



PREGNANCY DISCRIMINATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION : A STRUCTURAL APPROACH



Abstract

It is my argument that pregnant students at public and private universities are systematically disenfranchised by university systems, not primarily through individual interactions that involve prejudice and discrimination, but through the common structure of universities themselves. **The primary research question this thesis will attempt to answer is how do structural aspects of universities disadvantage pregnant students?** Perspectives of feminist theory and conflict theory will be utilized to look at what makes a group minoritized and what makes discrimination structural as opposed to interpersonal. Using these theories as guides, I will argue that pregnant students function as a minoritized or disenfranchised group at universities because there are structural elements, such as universitywide policy and societal views of natalism/pregnancy, that put them at a disadvantage. Through a combination of theoretical analysis and fact collecting about the average American university's resources and policies regarding pregnant students, it is clear that, on average, institutions of higher education are structured in a way that inhibits the success of pregnant students.

Presented by Emily Pacenti

Mentored by Dr. Leslie Richardson

Distribution of University Total Scores

Average : -0.314

SD: 3.002



Measuring The Problem: How Do We Quantify Structural Discrimination?

- Identify policies that hinder pregnant students specifically.
- Identify policies that empower pregnant students.
- Identify resources vital to a pregnant student's success.
- Identify institutions and systems the pregnant student would need to rely on (healthcare, childcare, transportation, etc.)

Six Determining Factors of a University's Preparedness to Support Pregnant Students

1. Is there a university health center that offers prenatal / obstetric services?
2. Does the university health center accept medicaid?
3. What are the resources for students who can not afford medical care?
4. Does the university have defined and accessible academic accommodations available to pregnant students?
5. Does the university offer physical accommodations to pregnant students such as rides to class?
6. Does the university have case management services available for pregnant students?

Using the six major factors of preparedness, a sample of 102 universities were evaluated and scored from -6 to 6 (least to most supportive of pregnant students). The distribution of scores was fairly normal, meaning most universities fall in the middle while some excel and others fail.

Case Study : Pregnant Student Drops Out of Florida State Due to Lack of Support

- University Health and Wellness Center did not accept Medicaid.
- Campus healthcare was not equipped to help student find care elsewhere.
- Unreliable bus system lead to excessive walking in high temperatures, contributing to a lack of weight gain during pregnancy and a high risk status.
- No family housing at FSU
- Unable to secure a spot in FSU daycare 8 months ahead of time.
- Judgmental and insensitive experience at campus counseling center
- Lack of online degree programs (pre-COVID)
- Pressure to drop out

Is Pregnancy a Disability?

What Is The Role of Title IX in Structural Discrimination?

Should Educational Disruption Be Considered a Part of the Motherhood Penalty?

Solutions

- Use existing accommodation systems and policies for disabilities, illness, and temporary impairment, and apply them to pregnant students.
- Standardized policies regarding 'leave of absence' and 'reinstatement' to prevent inconsistency in the rights of pregnant students and undue burden on professors to invent accommodations.
- Campus healthcare should accept Medicaid and be well versed in the care available in the wider community, so students can be directed to outside help.
- Family housing, changing tables, lactation rooms, baby food and supplies in campus food pantries.
- Accessible and reliable transportation (bus systems).
- Foster a supportive campus culture by informing students, staff, and faculty of the rights of pregnant and parenting students.



CCAMPIS (Childcare Access Means Parents in School) Program at University of Nevada, Reno



CHILDREN & FAMILY PROGRAMS
AT THE CENTER FOR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

NOW ENROLLING

Students who Parent Support Group