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“They Sit with the Discomfort, They Sit with the Pain Instead of Coming Forward”: Muslim Students’ Awareness, Attitudes, and Challenges Mobilizing Sexual Violence Education on Campus

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Abstract: There is limited literature on anti-sexual violence programming on college campuses for historically underrepresented groups in the United States, including, and especially, for Muslim students. This study will explore the following questions: (a) *What is Muslim students’ awareness of sexual violence on college campuses?* (b) *What are Muslim students’ attitudes towards sexual violence?*, and (c) *What challenges do Muslim survivors and allies of sexual violence face on college campuses?* A mixed methods analysis of quantitative (n = 91) and qualitative data (n = 8) was utilized to understand the impact of anti-sexual violence advocacy programming on college campuses. Results demonstrate that Muslim women reported knowing more survivors of sexual assault than Muslim men. Women also reported significantly higher levels of disagreement with victim-blaming statements compared to men. Qualitative interviews with eight student leaders demonstrated challenges to sexual assault programming on campus, include Islamophobia, power struggles between student groups, denial that sexual violence is a problem, and a lack of engagement from men. Results from this study highlight several key findings including (1) rape culture attitudes vary significantly between Muslim men and Muslim women, (2) barriers to facilitating sexual violence programming include several systems of oppression, and (3) the urgent need to provide nuanced programming to support minoritized youth communities on college campuses.

Keywords: Muslim mental health; campus sexual assault; Muslim youth; student activism; Islamophobia; youth identity development; sexual violence



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1. Introduction

Current research on religion and spirituality is limited in religious and cultural contexts (Abo-Zena and Ahmed 2014). Specifically, experiences and theories centering white American, Christian, and heteronormative cultural contexts dominate the field, particularly in the United States. Racial and religious minoritized youth and immigrant-origin emerging adults are often viewed from a deficit perspective and theories of development often fail to acknowledge how racism shapes minoritized student experiences. Muslim Americans are racially and ethnically diverse, including Southeast Asians, Southwest Asians and North Africans, Black Americans, Latines, etc., and locate Muslims in intersecting identity spaces that present various barriers to research and community organizing (Greenwood 2017). Muslim youth, for example, in addition to normative developmental challenges around personal identity, relationships, and societal expectations, must also cope with challenges related to their religious identity within current geopolitical and racialized contexts of the United States and within their Muslim communities (Ahmed and Ezzeddine 2009; Mu’Min 2019). Current trends on the developmental concerns of Muslim youth suggest that this

group is not adequately supported by their parents, peers, educational and religious institutions, and have complex needs around navigating religious, racial, and gender identities (Ahmed and Ezzeddine 2009). Similarly, in a literature review on research trends on Muslim youth, Ahmed and Hashem (2016a, 2016b) suggest that research on Muslim youth focuses on concerns related to identity and acculturation, mental health needs including marriage and family dynamics, group-based health interventions in schools, and the role of religion in engaging in risk behaviors such as alcohol consumption and pre-marital sex (Ahmed and Hashem 2016a). Notably absent from the literature are the challenges to providing education to raise awareness about sexual violence in this population and the impact of Islamophobia on sexual violence education for Muslims.

1.1. College-Aged Youth and Sexual Violence Programming

Sexual violence (SV) can be experienced by anyone, and includes all unwanted, non-consensual sexual acts—whether harassment, abuse, or assault—committed against another person, without that person's freely given consent (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2020). Many times, sexual violence occurs on a spectrum that intersects with other types of gender, race, and religion-based violence, including, but not limited to, physical, emotional, and spiritual abuse. Approximately 20% of college attending women experience some form of sexual assault during college—90% of which are committed by an acquaintance (Mellins et al. 2017; Fedina et al. 2018). The prevalence of sexual violence on college campuses has led to significant university-specific programming around campus-based sexual violence (Vladutiu et al. 2011). Programming efforts on campus have focused on rape prevention, rape myth acceptance, sexual assault knowledge, and sexual assault terms and definitions (Vladutiu et al. 2011). College-campus programming has varied by single-gender audiences, professional vs. peer, and in length. For example, one-time national and international events such as Take Back the Night, social theater, and gender identity-specific workshops have been illustrated to increase awareness and dispel rape myths on campus (McMahon et al. 2014; Banyard et al. 2009; Wooden 2000). Currently, much of the research on sexual violence prevention and programming in higher education is heavily centered around the experiences of white and Euro-centric bodies and narratives (Linder et al. 2020). The literature around the prevalence of sexual violence suggests that marginalized students and underrepresented groups such as deaf and hard of hearing students, students who are gay, lesbian, and bisexual, trans or gender non-conforming, and racially/ethnically minoritized students have not been studied as extensively as white heterosexual women (Porter and Williams 2011). As such, there is limited literature on sexual violence prevalence and programming on college campus for historically underrepresented groups in the United States.

Systemic reviews of sexual health education in racial and gender minoritized groups found that sexual health education is not tailored to racially minoritized populations, is largely abstinence-based, excludes information related to sexual orientation and gender identity, and does not include topics such as dating, communication, and coercive control (McCustian et al. 2021; Pampati et al. 2021). For example, Pampati et al. (2021) systemic review of the literature on sexual health programming found that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and gender non-conforming and trans students have trouble accessing programming and campus resources related to preventing sexual violence and programming created specifically for this population is more effective. Moreover, in a meta-analysis of the literature on race and sexual health disparities, McCustian et al. (2021) found that community-based participatory research may help reduce sexual health disparities and attitudes and behaviors related to sexual health inequity.

Similarly, qualitative research confirms that health programming that honors cultural and racial/ethnic values is more supportive for underserved students (Stephens and Thomas 2011; Graham et al. 2020; Karunaratne and Harris 2022). Specifically, interviews with Hispanic college students reported a trusting relationship with their health care provider, respect for cultural values, and sexual health education that empowers women would increase their campus-based health-care service utilization (Stephens and

Thomas 2011). Interviews with 44 women of color's perceptions of campus sexual assault programming supplement these findings. Specifically, women shared that while sexual violence programming on campus is well-intentioned, a more collaborative learning approach would facilitate more effective engagement with programming, such as using case studies to explore the role of power in sexual violence. Women in this study also expressed concerns that examples and case studies lacked nuance, and in some cases perpetuated rape myths (Karunaratne and Harris 2022). Given programming did not allow for collaborative learning, women stated they were unable to process reactions or challenge the content they were receiving

Furthermore, sexual violence programming which erases on the impact of race, gender, and orientation on sexual violence may also be contributing to a lack of culturally specific and responsive programming for minoritized students. Specifically, in one study, participants were randomly assigned one of three vignettes describing a hypothetical date rape scenario differentiating between an African American, Latina, or white woman student. Authors found that race and ethnic identity influenced peer evaluation of victim responsibility for the violence enacted upon them and a victim's need for social support (Lewis et al. 2019). Specifically, participants utilized victim blaming language (i.e., "she is responsible since she didn't stop him earlier," and reported the assault was justified (i.e., "she put herself in that situation") with African American and Latina vignettes. Conversely, when participants were asked to report how responsible the white victim was for the encounter, responses often included or blamed the boyfriend (i.e., "it doesn't matter if she was drinking, she clearly said no," and "she trusted James, she told him to stop, and he didn't." Participants described the white woman's post encounter experience feeling as "heartbroken," "sad," "traumatized," "violated," "scared," and "embarrassed." When asked about what the encounter made the hypothetical African American victims feel, responses included "if she were more reserved and respectful of her body this would not have happened." As such, Lewis and colleagues highlight how race impacts how people perceive and blame victims of assault.

Similarly, in a study about sexual health educators' understanding of gender identity and sexuality, the authors found that sexual health educators' attitudes towards gender identity mediated how sexual violence prevention was framed. Individuals were categorized as gender unaware, defensive, aware, inclusive, and transformative. The authors noted that individuals who were gender unaware, or defensive were unable to identify and include the LGBTQ+ community within their programming lens. In contrast, gender-aware, gender-inclusive, and gender-transformative individuals were able to acknowledge the impact of gender and gender identity on how programming should be created and implemented specifically around same-sex sexual violence and the needs of trans individuals (Marine and Nicolazzo 2020).

Together, this body of literature suggests that sex education must address implicit and explicit messages that reinforce and bolster inequities around race, class, gender identity, and sexuality in the U.S. Even when programming is created to support minoritized students, stereotypes and biases impact the efficacy of attitude change. Because Muslims intersect across various racial, class, gender and sexuality categories and identities, stereotypes formed around Muslim communities and their relationship to sex and sexuality will similarly hinder their sex education and response to sexual violence.

