The Clery Act: Student Awareness and Perceptions of Effectiveness at a Public University and a Private College in East Tennessee

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THE CLERY ACT: 
STUDENT AWARENESS AND PERCEPTIONS OF EFFECTIVENESS AT A 
PUBLIC UNIVERSITY AND A PRIVATE COLLEGE IN EAST TENNESSEE

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ABSTRACT
The U.S. Congress has recognized that safety is essential on our college and university campuses. Incidents such as the Virginia Tech massacre and the death of Jeanne Clery have emphasized the need for legislation that assists students in selecting a safe college and improves their safety by reducing the incidence of crimes and fires. The Clery Act is a federal law that requires colleges and universities to provide annual information on the number and type of crimes on campus as well as the number and cause of fires occurring in the residence halls. The purpose of this study was to determine the perceived effectiveness of the Clery Act by students at two higher educational institutions in East Tennessee.

This study determined that students are not aware of the Clery Act as it relates to the crime and fire statistics to a significant extent. However, students are aware of the Clery Act as it relates to the issuance of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings by their institution. Students do not tend to use the Clery Act crime and fire statistics in their decisions as to what college to attend, indicating the limited effectiveness of the Clery Act. Lack of use of the Clery Act crime and fire statistics may be related to a lack of awareness of their existence. Students perceive to a significant extent that the reporting of the Clery Act crime and fire statistics as well as the use of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings, improved their safety and security while on campus. The Clery Act mandated use of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings issued by the institution results in students changing their behavior to protect themselves and their property. Students perceive that the reporting of crime and fire statistics as well as the use of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings, has reduced crime and fires on campus.

INTRODUCTION
Jeanne Clery, a student at Lehigh University located in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, was beaten, raped, and murdered in her dormitory room on April 5, 1986 (Fine & Gross, 1990). An investigation by local authorities culminated in the arrest of another Lehigh University student who was eventually convicted of murder and sentenced to death. As a result of intense lobbying by her parents, Connie and Howard Clery, and the media scrutiny that followed, the U.S. Congress passed the Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act of 1990. This piece of legislation would later become known as the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act, requiring all public and private higher education institutions that receive federal Title IV funding to report their crime data to the Department of Education and publish an annual crime report for the purpose of advancing campus safety and security (McNeal, 2007).

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceived effectiveness of the Clery Act by students at two higher educational institutions in East Tennessee. The following research questions were addressed by this study:

1. Are student’s scores significantly different from the test value of 4 as it relates to awareness of the Clery Act crime statistics (campus security report), fire statistics (fire safety report), and the issuance of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings by their institution?
2. Is there a significant difference of awareness scores between males and females they relate to the Clery Act crime statistics (campus security report), fire statistics (fire safety report), and the issuance of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings by their institution?  

3. Is there a significant difference between the responses of students who experienced a crime or fire prior to attending college and those who did not experience a crime or fire prior to attending college as related to awareness of the Clery Act crime statistics (campus security report), fire statistics (fire safety report), and the issuance of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings by their institution?  

4. Is there a significant difference between responses of campus residents and non-campus residents as related to awareness of the Clery Act crime statistics (campus security report), fire statistics (fire safety report), and the issuance of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings by their institution?  

5. Is there a significant difference between responses of public and private institution students as related to awareness of the Clery Act crime statistics (campus security report), fire statistics (fire safety report), and the issuance of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings by their institution?  

6. For students who are aware of the Clery Act campus security and fire safety report, how were they made aware of the institution's provision of crime and fire statistics?  

7. Do students use the Clery Act crime statistics (campus security report) and fire statistics (fire safety report) to a significant extent in their decision as to what college or university they wish to attend, (2) providing safety notices, crime alerts, and timely warnings to students so they can alter their behavior to protect themselves and their property, and (3) reducing the incidence of campus crime (Janosik, 2004).  

8. Do students perceive that the use of crime statistics, fire statistics, and the issuance of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings reduces crime on their campus to a significant extent?  

