak out about the exact thing that is meant to undermine and keep them down. However, then professionals, family members, friends, and so on question whether their experiences were noteworthy or even if they could be considered rape at all. This type of dismissiveness and questioning is shown to increase mental health issues. It is also shown to decrease other victim's willingness to report assaults due to fear of adverse reactions. The source explains how, after an assault and being brave enough to come forward, many women still have to go through the trauma of adverse reactions from loved ones and health professionals:

Rape survivors who speak out about their assault experiences are often punished for doing so when they are subjected to negative reactions from support providers. These negative reactions may thereby serve a silencing function, leading some rape survivors to stop talking about their experiences to anyone at all. The current study sought to examine this worst case scenario. Focusing on the qualitative narratives of eight rape survivors who initially disclosed the assault but then stopped disclosing for a significant period of time, this

study sought to provide an in-depth description of how negative reactions silenced these survivors. Three routes to silence were identified: 1) negative reactions from professionals led survivors to question whether future disclosures would be effective; 2) negative reactions from friends and family reinforced feelings of self-blame; and 3) negative reactions from either source reinforced uncertainty about whether their experiences qualified as rape. Implications for future research and practice are discussed. (Ahrens, 2006)

However, they receive adverse reactions, which consequently cause silence once more. The source shows how the system has and continues to push survivors down, using everything it can to silence them. It also shows how these adverse reactions tend to cause victim blaming and questioning the severity or even existence of the assault. The source will help advance the investigation by providing more ways the system fails and addressing sexual assault cases. It will also help show the impact that the professionals in charge of the issue have on victims' mental health.

Methods

A computer with an internet connection was utilized alongside an internet browser (Google Chrome) for this investigation. In order to find the sources required for this investigation, the Google Scholar and EBSCO Host search engines were paramount for pinpointing the necessary sources to elucidate the research question. Although the internet connection was unstable at times, it proved sufficient to conduct all the required constituents of this investigation. All of the sources were peer-reviewed or approved by the investigation mentor. Some sources were outside of peer-reviewed sources, but the Research Advisor validated them. All these components working in tandem created the optimal conditions for the consummation of this project.

This investigation was completed utilizing a documentary analysis design. To populate this research, it was necessary to specify the purpose of each of the ten sources used. Furthermore, it was essential to recognize the source's design and approach, indicate the target audience, highlight their limitations, and determine the recommendations and findings in each. An analytical component outlining the significance of the data presented in the inquiry was generated, so a descriptive content analysis methodology was the most appropriate method of triangulating the information.

Results

The utilized search engine (EBSCO Host) proved most beneficial for the selected sources of this investigation. One of the sources had no publication date, and it dealt with information regarding the origin of the rape kit backlog. The second source was very recent (2022). It discussed information regarding the psychological effects of the rape kit backlog on victims' mental health. The third source was very recent (2023), and it indicated that because the justice system'sss to address sexual assaults adequately, many victims do not report them. The fourth source, which was not recent (2018), described the backlogged kits in Missouri. The fifth source was not recent (2015), and it delved into the fact that 3,400 untested rape kits were discovered in Minnesota. The sixth source was not recent (2015), and it demonstrated that many college students are not reporting sexual assault due to mistrust in the justice system. The seventh source was not recent (2013), and it explored institutional trauma with sexual assault cases, how trauma theory accounts for this, and how institutional trauma worsens post-assault trauma. The eighth source was not recent (2018), and it elucidated the fact that jurisdictions often overlook rape kits as substantial evidence in a trial. The ninth source was not recent (2018) and illustrated the

correlation between the completion and release of kits. Finally, the tenth source was not recent (2006), and it clarified how adverse reactions affect rape survivors who are able and willing to come forward.

Discussion & Conclusion

The presented sources were able to elucidate the effects of untested rape kits on victims' mental and physical health. Moreover, this investigation delineated the failure of the system to address the backlog of rape kits throughout the United States. Additionally, evidence was provided that around 4,000 untested kits were discovered in Minnesota. Five thousand kits were also discovered in Missouri, among many others. The kits discovered in Minnesota and Missouri are far from the extent of untested kits being discovered. The process revealed some limitations, which might be resolved by more investigation. Generally, it would have been beneficial if the sources could outline more information on the impacts on the victim's mental health. Other limitations found were that sources did not discuss how the backlog may cause victims not to report an assault. In a general sense, the sources were able to present a vignette on the rape kit backlog in the United States. For upcoming continuing research and data analysis, recommendations include securing more years of data and requesting more study resources.

Ultimately, this investigation aimed to answer how victims were impacted when they discovered their kits had been untested. Sources converged to provide an answer, which is that many victims lost faith in the system and felt like a part of them had been ignored. This feeling of betrayal was a typical result of the backlog among victims. This investigation revealed that overlooking sexual assault victims has resulted in a lack of funding, which has caused issues such as the backlog. It was recommended that further research be conducted to bring more attention to the issue and increase funding. Law enforcement officers can better address the issues by taking sexual assault cases seriously. Many law enforcement officers place blame on the victim, asking questions such as "What were you wearing?" this can make victims feel responsible for the actions of their perpetrator. Police officers can better address sexual assault by not placing blame on the victim and by taking the crime seriously, as well as the testing of the kits.

Limitations

For the investigation to come to fruition, the scope of the research question had to be more encompassing to find more information on the subject, which permitted the optimal conditions to answer the research question. If the original research question had not been changed, perhaps the essay would not have been written as well, given that the research question would have been challenging to complete. Additional internal threats had to be mitigated to preserve the investigation's internal validity, such as changing various sources that did not meet the quality threshold to elucidate the problem surrounding the conducted research correctly. Moreover, multiple external threats had to be addressed to preserve the external validity of the inquiry, such as the instability of the institution's Internet connection, a limited database, a slow computer on occasion and lost methodological resources. The articles used in this paper were meant to answer the question, "What are the psychological impacts of the rape kit backlog on sexual assault victims?" The articles answered every aspect of this research question.

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