1.2. Religion, Culture, and Sexuality

The Muslim tradition is explicit in stating sex and dating before marriage as a sin (Halstead 1997; Ahmed et al. 2015); however, the lived realities and sexual experiences of Muslim youth demonstrate that Muslims are engaging in sexual activity both in and outside of the confines of marriage (Ali-Faisal 2016; Ahmed et al. 2014). In one sample of Muslim youth, 85% of participants reported dating and described themselves as very or moderately religious (Ahmed et al. 2009). In a national sample of college students, sexual intercourse among never married Muslim college students was 54% with 65% of these individuals reporting they "never" or "sometimes" use a condom during sexual activity

(Ahmed et al. 2014). Finally, in another sample of 403 Muslims, more than half of the participants reported having engaged in sexual intercourse with two thirds of those who engaged in sex had done so before marriage (Ali-Faisal 2016). While Islam prohibits this behavior, research suggests otherwise.

Research also suggests that Muslims in the West (i.e., Canada, United States, Australia, Britain) are more sexually conservative than non-Muslims—with Muslims engaging in less premarital sex and being less tolerant of premarital sex (de Visser et al. 2007). It is unclear if religion, culture, or both are informing Muslim beliefs about sex and sexuality. For example, qualitative research with young British and French Arab women suggests that culture, rather than religion may have a greater impact on maintaining sexual virginity (Amer et al. 2015; Marie Skandrani et al. 2012). The way religion and culture intersect to inform sexuality is an area of research which is limited across religion. However, religion and religiosity have been demonstrated to be a predictor of attitudes towards homosexuality (Bratton et al. 2020); however, the research with Muslims is mixed. Pew research suggests that Muslims are less accepting of homosexuality than Americans as a whole. However, when compared to Evangelical Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons, Muslims were not the religious group that were the most disapproving of homosexuality (Pew Research Center 2014). Religiosity in Muslims has also predicted less accepting attitudes towards homosexuality compared to Roman Catholic and Jewish individuals (Bratton et al. 2020). On the other hand, interviews with 21 Muslim Americans found that higher levels of religious practice did not have a positive relationship with negative attitudes towards same-sex relationships (Alnagar 2018).

While Muslim youth are looking to experience pleasurable sex (Akande 2015), prevent coercive sex (Ansari 2017; Al-Hibri and Ghazal 2018), and are negotiating their beliefs about homosexuality in Islam (Alnagar 2018; Ahmadi 2015), there appears to be considerable opposition to sex education from within Muslim communities. Specifically, concerns that sex education materials used in sex education are against Islamic principles of modesty and decency, beliefs that contemporary sex education tends to present certain sexual behavior as normal or acceptable that Muslims may believe is sinful, and views that sex education will undermine the Islamic concept of family life are barriers to comprehensive sexual health education for Muslim youth (Halstead 1997). For example, language such as 'spending time together alone' and 'getting to know each other' are said to violate Islamic principles of decency, modesty, chastity, and sexual responsibility (Sanjakdar 2009). Moreover, participatory action research by Sanjakdar (2009) demonstrates a part of the resistance in sexual health education within Muslim spaces are also questions around what should be included in sexual health curriculum and who should teach sexual health education in a way that honors religious and cultural norms.

1.3. How Are Muslims Learning about Sex?

Muslim youth are learning about sex through various informal means rather from formal education or programming. Muslim youth between the ages of 18 and 29 were most likely to receive sex education through informal sources such as the internet, friends/peers, school, and books (Haque 2019; Wong et al. 2017). While Muslim youth would like their parents and Islamic centers to speak openly about sex and sexuality, research has found that parents and teachers often skip sex related content out of shame, embarrassment, and modesty leaving youth to receive inaccurate and incomplete sexual education (Haque 2019; Sanjakdar 2009).

For example, in a sample of six Australian Muslim teachers, Sanjakdar (2009) found that Islamic school teachers wanted their Muslim students to be acquainted with Islamic perspectives of sexual health from the Quran and Hadith. While they were concerned about topics such as homosexuality and virginity, they simultaneously wanted the sexual health education curriculum to promote inquiry, questioning, and discussion without fear and embarrassment. However, when teachers began to discuss sex and sexuality within the Islamic classroom, they found that students were resistant, shy, and expressed discomfort learning about sex, and noted that many students were ignorant about the religions

openness around discussing sex. These teachers also had questions around negotiating religious credibility and honoring students' cultural contexts within the Islamic school environment. For example, teachers wondered 'How can I teach the Islamic perspectives without putting at risk the credibility and legitimacy of my students' cultural knowledge and upbringing?' and 'Am I, within my role and confines of the cultural emphasis and pre-occupation of the school, to actively challenge and question my students' cultural understandings?' (Sanjakdar 2009). Additional questions were then raised around control of sexual health curriculum and the broader control of knowledge.

In another qualitative study examining Muslim perceptions of sex education, nine Muslim adolescents shared that learning about sexuality is a duty as Muslims. While they stated they would like to have conversations about sex with their parents and within their Islamic centers, they noted parents and Islamic centers rarely talked about sex, and when they did, those conversations focused on the threats of premarital sexual relations on the social and moral order (Al-Dien 2010). Both Haque (2019) and Al-Dien (2010) allude to participants in their studies requesting sex education focus not only on the mechanics and ethics of sexuality in Islam, but also elements of comprehensive sexual health education such as menstruation and "Family Life Education." Al-Dien (2010), like Halstead (1997), suggests that in many Muslim communities 'sex education' has been misunderstood and often interpreted to mean a subject that promotes pre-marital sexuality.

Finally, in a mixed method study examining college-student perceptions of a book on sexual health written by Muslims, Waqar (2022) found that Muslim youth were searching for faith affirming conversations about sex and relationships. When given the opportunity to explore sexual health and sexual ethics in a Muslim-majority space, participants experienced discomfort, shame, anger, and hurt for not receiving information earlier. Pulling from Sara Ahmed's *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (Ahmed 2014), Waqar suggests that unlearning shame at the individual, family, and community level was necessary for Muslim youth to engage with sexual health education openly and honestly. Waqar, like Al-Dien, and Haque found that Muslim youth wished elders in their communities engaged with sexual health education. Together, this body of research highlights the experiences of shame, embarrassment, and themes of modesty appear to hinder Muslim elders, parents, and Islamic educators from talking about sexual health—let alone about sexual violence and preventing sexual harm.

1.4. Muslim Youth, Sexual Violence, and Systemic Violence

There is significant research around Muslims and violence; however, when sexual violence has been examined, it is often around survivors of domestic violence. Domestic violence includes sexual violence but differs in that domestic violence is a pattern of coercive, controlling behavior that can include physical abuse, emotional or psychological abuse, sexual abuse, or financial abuse (using money and financial tools to exert control) (Kentucky Coalition against Domestic Violence (KCADV) 2022).

Research suggests that when Muslim women reach out for support around domestic violence, community support is often the first line of action, followed by community elders and religious leaders, and finally through social services (Akinsulure-Smith et al. 2013). However, given the lack of education and tools to address sexual violence, well-intentioned but harmful narratives make it difficult for survivors of violence to come forward to their community (Raja et al. 2017; Akinsulure-Smith et al. 2013; Begum and Rahman 2016). These narratives may include advising survivors to address the harm privately to avoid gossip, requesting four witnesses to prove an incident of sexual assault, myths around marital abuse, and often a pressure to reconcile with their abusers (Raja et al. 2017; Akinsulure-Smith et al. 2013; Begum and Rahman 2016). Muslim survivors often face additional barriers to seeking support due to cultural perceptions such as the difficulty and stigma of getting a divorce, fear of loss of status in the family due to a "failed marriage," and a belief that religion discourages them from seeking help (Begum and Rahman 2016; Oyewuwo-Gassikia 2016). Moreover, disclosure of sexual violence and abuse often divide families and communities (Morfett 2013) making family and informal support systems both a barrier

and facilitator to seeking support (Oyewuwo-Gassikia 2016). When Muslim survivors do reach out or receive services, they report dissatisfaction with services because of a lack of cultural and religious understanding and a sense of saviorism from providers (Ahmed and Muhammed 2019; Raja et al. 2017; Oyewuwo-Gassikia 2016, 2020).