RELATED LITERATURE

The Clery Act, passed by Congress in 1998, requires colleges and universities to report their crime statistics and security policies for the main purposes of (1) providing information to potential students so they can factor campus security into their decision as to what college or university to attend, (2) providing safety notices, crime alerts, and timely warnings to students so they can alter their behavior to protect themselves and their property, and (3) reducing the incidence of campus crime (Janosik, 2004). Colleges and universities must also report various crime occurrences and disciplinary offenses such as murder, robbery, forcible sex offenses, non-forcible sex offenses, burglary, aggravated assault, manslaughter, motor vehicle theft, weapons possession, drug related violations, and liquor law violations (Mann & Ward, 2011). In 2008 the Clery Act was amended by requiring colleges and universities to issue emergency notifications, in addition to timely warnings already required since the law was first enacted, by notifying campus occupants of any emergency situation that constitutes a threat to the safety of faculty, staff, and students. Additionally, the 2008 amendment required reporting of fire statistics through the use of a fire incident logbook, documenting every fire occurrence in the residential facilities for a period of three years. This amendment also required the publication of an annual fire safety report that described the fire protection systems that have been installed in the residence halls, such as sprinklers, standpipes, and fire alarm systems. The annual fire safety report must also include the university's fire safety programs such as the use of fire drills, fire evacuation training in choosing their college selection, and fire safety training (Mann & Ward, 2011). Numerous studies (e.g. Gregory & Janosik, 2002b; Janosik, 2004; Janosik & Plummer, 2005) have been conducted with students, parents, college presidents, federal officers, campus police, and the public about the Clery Act. As such, the analysis of the relevant research indicates that the purposes of the act have not been realized, other than the annual reporting of crime and fire statistics, and therefore the presence of the Clery Act by measuring awareness of the act, student use of crime statistics in their college selection decisions, student change in behavior due to the crime report, and the frequency of the incidence of crimes. The findings of these studies indicate that the Clery Act has not significantly reduced the incidence of crimes or changed student behavior to protect themselves or their property, and that most students and parents are unaware of the Clery Act and do not use the crime report to select a college (Alabadi, 2001). For instance, Gregory & Janosik (2002a) conducted a study in which 70% of senior university police officer respondents believed that crime was not reduced as a result of the Clery Act, while Alabadi (2007) established that only 18% of student respondents from three California universities changed their behaviors to protect themselves or their property. Additionally, Bush (2011) conducted a study of 1,800 Northern Michigan University students, revealing that only 25% of respondents were familiar with the Clery Act and its requirements. Gehring and Janosik (2003) also surveyed 9,150 undergraduate students in which only 8% of respondents used the Clery Act crime information in making their college selection.  

With the adoption of the amendments to the Clery Act in 2008, fire statistics and fire safety are now an integral component of the act. University officials are required to be aware of the act and its fire safety reporting requirements in order to comply with the act and accomplish its goals. Additionally, students and parents should be cognizant of and familiar with the annual fire safety report, understanding their rights as campus residents to know about their behavior to protect themselves and their property from fire. Several studies (e.g. Gregory & Janosik, 2002b, 2009; Janosik & Plummer, 2005) have been conducted to determine whether the Clery Act requirements have decreased campus crime, criminal victimization, and the frequency of the incidence of crimes. The findings of these studies indicated that only a small percentage of respondents perceived that the Clery Act would decrease as a result of the act. Students have shown that only a small percentage of respondents perceive that campus crime has been reduced due to the Clery Act and its provisions, which clearly was the case as shown in numerous aforementioned studies, then students are unable to use this information in their college selection decisions or to change their behavior in protecting themselves or their property since they are unaware of the incidence of crime or fires on their campus (Janosik, 2004). Considering most students and their parents were unaware of the act and do not use the information to change their behavior in their college selection decision, it would seem highly unlikely that crime or fires would decrease as a result of the act. Studies have shown that only a small percentage of respondents perceive that crimes or fires on or near their college are reduced due to the Clery Act. As such, the analysis of the relevant research indicates that the purposes of the act have not been realized, other than the annual reporting of crime and fire statistics, and therefore the presence of the Clery Act was intended to increase the awareness of the Clery Act and its requirements. The total sample was comprised of 1,361 students who voluntarily agreed to complete and submit the survey.  

The first 11 items of the 28 item survey were demographic in nature, enabling cross-tabulation and comparison of subgroups to ascertain the variance of responses between these groups. The next two items asked respondents whether they had read their institution's campus security report and fire safety report. The next 11 items consisted of Likert-type statements to measure degrees of awareness, decision, improvement, and perception. Each item had seven possible responses: Strongly Disagree -1, Disagree -2, Somewhat Disagree -3, Neither Agree or Disagree -4, Somewhat Agree -5, Agree-6, and Strongly Agree -7. The last two items asked respondents to identify where they observed their institution's crime and fire statistics.  

FINDINGS

Research Question 1  

A directional, upper tail critical, single sample t test was conducted to evaluate whether responding students were aware of crime statistics, fire statistics, and the issuance of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings by their institution to a significant extent. This variable was entitled “overall awareness” (Mean = 4.37, SD = 1.34) and was composed of the average scores resulting from three separate Likert-type scale survey statements as follows: 1) I am aware of the Clery Act center, 2) I am aware of the Campus Safety (Campus Security Report) for the college I am attending, 2) I am aware of the Clery Act center, 3) I am aware of the Campus Safety (Campus Security Report) for the college I am attending, and 3) I read safety notices, crime alerts, emergency notifications, or timely warnings...
Research Question 2
An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean score of the overall awareness of the Clery Act by students was different between females and males. “Overall awareness” of the Clery Act by students was composed of the average scores resulting from three separate Likert scale survey statements as follows: 1) I am aware of the Clery Act as it relates to the provision of crime statistics (Campus Security Report) for the college I am attending, 2) I am aware of the Clery Act as it relates to the provision of fire statistics (Fire Safety Report) for the college I am attending, and 3) I read safety notices, crime alerts, emergency notifications, or timely warnings which are sent out by Public Safety or Campus Security. The overall awareness of the Clery Act by students was the variable and the grouping variable was females or males. The test was significant, t(1,302) = 2.65, p = .004. The "overall awareness" mean for females was 4.44, with a standard deviation of 1.31, while the "overall awareness" mean for males was 4.21, with a standard deviation of 1.33, indicating that females were significantly more aware of the Clery Act than students who did not experience a crime before attending college.

Research Question 3
An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean score of the overall awareness of the Clery Act was different between those students who experience a crime or fire prior to attending college and those who did not. “Overall awareness” of the Clery Act by students was composed of the average scores resulting from three separate Likert scale survey statements as follows: 1) I am aware of the Clery Act as it relates to the provision of crime statistics (Campus Security Report) for the college I am attending, and 3) I read safety notices, crime alerts, emergency notifications, or timely warnings which are sent out by Public Safety or Campus Security. The overall awareness of the Clery Act by students was the variable and the grouping variable was those students who reside on-campus and those who do not. The test was significant, t(1,302) = 2.77, p = .006. The "overall awareness" mean for students who reside on-campus was 4.53, with a standard deviation of 1.30, while the "overall awareness" mean for students who reside off-campus was 4.38, with a standard deviation of 1.35, indicating that students who reside on-campus were significantly more aware of the Clery Act than students who reside off-campus.

Research Question 4
An independent-samples t test was conducted to evaluate whether the mean score of the overall awareness of the Clery Act was different between those students who attend the regional public institution and those who attend the small private Christian college. “Overall awareness” of the Clery Act by students was composed of the average scores resulting from three separate Likert scale survey statements as follows: 1) I am aware of the Clery Act as it relates to the provision of crime statistics (Campus Security Report) for the college I am attending, 2) I am aware of the Clery Act as it relates to the provision of fire statistics (Fire Safety Report) for the college I am attending, and 3) I read safety notices, crime alerts, emergency notifications, or timely warnings which are sent out by Public Safety or Campus Security. The overall awareness of the Clery Act by students was the variable and the grouping variable was students who attend the regional public institution and students who attend the small private Christian college. The test was significant, t(1,302) = 2.44, p = .015. The "overall awareness" mean for regional public institution students was 4.41, with a standard deviation of 1.33, while the "overall awareness" mean for private Christian college students was 4.15, with a standard deviation of 1.35, indicating that students who attend the regional public institution are significantly more aware of the Clery Act than students who attend the private Christian college.