Systemic barriers such as immigration status, class, and race have also been identified barriers to care for Muslim survivors of abuse. For example, an abuser may use an individual's immigration status to exert power and control over a victim stating they will not be able to seek support without being deported (Alkhateeb and Abugideiri 2007; Oyewuwo-Gassikia 2016). A fear of law enforcement involvement and a desire to protect the image of Muslim and Black communities further hinder access to care. For example, Black Muslim women often navigate concerns around reporting abuse to authorities to avoid putting Black men at risk of police brutality. Additional systemic barriers, such as the limited availability of translators, minimal culturally specific information, and financial cost further burden survivors in seeking support or leaving an abusive environment (Abu-Ras 2003; Raja et al. 2017).

Gendered Islamophobia consists of the ways the state utilizes gendered forms of violence to oppress, monitor, punish, maim and control Muslim bodies (Raja et al. 2020). This includes the way Muslim women are racialized vis-à-vis the Western trope that Muslim women are victims of patriarchy and are in need of "saving," "civilizing," from the "barbarism" of Islam, is another system which impacts Muslim survivors of sexual (Ahmad 2018; Moallem 2005). Specifically, tropes such as "Islam is an inherently violent religion" and "Muslim men are within their rights to harm women" are Islamophobic narratives which prevent Muslim survivors from reporting harm and prevent non-Muslim agencies from providing culturally sensitive support for survivors of abuse (Raja et al. 2017). Moreover, misinformation about the rights of women in Islam contribute to Islamophobia-related fears that inhibits Muslims from talking about sexual violence as it may add "fuel to the Islamophobes fire" (Raja et al. 2017) and may be contributing to an underreporting of violence. This paired with some religious leaders blaming women for abuse is an additional challenge for survivors (Begum and Rahman 2016). Gendered Islamophobia also erases the ways in which Muslim women are agents of change within their communities and how gender, race, and religion are central to many Muslim women's commitment to political, economic, and social movements (Auston 2017; Azmat 2021; Chan-Malik 2018; Salem 2013).

For example, the #MosqueMeToo movement in 2017 addressed how within the Muslim community, there were many who did not want Muslims to speak up about violence in the Muslim community. Many intra-community narratives suggested that talking about sexual violence would "make Muslims look bad" which further prevented dialogue, education, and healing for survivors. Specifically, intra-community tensions between how the #MosqueMeToo movement continued the othering of Muslims while also highlighting how the #MosqueMeToo brought attention to the intersectional nature of sexual violence were conversations within the Muslim online space during the #MeToo movement (Point 2019; Dall'Agnola 2022; Al-Wazedi 2020). The #MeToo and #MosqueMeToo movements illustrated how intersectional violence impacts Muslim women whether through hijab snatching, cultural betrayal, and racial discrimination (Fatima 2021; Gómez 2022; Ahmad 2019), leaving Muslim women vulnerable to various forms of harm with insufficient support. The nuance of these intra-community dialogues and research also often erase that Muslim men are impacted by and are also victims of sexual violence.

It is important to note that themes of mercy, kindness, and justice are central to the tenants of Islam (Abugideiri 2010; Begum and Rahman 2016; Faizi 2000) and there are no accounts of the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh) hitting any woman or child in his lifetime (Abugideiri 2010; Begum and Rahman 2016). The Islamic tradition is rich with women in empowered economic, social, and spiritual positions with and without spouses. Within the Islamic tradition, women should have freedom from "fear of any human being, freedom from all oppression, the right to justice, freedom from defamation, and the right to peacefulness even during divorce" (Faizi 2000, p. 215). More importantly, Islam does not demand submission of a woman to her husband but rather suggests "submission is only to

God” (Alkhateeb et al. 2001). Unfortunately, traditionally patriarchal characteristics such as protection and obedience have been utilized by abusive men to demand women into submissiveness and degradation (Faizi 2000).

The present research therefore aims to add to research on the development, implementation, and evaluation of sexual violence programming in a U.S.-based sample of Muslim youth. The aim of this research study was to examine the impact of a year-long pilot program that utilized a culturally specific curriculum created by a Muslim community-based organization HEART. Specifically, HEART is a Muslim-woman led organization committed to promoting sexual health, uprooting gendered violence, and advancing reproductive justice by establishing choice and access for the most impacted Muslims. After receiving several requests to support college-aged youth with violence which was occurring in the Muslim student spaces on college campuses, HEART offered workshops to campuses about sexual violence. In this study, we sought to explore the awareness and attitudes about sexual violence of Muslim students on campus while also identifying continued challenges they face on their respective campuses. Given the dearth of information about young Muslim survivors, HEART programming attempted to address the needs of Muslims on campus and challenge gendered Islamophobia via Muslim women-led social justice organizing on their campuses (Alimahomed-Wilson 2020).

2. Materials and Methods

During the 2017–2018 academic year, HEART implemented a series of educational trainings for student leaders and workshops for Muslim students on five college campuses across the U.S. Using a train-the-trainer model, 25 student leaders attended an immersive training to serve as anti-sexual violence advocates in preparation for co-hosting a sexual violence prevention workshop on their respective campuses. These two-hour workshops, entitled “Demystifying Sexual Violence: Definitions, Facts, and Solutions”, brought women and men Muslim students together to learn about sexual violence, how it impacted Muslim students on campus, and what resources were available on each campus. Ultimately, these workshops reached 146 students across five campuses in the United States.

2.1. Programming for Muslim Students and Leaders

The sexual violence programming for the student leader trainings and sexual violence workshops were both informed by HEART’s RAHMA Principles. The RAHMA principles, coming from the Arabic word for compassion, provide folks with practical skills in supporting survivors and how to respond to disclosures in a survivor-centric manner. The principles include the following: Respond by listening; Affirm and believe; Honor cultural and religious context and values; Maintain privacy; and Assist with providing resources (HEART 2022). Student leaders were trained in these principles and then trained other students during the workshops. The programming included sharing knowledge about sexual violence terms and definitions such as rape culture, victim-blaming, sexual assault, male privilege, and consent. Students were then familiarized with the sexual assault resources present on their respective campuses (Title IX office, wellness centers, etc.), and how to create safe spaces on campus in Muslim spaces while maintaining the confidentiality and privacy of those harmed. The training also educated students about various ways Muslims can experience sexual violence on campus, including barriers that Muslims may face to disclose as well as culturally specific sexual violence myths that further alienate Muslim survivors. The training and workshops then prepared students for ways they can support, share campus resources, and offer non-judgmental comfort to their Muslim peers who may experience sexual violence. Additionally for the student leaders, they were informed on how to support survivors that do or do not want to report their incidence of sexual violence to authorities, and how to access and navigate on- and off-campus justice systems (reporting offices, city police, court, etc.) for those that do want to report. Both the student leader training and general student workshops provided culturally specific practical skills they could be utilized on college campuses with student survivors.

2.2. Survey and Interview Design

In partnership with a research academic institution, Center for Urban Research and Learning (CURL), CURL designed and conducted a post-workshop quantitative survey with general body students and qualitative interviews with student leaders. This mixed methods approach provided a holistic evaluation of the overall program.

CURL conducted a quantitative post-workshop survey among workshop participants (n = 91) across five universities to measure student knowledge around sexual violence on campus. The survey asked workshop participants to share their demographic information including their current age, race/ethnicity, gender, year in school, religion, and sexual orientation. Subsequent questions asked participants to share the number of peers they knew who experienced sexual assault or harassment, ranging from ‘0’ to ‘5 or more’ students. These questions were informed by validated campus climate sexual assault survey instruments drafted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (Krebs et al. 2016). Participants then rated their familiarity with sexual violence terms, selecting from the following options: ‘not familiar at all’, ‘moderately familiar’, ‘very familiar’. Participants were then asked to rate their knowledge of sexual violence issues and knowledge of sexual violence resources on campus (i.e., Title IX, campus advocates), selecting from a five-point Likert scale ranging from ‘extremely knowledgeable’ to ‘not knowledgeable at all’. To assess overall attitudes, participants were asked to select from a six-point Likert scale ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’ with the following sexual violence myths: (a) A woman who has experienced sexual assault is less desirable as a partner, (b) In a majority of sexual assault cases, the victim is promiscuous, (c) A man is somewhat justified in forcing a woman to have sexual intercourse or perform other sexual acts if they are engaged or married, and (d) Men should not be blamed as harshly if they sexually assault a woman who is drunk or high. The final section asked students to share feedback on the HEART workshop. The present study will focus on results around awareness of sexual violence and sexual violence attitudes. Familiarity of sexual violence terms, knowledge of sexual violence issues and resources, and workshop feedback will not be included in this article as these results were utilized for HEART’s internal use to evaluate and improve the programming.

The student leader follow-up interviews occurred 6 months after the two-day training to understand the impact of the student leader training (n = 8). Interviews with student leaders followed a semi-structured script that asked questions about campus climate around sexual violence, skills and knowledge gained and learned from the training, and overall program feedback.

Data collected and reported in the present article are clarified in Table 1. Additional details to the post-workshop survey and student leader interview instruments are included in Appendix A.

Table 1. Methods of Data Collected and Reported.

Programming	Data Collected	Data Reported in Article
	Post-Workshop Quantitative Survey	Included
Sexual Violence Workshops	• Demographics	Included
	• Sexual Assault Awareness	Included
	• Sexual Harassment Awareness	Included
	• Familiarity with Sexual Violence Terms	Not included
	• Knowledge of Sexual Violence Issues	Not included
	• Knowledge of Sexual Violence Resources on Campus	Not included
	• Sexual Violence Attitudes	Included
Student Leader Train the Trainers	• Program Feedback	Not included
	Pre vs. Post Quantitative Survey	Not included
	6 Month Follow-up Qualitative Interviews	Included
	• Campus Climate (attitudes, Islamophobia, barriers)	Included
	• Skills and Knowledge (policies/laws, Title IX, information sharing)	Partially included (Title IX)
	• Program Feedback	Not included

2.3. Recruitment and Data Collection

All student leaders and workshop participants selected for HEART programming were recruited using convenience non-probability sampling. For recruitment of participating universities, HEART utilized their existing network of university student organizations and individual students in the U.S. to create a list of universities to recruit students. HEART reached out to university organizations and students across many universities in the U.S., many of which HEART already had established relationships with. Of the many universities contacted, students and student organizations from five U.S. universities committed to year-long HEART programming to hold a day-long training for student leaders and conduct a workshop for general students on each university campus.

Student leaders across the five university campuses were recruited through an application process and 25 were selected for their understanding of sexual violence, familiarity with Muslim communities, having reflective listening skills, and leadership experience. All 25 student leaders were trained, completed pre- and post-surveys, and led sexual violence workshops on their respective university campuses. Six months after they led the workshops, HEART recruited student leaders to participate in a follow-up interview through convenient sampling. HEART offered the interview opportunity to all 25 student leaders and eight students agreed to participate. Because only two campuses were able to complete the full year-long programming, the eight student leaders represented only two campuses. While this limited the breadth of universities captured in the interviews, it also represented the attrition that occurred with the students and universities that could not complete the full program due to lack of resources, not enough student engagement, or lack of time among other reasons.

For recruitment of workshop participants on each of the five campuses, convenient sampling was also utilized. General body students were recruited through various student-led organizations on campus, especially from cultural and identity-based student organizations such as the Muslim Students Association (MSAs). HEART staff distributed post-workshop surveys to students in attendance at the workshop. Survey respondents were thus recruited through convenience non-probability sampling.

The study protocol was approved by the institutional review board of Loyola University (Chicago). Informed consent forms were provided to all student leaders, workshop participants, and interview participants prior to completing any survey or interview. To ensure confidentiality of students' identities, names of student leaders were replaced with a unique ID (two-digit birthdate day + first three letters of mother's first name + first letter of mother's maiden name) on their pre- and post-surveys as well as the interviews. Student names of workshop participants were not collected in the post-survey to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of information shared. Due to the highly stigmatized nature of the programming content, risks associated with being identified or otherized were verbally communicated to all the workshop participants and student leaders.

2.4. Data Cleaning and Analysis

Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were utilized for this study. For the quantitative data, open-ended demographic questions were cleaned and recoded into categories that are more generalizable. Statistical analyses to assess differences in awareness of sexual violence on campuses and sexual violence attitudes were conducted across gender using the Mann–Whitney U-Test. A U-Test was selected to more accurately assess differences in gender that considered the small and not normally distributed sample used for this study. Statistical significance was set at a 2-tailed $p < 0.05$, and the data were analyzed using SPSS. For the qualitative data, the interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, and coded thematically using open coding to allow codes to emerge from the data (Braun and Clarke 2006). Due to the small number of interviews conducted, the data were analyzed manually using Word documents rather than a formal qualitative coding software. The interviews were coded, and memos were written to organize the data and analyze major themes across all student leader interview.

2.5. Reflexivity Statement

As a mostly Muslim-led research team, it was important for each researcher to be cognizant of the biases and assumptions they held especially when belonging to the community included in the research (Merton 1972; Naples 1996; Zinn 1979). For the Muslim researchers, negotiating the in-between of being both insiders and outsiders in this project brought up unique challenges (Merriam et al. 2001; Kwame 2017; Ndlovu 2021). While they wanted to represent their community in a dignified and compassionate matter, researchers also wanted to address the limitations in sexual health and violence education on college campuses without replicating Islamophobic tropes in the programming or in the discussion of the study findings.

These challenges were prominent throughout the entirety of the programming and research process. Specifically, the design and development of the leadership program arose due to Muslim students reaching out to HEART for resources and advocacy around sexual violence for Muslims on college campus spaces. Thus, the student leader training and workshops were a response to a call to action by Muslim students because they did not feel the current Title IX/campus programming was speaking to the needs of Muslim students. The Muslim students were engaged and committed to the programming because they saw themselves represented in the work HEART was creating with and for them. This representation was not only critical for student engagement and innovation, but it also was a heavy responsibility for HEART to lead this programming with survivors and directly impacted individuals in a way that centered their care while also knowing that this very work may alienate and dismiss them in their own Muslim communities.

Muslims can often be hard-to-reach populations as they are scattered in smaller communities, are cautious around research due to national surveillance practices, and may not want to engage in discussing stigmatized topics such as sexual violence (Amer and Bagasra 2013). Although the research team had considerable access working with Muslim communities, HEART staff and campus leaders had significant challenges bringing programming to college campuses. At the time of recruitment and implementation, many Muslim student organizations on campus were skeptical of HEART's credibility and were resistant to paying HEART for training and capacity building. HEART staff found it especially demoralizing to bear witness to the sexism they experienced while attempting to support Muslim survivors of sexual violence on these campuses. They also observed how Muslim student experiences were ostracized from Muslim spaces on campuses in a way that paralleled HEART's image in larger Muslim communities.

In debriefing about the programming and research, the researchers acknowledged the fears and reality that conducting work around sexual violence may lead to them being criticized and excluded from their Muslim communities. However, it was clear from the bravery of the student participants and their feelings of gratitude that there was a community created committed to ending sexual violence. The programming itself was healing and validating for both the Muslim students and researchers, and the storytelling shared through this research attempts to capture the realities of Muslim survivor experiences on campus from a strengths-based approach noting the work done with, by, and for Muslims.

3. Results

The results of this program will be discussed by research question. The research aims to answer the following questions: (a) *What is Muslim students' awareness of sexual violence on college campuses?* (b) *What are Muslim students' attitudes towards sexual violence?*, and (c) *What challenges do Muslim survivors and allies of sexual violence face on college campuses?* Broadly, we found that awareness of campus sexual violence, campus sexual harassment, and attitudes towards sexual violence differed significantly by gender, with Muslim women reporting more awareness about campus sexual violence and more disagreement with harmful sexual violence attitudes than Muslim men.

3.1. Awareness and Attitudes towards Sexual Violence of Muslim Students on Campus

A total of 146 students participated in the workshops led by these student leaders across five U.S. campuses, and a total of 110 fully completed the post-workshop survey, 91 of them identifying as Muslim. Among the Muslim respondents, they ranged from 18 to 26 years of age, 51 (56.0%) were of Asian/South Asian descent, and 64 (70.3%) identified as woman (Table 2). Results demonstrated awareness of campus sexual violence and attitudes about sexual violence were statistically significant between Muslim men and women participants.

Table 2. Sexual Violence Awareness and Beliefs by Gender.