Research Question 6
The survey used two separate items to collect data concerning notification, one for crime statistics and the other for fire statistics. The types of notification methods and the corresponding percentage of students who were notified by these methods are listed in the following tables:

### Table 1: Methods by Which Respondents Were Made Aware of the Clery Act Crime Statistics (N = 1,361)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notification Method</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observed notification of crime statistics on college website</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>28.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notified of crime statistics in orientation session</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>20.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notified of crime statistics by a Residence Life Official</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>14.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notified of crime statistics by a Student Affairs Official</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>14.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed notification of crime statistics in catalog</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>13.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed notification of crime statistics on student application</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>11.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed notification of crime statistics in Parent Handbook</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other notification method</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Approximately 550 respondents, or 43.79% of survey participants, did not see any notifications of crime statistics.

### Table 2: Methods by Which Respondents Were Made Aware of the Clery Act Fire Statistics (N = 1,361)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notification Method</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Observed notification of fire statistics on college website</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>13.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed notification of fire statistics in catalog</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>12.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notified of fire statistics in orientation session</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>10.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notified of fire statistics by a Residence Life Official</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>9.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notified of fire statistics by a Student Affairs Official</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed notification of fire statistics on student application</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>5.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed notification of fire statistics in Parent Handbook</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>5.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other notification method</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Approximately 863 respondents, or 69.21% of survey participants, did not see any notifications of fire statistics.
Research Question 7
A directional, upper tail critical, single sample t test was conducted to evaluate whether responding students perceive that the Clery Act crime and fire statistics to a significant extent in their decisions as to what college to attend. The variable was entitled “Use of Crime and Fire Stats in College Decision” (Mean = 2.52, SD = 1.60) and was composed of the average scores resulting from two separate Likert scale survey statements as follows: 1) I considered the Clery Act crime statistics (Campus Security Report) and fire statistics (fire safety report) to a significant extent in their decisions as to what college to attend, and 2) I considered the Clery Act fire statistics (Fire Safety Report) as to what college to attend. A test value of 4, which indicated neutrality on the Likert scale, was used for this analysis. The test was significant, t(1,389) = 18.11, p < .001. Therefore, students do change their behavior to protect their property or personal well-being due to the use of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings issued by their institution to a significant extent. The variable was student perception of improved safety due to timely warnings (Mean = 5.26, SD = 1.44), and a test value of 4, which indicated neutrality on the Likert scale, was used for this analysis. The analysis indicated that the mean is significantly higher than the test value t(1,300) = 31.52, p < .001. Therefore, students do perceive that the use of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings by their institution has improved their security while on campus to a significant extent.

Research Question 8
A directional, upper tail critical, single sample t test was conducted to evaluate whether responding students perceive that the reporting of the Clery Act crime statistics (campus security report) and fire statistics (fire safety report) has improved their safety from crimes and fires while on campus to a significant extent. The variable was entitled “Reporting of Crime and Fire Statistics” (Mean = 4.25, SD = 1.35) and was composed of the average scores resulting from two separate Likert scale survey statements as follows: 1) In my opinion, the reporting of crime statistics (campus security report) has improved my security on campus, and 2) In my opinion, the reporting of fire statistics (fire safety report) has improved my safety from fires while on campus. A test value of 4, which indicated neutrality on the Likert scale, was used for this analysis. The test was significant, t(1,389) = 6.60, p < .001. Therefore, students perceive that the reporting of the Clery Act crime statistics (campus security report) and fire statistics (fire safety report) improves their safety from crimes and fires while on campus to a significant extent.