Sexual Violence Awareness and Beliefs by Gender						
	No. (%)					
	Gender					
	Women	Men	Non-Binary	Total	<i>U Test</i>	<i>p Value</i>
	n = 64 (70.3)	n = 26 (28.6)	n = 1 (0.01)	n = 91 (100)		
Characteristics						
Age, median (IQR)	20 (20–21)	20 (19–21)		20 (19–21)	–	0.086^a
Muslim	64 (100)	26 (100)	1(100)	91(100)	–	–
Race/Ethnicity						
<i>Asian/South Asian</i>	37 (57.8)	14 (53.8)	0 (0)	51 (56.0)	–	0.731^a
<i>Middle Eastern/North African</i>	12 (18.8)	4 (15.4)	0 (0)	16 (17.6)	–	0.705^a
<i>Hispanic/Latinx</i>	0 (0)	1 (3.8)	0 (0)	1 (1.1)	–	0.115^a
<i>Black/African/African American</i>	5 (7.8)	3 (11.5)	1 (100)	9 (9.9)	–	0.573^a
<i>Multiracial</i>	6 (9.4)	1 (3.8)	0 (0)	7 (7.7)	–	0.375^a
<i>NA</i>	4 (6.3)	3 (11.5)	0 (0)	7 (7.7)	–	–
Number of Students Known Who Experienced Sexual Violence						
					579.5	0.022[*]
<i>0 Students</i>	25 (39.7)	16 (61.5)	0 (0)	41 (45.1)		
<i>1 Student</i>	11 (17.2)	5 (19.2)	0 (0)	16 (17.6)		
<i>2 Students</i>	9 (14.1)	3 (11.5)	0 (0)	12 (13.2)		
<i>3 Students</i>	5 (7.8)	1 (3.8)	0 (0)	6 (6.6)		
<i>4 Students</i>	3 (4.7)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (3.3)		
<i>5 or More Students</i>	10 (15.6)	1 (3.8)	1(100)	12 (13.2)		
Number of Students Known Who Experienced Sexual Harassment						
					580.5	0.05[*]
<i>0 Students</i>	10 (15.6)	8 (30.8)	0 (0)	18 (19.8)		
<i>1 Student</i>	15 (23.4)	7 (26.9)	0 (0)	22 (24.2)		
<i>2 Students</i>	10 (15.6)	3 (11.5)	0 (0)	13 (14.3)		
<i>3 Students</i>	3 (4.7)	2 (7.7)	0 (0)	5 (5.5)		
<i>4 Students</i>	6 (9.4)	1 (3.8)	0 (0)	7 (7.7)		
<i>5 or More Students</i>	19 (29.7)	4 (15.4)	1 (100)	24 (26.4)		
<i>NA</i>	1 (1.6)	1 (3.8)	0 (0)	2 (2.2)		
Agreement with Beliefs Regarding Sexual Assault						
A woman who has experienced sexual assault is less desirable as a partner						
					518.5	0.00[*]
<i>Strongly agree</i>	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)		
<i>Agree</i>	0 (0)	1 (3.8)	0 (0)	1 (1.1)		
<i>Somewhat agree</i>	1 (1.6)	2 (7.7)	0 (0)	3 (3.3)		
<i>Somewhat disagree</i>	1 (1.6)	2 (7.7)	0 (0)	3 (3.3)		
<i>Disagree</i>	2 (3.1)	4 (15.4)	0 (0)	6 (6.6)		
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	59 (92.2)	15 (57.7)	1 (100)	75 (82.4)		
<i>NA</i>	1 (1.6)	2 (7.7)	0 (0)	3 (3.3)		

Table 2. Cont.

Sexual Violence Awareness and Beliefs by Gender						
	No. (%)					
	Gender					
	Women	Men	Non-Binary	Total	<i>U Test</i>	<i>p Value</i>
	n = 64 (70.3)	n = 26 (28.6)	n = 1 (0.01)	n = 91 (100)		
In a majority of sexual assault cases, the victim is promiscuous					527.0	0.003 *
<i>Strongly agree</i>	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)		
<i>Agree</i>	0 (0)	2 (7.7)	0 (0)	2 (2.2)		
<i>Somewhat agree</i>	1 (1.6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1.1)		
<i>Somewhat disagree</i>	3 (4.7)	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (3.3)		
<i>Disagree</i>	3 (4.7)	8 (30.8)	0 (0)	11 (12.1)		
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	55 (85.9)	14 (53.8)	1 (100)	70 (76.9)		
NA	2 (3.1)	2 (7.7)	0 (0)	4 (4.4)		
A man is somewhat justified in forcing a woman to have sexual intercourse or perform other sexual acts if they are engaged or married					663.0	0.024 *
<i>Strongly agree</i>	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)		
<i>Agree</i>	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)		
<i>Somewhat agree</i>	0 (0)	1 (3.8)	0 (0)	1 (1.1)		
<i>Somewhat disagree</i>	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)		
<i>Disagree</i>	2 (3.1)	3 (11.5)	0 (0)	5 (5.5)		
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	62 (96.9)	20 (76.9)	1 (100)	83 (91.2)		
NA	0 (0)	2 (7.7)	0 (0)	2 (2.2)		
Men should not be blamed as harshly if they sexually assault a woman who is drunk or high					664.0	0.026 *
<i>Strongly agree</i>	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)		
<i>Agree</i>	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)		
<i>Somewhat agree</i>	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)		
<i>Somewhat disagree</i>	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)		
<i>Disagree</i>	2 (3.1)	4 (15.4)	0 (0)	6 (6.6)		
<i>Strongly disagree</i>	62 (96.9)	20 (76.9)	1 (100)	83 (91.2)		
NA	0 (0)	2 (7.7)	0 (0)	2 (2.2)		

* Statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. ^a Chi-Square Test conducted.

3.1.1. Awareness of Campus Sexual Violence and Harassment by Gender

Workshop participants were asked about the number of fellow students they know, including themselves, who experienced some form of sexual violence or sexual harassment while a student at their university. Of the 91 participants, 54.9% of the student reported knowing one or more fellow students who experienced some form of sexual violence and 80.2% of participants reported knowing one or more fellow students who experienced some form of sexual harassment.

When analyzed across gender, a larger proportion of women knew at least one peer who experienced sexual violence or harassment. Over half of men (61.5%) reported that they did not know any fellow students who experienced some form of sexual violence, compared to slightly over one-third of women (39.7%). Concurrently, 15.6% of women surveyed knew five or more fellow students who experienced some form of sexual violence while a student at their university, compared to 3.8% of men. A Mann–Whitney U test revealed that women ($mdn = 1, n = 63$) knew a statistically significantly greater number of students who experienced sexual violence on campus as compared to men ($mdn = 0, n = 26$) ($U = 579.5, p = 0.022$).

Similarly, about twice as many men (30.8%) than women (15.6%) reported that they did not know any fellow students who experienced some form of sexual harassment while

at their university. Additionally, 29.7% of women surveyed knew five or more fellow students who experienced some form of sexual harassment while attending their university, compared to 15.4% of men. A Mann–Whitney U test revealed that women (mdn = 2, n = 63) knew a statistically significantly greater number of students who experienced sexual harassment on campus as compared to men (mdn = 1, n = 25) ($U = 580.5, p = 0.05$). All results are listed in Table 2.

3.1.2. Attitudes Regarding Sexual Assault by Gender

Students were asked to agree or disagree with four attitude statements about sexual assault. As shown in Table 2, almost all women participants strongly disagreed that ‘a woman who experienced sexual assault is less desirable as a partner’ (92.2%) compared to only 57.7% of men. A Mann–Whitney U test revealed that women (mdn = 5, n = 63) statistically significantly disagreed more so than men (mdn = 5, n = 24) for this statement ($U = 518.5, p = 0.000$).

The large majority of women (85.9%) strongly disagreed that ‘in a majority of sexual assault cases, the victim is promiscuous’ compared to only 53.8% of men. Based on a Mann–Whitney U test, women (mdn = 5, n = 62) statistically significantly disagreed more so than men (mdn = 5, n = 24) for this statement ($U = 527, p = 0.003$).

Almost all women (96.9%) strongly disagreed that ‘a man is somewhat justified in forcing a woman to have sexual intercourse or perform other sexual acts if they are engaged or married’, compared to only 76.9% of men. A Mann–Whitney U test revealed that women (mdn = 5, n = 64) statistically significantly disagreed more so than men (mdn = 5, n = 24) for this statement ($U = 663, p = 0.024$).

Finally, almost all women (96.9%) strongly disagreed that ‘men should not be blamed as harshly if they sexually assault a woman who is high or drunk’ compared to only 76.9% of men. A Mann–Whitney U test revealed that women (mdn = 5, n = 64) statistically significantly disagreed more so than men (mdn = 5, n = 24) for this statement ($U = 664, p = 0.026$).

3.2. Challenges Facing Muslim Survivors of Sexual Violence on Campus

Eight of the student leaders that led the campus-wide workshops agreed to participate in an interview 6 months after the workshops. Of the participants, seven identified as women and one identified as a man. Themes regarding the needs of Muslim survivors from these student leaders included survivors needing support in (a) challenging Islamophobia (b) pushing the campus Muslim community to discuss sexual violence and (c) increased engagement from Muslim men.

3.2.1. Institutional Support and Challenging Islamophobia

Results from qualitative findings suggested that students felt that their general campuses and administration could be doing more to address and prevent sexual violence (SV). They felt a lack of education or preventative measures concerning SV from the university itself. For example, many students were not aware of the Title IX offices on their campus or shared that the offices were inaccessible especially for Muslim survivors. Instead, students and student organizations were portrayed as leading and engaging the campus community around sexual violence prevention. Participant Hind explained that “all the prevention work being done is just students who spend a lot of physical and emotional labor to complete these things.” The student revealed the physical and emotional exhaustion of engaging in SV prevention but alluded to a disappointment in the university response to SV on campus. Despite difficulties with discussing sexual violence, student leaders still recognized and appreciated the resources and groups on campus that challenge sexual violence, conduct collaborative panels, and engage various groups on campus.

Furthermore, interviewers were curious about students’ experiences with Islamophobia on campus in relation to sexual violence. Overall, respondents agreed that Islamophobia was not really an issue felt on their campuses because of a substantial Muslim population and presence on their respective campuses. However, many student leaders offered re-

flective observations regarding how Islamophobia may inhibit people from reporting or discussing sexual violence. As participant Muhammed explained, “somebody may wanna protect their religion against whatever is being said in society or wherever they live. And so, they sit with the discomfort, they sit with the pain instead of coming forward.” There is both a fear in how others will perceive Muslims reporting sexual violence, but also a shared anxiety over being the “perfect Muslim” and ignoring issues of sexual misconduct. But, the participant Muhammed rebutted, “let’s just talk about it” rather than keeping these issues hidden or masked under the fear of Islamophobia.

While overt Islamophobia was not often reported by participants, students revealed the subtle microaggressions experienced when discussing or presenting about sexual violence. Specifically, a respondent explained that non-Muslims often were surprised that Muslims were discussing sexual violence. Participant Kawthar presented a nuanced description:

“So, I think sometimes folks come in and they’re worried that—oh, ya know—yeah, you’re talking about sexual violence in the Muslim community but are you being aware of the intersection of things. Like do we talk about privilege? Do we talk about different identities that exist within the Muslim community? So, I think definitely, I remember when we had our first workshop, I think people were a little worried that, oh what if they talk about sexual violence but they’re not LGBTQ friendly, that sort of thing. Right?”

This respondent referred to the misconception that Muslims are not progressive enough to discuss sexual violence and are often misjudged by non-Muslims.

3.2.2. Community Willingness to Discuss Sexual Violence

Qualitative interviews also suggested that the greatest barrier to change experienced by the student leaders was engaging the Muslim community and organizations on campus in serious and open conversations regarding sexual violence. Students referenced grave tensions between HEART advocates and Muslim organizations on campus, especially with the organizations’ leadership boards. Participant Kawthar explained that the “unwillingness to have those conversations is a bit concerning, especially since it’s coming from the board members.” Thus, many of the student respondents felt frustrated not gaining the support needed from the leadership boards and other spiritual leaders on campus and had to organize other ways of convening. Specifically, leaders from one campus petitioned and applied to establish a new student organization in order to continue their anti-sexual assault advocacy on campus.

When asked specifically about the state of the Muslim community on campus around sexual violence, the participants characterized the Muslim community as hesitant to discuss sexual education or sexual violence. Many respondents associated words like “fear”, “harm,” “difficult,” “awkward,” “controversial,” “frustrating,” etc. when bringing up sexual violence with other Muslims on campus. More specifically, there was an overwhelming sense that Muslims on campus believe in the myth that sexual violence does not occur in Muslim communities or that it is haram, religiously prohibited, to discuss these kinds of topics. Thus, many of the difficulties around sexual violence among Muslims persist because of denial and stigma, as according to student leaders. Participant Kishwar retroactively explained their interaction with Muslims when attempting to discuss sexual violence:

“That conversation would have never happened; we rarely ever talked about things like sexual assault or violence against women or anything of that sort because most people assume that we’re Muslim, so this conversation does not need to happen because these kind of things don’t happen in our community. Some of them were like “we don’t do that stuff.”

While most of the respondents shared this sentiment of denial, others recognized that some Muslims were beginning to discuss sexual violence. As participant Naseem said, “it felt like we were just opening a door to piloting new beginnings.” Muslims were not only

discussing sexual violence as a community issue, but they were understanding the harm that persists within Muslim communities from refusing to challenge sexual violence.

Students also reported having HEART as an outlet and justification to discuss sexual violence among other Muslims provided an opportunity that perhaps would never have opened up prior. Participant Kishwar explained, “if those conversations aren’t brought up, if someone’s not initiating it, then that’s not going to happen. And I think with bringing HEART to [our university] has definitely sparked that initiative to start raising awareness and to hopefully break the taboos surrounding sexual health and sexual violence.” The student leaders reflected that HEART’s presence on campus provided the cultural perspective needed to engage Muslims in these discussions. Participant Kawthar explained that “bringing that cultural perspective in it because I feel like, at first, it was kind of like one brush that’s depicting experiences and so a lot of folks who can’t even really talk about sex just really didn’t feel like had a voice.” Another participant Shanzeh explained that this was the first time she learned about sexual violence from a religious frame, but she also emphasized how empowering it felt to have Muslim women leading the programming. She explained that “a lot of times, it feels very alienating and [women] can’t talk,” so to have the inclusion of a Muslim woman voice present information on sexual violence through a survivor centered frame was empowering. The culturally responsive programming fostered a reason to discuss sexual violence, but, according to this respondent, students gained a voice in combatting cultural stigmas and sexual violence. It is worth noting that a respondent expressed that some students still voiced misconceptions regarding sexual violence, but now they had the voice, language, and space to concretely break down those myths.

3.2.3. Increased Engagement with Muslim Men

Student leader respondents expressed that there seemed to be a gender divide that acted as a barrier to reaching and engaging more students about sexual assault. Student leader respondents shared that within the Muslim communities on their campuses, Muslim women were more likely than Muslim men to support HEART programming on campus or discuss sexual violence issues occurring on their campuses. Many of the student leaders observed that only a small number of men, if any, attended HEART events on their campuses. In the case of one Muslim student organization on campus, male students in leadership positions had hindered the ability for HEART to expand their programming to other Muslim organization members. Male participant Muhammed explained further:

“... It would have helped if I had another male ally there from [the Muslim Organization]. But I also think that just my involvement with [the Muslim Organization] definitely—like if I wasn’t involved, I wouldn’t have made—no one would have really cared. Been like “Ok he’s just . . . ” you know, or whatever, just brushed it under the rug. Or “Oh he’s working with the feminists . . . ” or whatever. So yeah—just being, I guess like, having that history and the involvement—that helped. The gender divide was definitely there.”

As a man HEART advocate, he pointed out that without his involvement in the Muslim organization, he did not know how other men may have responded to HEART workshops. He alluded to a few misconceptions of how Muslim men respond to sexual assault or about feminism more generally. Similarly, respondents expressed hesitancy in discussing sexual violence with men (especially men relatives) or knowing how to address misconceptions often held by men. This suggests that discussing the issue of sexual violence focuses more on destigmatizing the topic rather than exploring thoughts, behaviors, and attitudes that perpetuate sexual violence. This also suggests that more resources, language, and support are needed to educate and engage Muslim men around this issue. It is also possible that given the high level of shame, stigma, and silence around sex and sexual violence, it is then difficult to have open discussions around direct and indirect attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate harm.