Research Question 9
A directional, upper tail critical, single sample t test was conducted to evaluate whether students change their behavior to protect their property or personal well-being due to the use of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings issued by their institution to a significant extent. The variable was student behavioral change due to timely warnings (Mean = 4.83, SD = 1.66), and a test value of 4, which indicated neutrality on the Likert scale, was used for this analysis. The analysis indicated that the mean is significantly higher than the test value t(1,295) = 18.11, p < .001. Therefore, students do change their behavior to protect their property or personal well-being due to the use of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings issued by their institution to a significant extent. The variable was student perception of improved safety due to timely warnings (Mean = 5.26, SD = 1.44), and a test value of 4, which indicated neutrality on the Likert scale, was used for this analysis. The analysis indicated that the mean is significantly higher than the test value t(1,300) = 31.52, p < .001. Therefore, students do perceive that the use of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings reduces crime on their campus to a significant extent.

Research Question 10
A directional, upper tail critical, single sample t test was conducted to evaluate whether responding students perceive that the reporting of crime statistics (Campus Security Report) and fire statistics (fire safety report) has improved their security while on campus to a significant extent. The variable was student perception of improved security due to timely warnings (Mean = 5.26, SD = 1.44), and a test value of 4, which indicated neutrality on the Likert scale, was used for this analysis. The analysis indicated that the mean is significantly higher than the test value t(1,300) = 31.52, p < .001. Therefore, students do perceive that the use of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings by their institution has improved their security while on campus to a significant extent.

Research Question 11
A directional, upper tail critical, single sample t test was conducted to evaluate whether responding students perceive that the reporting of crime statistics (campus security report) and fire statistics (fire safety report) improves crime and fires on their campus to a significant extent. The variable was entitled “Reporting Reduces Crimes and Fires” (Mean = 4.15, SD = 1.20) and was composed of the average scores resulting from two separate Likert scale survey statements as follows: 1) In my opinion, the reporting of crime statistics (campus security report) reduces crime and fires on their campus to a significant extent. The test was significant, t(1,287) = 8.62, p < .001. Therefore, students do perceive that the use of crime statistics in making their selection as to what college to attend. This study reveals that website postings, student applications, parent handbooks, catalogs, orientation sessions, student affairs personnel, and residence life officials are making students aware of the Clery Act crime and fire statistics, but not to a significant extent. Students should be aware of the existence of Clery Act statistics prior to attending college so that they can use them in making their college selection decisions. The Department of Education should devote resources to advertise the Clery Act and its importance to the general public, in particular the awareness of the Clery Act mandates and the usefulness of the information provided by these mandates. College students should be aware of the Clery Act requirements prior to their decision as to what college to attend, making their high school years an appropriate target for disseminating Clery Act information.

Research Question 12
A directional, upper tail critical, single sample t test was conducted to evaluate whether responding students perceive that the use of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings reduces crime on their campus to a significant extent. The variable was student perception of reduced crime due to timely warnings (Mean = 4.33, SD = 1.38), and a test value of 4, which indicated neutrality on the Likert-type scale, was used for this analysis. The analysis indicated that the mean is significantly higher than the test value t(1,287) = 8.62, p < .001. Therefore, students do perceive that the use of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings reduces crime on their campus to a significant extent.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Overall, the findings of this study indicate that students perceive that the Clery Act is effective. Students are aware of timely warnings and change their behavior due to these warnings. Students perceive that the Clery Act has improved their safety and security. Additionally, students perceive that the Clery Act has reduced the incidence of crime and fires. There are, though, two areas in which the Clery Act has very limited effectiveness: awareness of the crime and fire statistics and use of the crime and fire statistics in making their selection as to what college to attend. The use of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings is effective in changing student behavior to protect themselves and their property, having the potential to increase safety and security. Therefore, colleges and universities should continue to advertise and promote the use of an emergency alert system that uses text messaging and email to reach students by cell phone.

REFERENCES