4. Discussion

4.1. Implications of Quantitative Findings

The current literature on sexual violence programming and advocacy on college campuses highlights that Muslim survivors may be missing from institutional discussions around creating survivor-centric spaces. Often sexual violence programming is white-led and lacks an analysis attending to race, sexual orientation, and gender identity (Marine and Trebisacci 2018; Linder and Myers 2018). Across the literature regarding sexual assault attitudes and beliefs, gender is repeatedly a significant determinant of “rape myths,” or attitudes concerning sexual assault that serve to “deny and justify male sexual aggression against women” (Burgess 2007; Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1994; Payne et al. 1999). These studies overwhelmingly reveal that men are generally more likely to accept these myths and individuals who do not know a survivor of sexual violence are less likely to intervene or engage in sexual violence programming (Hayes-Smith and Levett 2010; McMahan 2010). Our quantitative results align with this literature. Specifically, our findings demonstrate stark differences between Muslim men and women’s attitudes towards sexual violence and awareness of at least one individual who has experienced sexual violence. We attribute the women in this study reporting higher levels of awareness about sexual violence on campus to how women are disproportionately impacted by gender-based violence and the emotional support role many women play to their peers (Branch and Richards 2013). This finding is unsurprising as most women who experience sexual assault eventually disclose their assault to a family member or friend, especially to other women (Sabina and Ho 2014; Sorenson et al. 2014; Halstead et al. 2017). While these gender differences may not be shocking, the results reveal Muslim men’s lack of awareness of sexual violence among their peers and their variability in understanding the nuances of sexual violence as it impacts Muslims. Including Muslim men among mainstream men in their approach to sexual violence reiterates the impact of patriarchy and masculinity on sexual violence attitudes (Khayr 2019). These findings are a first step in identifying the role that Muslim men have in perpetuating and denying the impact sexual violence has on our Muslim communities and is a signal for specific research, education, and programming for Muslim men.

Often a student’s gender and victimization history may influence heightened awareness of sexual violence incidents, with women and survivors of sexual violence being more aware and knowledgeable. As such, Muslim women in our sample may be relying on each other for support, care, and understanding after experiencing an incident of violence. The literature around women survivor decisions to disclose to men also suggests a fear of violence, discomfort discussing sexual issues, and fear of blame due to rape myth acceptance (McMahan et al. 2014; Ullman et al. 2020). Specifically, a survivor fearing more violence would be precipitated if they shared their stories with men highlights why less men in our sample were privy to conversations and awareness about sexual violence. We also found significant gender differences within Muslim men and Muslim women in rape culture attitudes. Specifically, Muslim women in this study reported higher levels of disagreement on attitudes towards sexual violence than Muslim men. In this study, rape myths were assessed by four culturally specific statements. These statements, informed by HEART’s fieldwork within mosques, families, and schools, suggest that Muslim men like many non-Muslim men persistently adhere to less sympathizing attitudes regarding sexual assault. As such, our quantitative findings suggest that awareness and attitudes about sexual violence on campus are gendered for Muslim students. This finding is particularly important to consider as women are not the only group negatively impacted by sexual violence myths, but other groups of marginalized genders also experience sexual violence (Allen et al. 2015; Harris and Linder 2017).

The significant quantitative differences in how Muslim men and women are aware of incidents of sexual violence and their attitudes towards sexual violence are a novel contribution as there is little evidence of sexual violence impacting Muslims. These results indicate how Muslims are understanding and reacting to sexual violence and survivors similarly to the mainstream society. This is a chance to include Muslims in a larger dialogue

around sexual violence at a national level in an academic space that will also then include Muslims in the larger movement to challenge and prevent sexual violence.

4.2. Implications of Qualitative Findings

The implications for our quantitative findings are also important to consider in tandem with our qualitative findings. Qualitative themes around the difficulties starting conversations about sexual violence on campus, institutional and interpersonal challenges to receiving culturally sensitive programming, and the lack of engagement from Muslim men, begs us to consider whose voices, beliefs, and attitudes towards sexual violence are prioritized when making programming decisions within college campuses?

For an overwhelming amount of the student leaders and campus organizations HEART partnered with, the greatest barrier among participants was engaging the Muslim community on campus in serious and open conversations regarding sexual violence. It is notable that many Muslim-led organizations, including those on campus are often led by men. The denial of sexual violence by the greater Muslim community led to Muslim survivors and allies to be pushed to the periphery of their campus communities and contributed to considerable intragroup hostility (Tahseen et al. 2019). This intragroup hostility is concerning as the marginalization experienced by peripheral Muslim youth may place them at risk for poor mental health (Tahseen et al. 2019). Muslim youth advocating for sexual violence prevention, education, and support were also left without having a faith-based community within campus as an avenue for support.

While Islam is a tradition that encourages sex and sexuality as forms of worship for the service of God, Muslim men often refuse to discuss the harms of sexual violence (Barlas 2002). Findings from our man interviewee suggest that Muslim men did not believe programming nor challenging sexual violence was a priority. Our interviewee highlighted that the gender divide around HEART programming on campus was striking and he would have appreciated support from more men allies. Thus, the male interviewee's comments provide insight that Muslim men's level of disagreement on culturally specific rape myths may be a part of men's resistance to engagement.

The literature on sexual violence education more broadly states that empathy building, social norm strategies, and bystander trainings are effective measures to engage men in sexual violence reduction (Fabiano et al. 2003; Hudson-Flege et al. 2020; Orchowski et al. 2018). However, the most effective tool to address the gender disparity in awareness, knowledge, and humanizing attitudes about survivors of violence is gender-specific programming (Kearney et al. 2004; Vladutiu et al. 2011). Muslim men are in an intriguing position as they both hold power and are subordinated under power. While they may face discrimination and subordination under other dominant men, they also reassert their sense of control by subordinating Muslim women (Archer 2001; Hopkins 2006). For example, in a study investigating the intersection between Muslim men's masculinity, religiosity, and sexual assault attitudes, Khayr (2019) found that while Muslim men were able to recognize harm in sexually violent behavior, they did not understand covert forms of perpetuating behaviors that justify the act of sexual assault. Given our quantitative and qualitative findings about Muslim men's lack of engagement in sexual violence programming and attitudes towards sexual violence, we believe gender and religion specific sexual violence programming is urgently needed for this population.

Our participants also alluded to challenges managing institutional Islamophobia in the form of microaggressions, and surprise from non-Muslim peers that Muslims were open to discussing sexual violence. Student leaders, therefore, were advocating for sexual violence prevention both within and outside of their own communities. Although this student activism was empowering for several student leaders, it must be noted that student activism also contributes to burnout and compassion fatigue, does not include credit or compensation for student activists' labor, and in some cases can lead to decreased academic performance and a reduction in emotional, and physical well-being (Linder et al. 2019a). To reduce student burnout and institutional barriers, we recommend title IX programming

address within community and within campus racism, heterosexism, and Islamophobia (Vladutiu et al. 2011; Raja et al. 2017). This may require commitments to collaborating across disciplinary resources (Casey and Lindhorst 2009) and continued research with Muslim students on campus around culturally specific sexual violence myths.

Our data highlight that many student leaders are already engaged in providing support and resources to survivors in their circles. Given a total of 54.9% of participants knew five or more fellow students who experienced sexual violence and 80.2% of participants reported knowing one or more students who experienced some form of sexual harassment, our findings demonstrate Muslim students are receiving disclosures of sexual violence from their peers. Given the documented emotional impact of receiving disclosures of sexual violence, this finding highlights the need for supporting Muslim students who may be experiencing vicarious trauma after hearing a disclosure of sexual violence (Baird and Jenkins 2003; Branch and Richards 2013). Therefore, programming efforts to support this group may need to be driven towards not only Muslim victims of sexual violence, but also Muslim students and allies who are supporting their peers after a disclosure. In this way, Muslim student leaders demonstrated considerable resilience. Although a number of student leaders were met with resistance, students were active in pushing Muslim and non-Muslim leadership to create space for dialogue about sexual violence on campus. Survivors and allies of sexual violence programming regardless of institutional, community, and interpersonal challenges facilitated healing by advocating for spaces for their experiences to be seen and supported.

Taken together, our qualitative and quantitative findings highlight the role of campus leadership in supporting sexual violence programming and also how members of the Muslim community were required to create new spaces for support and belonging given their commitment to sexual violence education. This dynamic echoes the literature in higher education around power, identity, and student activism on campus. Specifically, students with marginalized identities often engage in campus activism as a way of responding to hostile campus environments by reasserting their existence on campus by challenging institutional leaders to be accountable (Linder et al. 2019a, 2019b).

5. Conclusions and Limitations

We hope this study is one of many which begin to address sexual violence awareness and attitudes within Muslim communities. Within our sample of college students, we found statistically significant results which highlight a discrepancy around awareness and attitudes towards sexual violence between Muslim men and women, barriers to facilitating sexual violence programming, and the importance of providing nuanced programming recommendations to support minoritized youth communities on college campuses.

We also recognize and would like to attend to the limitations of this project. The first limitation to this research is the study design. Given the dearth of research on Muslim survivors of sexual violence and limited measures around culturally specific attitudes, survey items used to capture data around culturally specific rape myths have not been psychometrically validated (Amer and Bagasra 2013). The current study was designed to assess gender differences between Muslim men and women around awareness and attitudes about sexual violence but was limited due to a constrained survey instrument distributed after a workshop. Additionally, while our sample size of 91 was students was considerable, additional research should expand the types of questions asked and a larger sample of Muslim youth on campus.

The second limitation we recognize is the sample of Muslim students interviewed does not represent nor claim to represent all Muslim students on campus. Given that recruitment for the pilot program was facilitated predominately through Muslim Student Associations (MSAs) and campus-cultural groups, it is important to interrogate who often attends and feels safe within these spaces (Amer and Bagasra 2013). For example, as Kameelah Mu'Min (2019) and Samaa Abdurraqib (2009) highlight—often Black Muslim students are invisible, disenfranchised, and doubly marginalized within the Muslim Student Association space.

This invisibility, marginalization, and exclusion from community has also been reported with queer Muslims (Alvi and Zaidi 2019). Therefore, attending to structures of power, silence, and inequality within dominant Muslim spaces is necessary in understanding how inequalities related to sexual violence may be reproduced when programming is facilitated only through the MSA space or through campus organizations unfamiliar with these community nuances (Armstrong et al. 2018). As such, selection bias is another limitation in this work. Moving forward, more nuanced programming recruitment, and evaluation is recommended. Longitudinal changes in awareness, beliefs, and attitudes should also be considered for this population.

We recommend future research in this area to focus on (a) programming specific to Muslim men (b) identify the prevalence of sexual violence of Muslim college students (c) understanding how race, sexual orientation, and belonging on campus impacts experiences of sexual violence and (d) exploring how mental health and religious coping are impacted when Muslim survivors do and do not receive support from their faith communities. Specifically, some survivors may question faith or denounce religion while others may experience increased spirituality following an assault (Ahrens et al. 2010).

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Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Institutional Review Board (or Ethics Committee) of Loyola University of Chicago (protocol code #2338 and 20 October 2017).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study. Participant codes have been replaced with pseudonyms.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to small sample of study participants.

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Appendix A.

This appendix includes the survey instrument and interview guide.

Appendix A.1. NAME REDACTED Post-Workshop Survey

1. Background information about you:

Current age: _____

Race/ethnicity (Circle all that apply): White Hispanic/Latinx Black/African American Asian
 American Indian/Alaska Native Middle Eastern/North African
 Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander Other: _____

Gender (Circle one): Woman Man Trans Gender Queer Other

Year in school (e.g., Sophomore): _____

Religion (If any): _____

Sexual Orientation (Circle one): Heterosexual Gay/Lesbian Bisexual Asexual
Queer Questioning Other

2. Including yourself, how many fellow students at your university do you know who have experienced some form of sexual violence while a student at this university?

Sexual violence includes:

- Completed or attempted rape of a victim
- Rape that occurs after a person is pressured verbally or through intimidation or misuse of authority to consent or acquiesce
- Non-consensual touching or fondling by the victim or the accused for the purpose of sexual gratification or arousal

0 1 2 3 4 5 or more

3. Including yourself, how many fellow students at your university do you know who have experienced some form of sexual harassment while a student at this university?

Sexual harassment is unwanted verbal, non-verbal, or visual sexual attention that one person inflicts on another including:

- Pressure for sexual activity
- Patting, pinching or deliberately brushing against a victim
- 'Friendly' arm around the shoulder or waist
- Stalking
- Sending sexually explicit photos or pictures

0 1 2 3 4 5 or more

4. After taking this workshop, how knowledgeable are you about sexual violence issues affecting students on this campus overall?

Extremely knowledgeable Very knowledgeable Moderately knowledgeable

Slightly knowledgeable Not knowledgeable at all

5. After participating in the workshop, how knowledgeable are you of resources available for students who have experienced sexually assault or abuse specifically?

Extremely knowledgeable Very knowledgeable Moderately knowledgeable

Slightly knowledgeable Not knowledgeable at all

6. How familiar are you with the following terms?

	Not Familiar at all	Moderately Familiar	Very Familiar
Rape culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Victim-blaming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual Assault	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Male privilege	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
XXXX Principles	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Please choose your level of agreement for each of the following statements (Place a check mark in one box for each row)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
A woman who has experienced sexual assault is less desirable as a partner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In a majority of sexual assault cases, the victim is promiscuous.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A man is somewhat justified in forcing a woman to have sexual intercourse or perform other sexual acts if they are engaged or married.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Men shouldn't be blamed as harshly if they sexually assault a woman who is drunk or high.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. What questions do you still have, if any, about sexual violence and resources for survivors of sexual violence after participating in this workshop?

9. What was the best or most useful part of this workshop for you?

10. What is at least one way you think this workshop could be improved? Please be specific.

Appendix A.2. Train the Trainers Interview Questions: Post Training and 6 Months-Follow Up

Campus Climate

1. Tell me about the general climate on your campus surrounding sexual violence right now.
 - a. What attitudes do you observe about sexual violence on campus?
 - b. Do you think the climate changed as a result of the **HEART** workshop and training series?
 - i. (If so) How?
 - ii. (If not) Do you see *potential* change in climate as a result of the program? How?
2. Tell me about the climate in the Muslim campus community surrounding sexual violence right now.
 - a. What attitudes do you observe about sexual violence in the Muslim campus community?
 - b. Do you think the climate changed as a result of the **HEART** workshop and training series?
 - i. (If so) How?
 - ii. (If not) Do you see *potential* change in climate as a result of the program? How?
3. Tell me how you think Islamophobia and/or stereotypes about Muslims on campus impacted the climate around sexual violence in your community, if at all.
 - a. (If yes) Do you think the **HEART** workshop and training series helped Muslim students cope with Islamophobia and/or Muslim stereotypes?
 - i. (If so) How?
4. What are some of the barriers you encountered or perceived in making positive change to the campus climate? (Tell me more about that)
 - a. Were there any challenges to making change that came from within your own campus organizations? (Tell us about those)
 - b. How do you see the possibility of overcoming those challenges in the future?

Skills and Knowledge

1. Tell me about 2 of the most important skills you gained and/or things you learned from the training you received.
 - a. How are these skills useful to you and/or others on your campus?
 - b. Can you tell me a story about a time when you used SKILL/KNOWLEDGE 1?
 - i. (If haven't used it) How might you be able to use it in the future?

- c. Can you tell me a story about a time when you used SKILL/KNOWLEDGE 2?
 - i. (If haven't used it) How might you imagine using it in the future?
2. Tell me about how you feel about your level of knowledge about policies and laws concerning sexual violence after taking this training?
3. Do you have any plans to implement a workshop or event about sexual violence for the Muslim community on your campus?
 - a. (If so) Tell me about the event.
 - b. (If not) Would you be interested and have time to set up a workshop or event around this issue in the future?
 - i. (If so) Would you want/need assistance from **HEART** staff to set this up?
4. (If not addressed in previous skills/knowledge questions) Tell me how you would help a survivor of sexual violence get through the process of disclosure and securing her/him resources and support.
5. (If not addressed in previous skills/knowledge questions) Tell me about your/your group's relationship with the Title IX Investigators on your campus.
6. (If not addressed in previous skills/knowledge questions) Tell me about your/your group's relationship with the CARE Advocates office on your campus.
7. During the training period, did you do any research on your own outside of the training to learn further related skills or knowledge?
 - a. (If so) What skills/knowledge did you pursue?
 - i. Why did you want to know more about that?
 - b. How did that go for you?
8. Have you shared or used any of the information and skills you learned in the workshop/training with members of your family?
 - a. (If so) Tell me about that.
 - b. (If not) Do you see yourself sharing information or skills with your family in the future?
 - i. How do you envision that happening and working out?
9. Have you shared or used any of the information and skills you learned in the workshop/training with Muslims outside of your school (such as in your workplace or community)?
 - a. (If so) Tell me about that.
 - b. (If not) Do you see yourself sharing information or skills with Muslims outside of your school in the future?
 - i. How do you envision that happening and working out?
10. To be effective as an **ADVOCATE/FELLOW** are there other skills or things that you want to learn that you haven't learned yet?

Program Feedback

1. Is there additional feedback you have for improving the **HEART** program towards its goal of sustainably and positively impacting the responses to sexual violence survived by Muslim students?
 - a. (If so) Tell me a bit about how you think the programming could be improved.
2. What were some of the challenges that you and your organization's members faced when working with **HEART** on this project?
 - a. (If there were some) Can you tell us your thoughts on how to improve upon those issues?

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