

Manuscript for JSWWP: The Impact of Anti-DEI Legislation on LGBTQ+ College Students: A Survey of Trends

Author Responses to Reviewers 1 & 2

Thank you for your time in reviewing our manuscript. You provided suggestions that will certainly improve the clarity and value of the article. Below we have added responses to each reviewer request. Please reach out if you have more questions or need further details.

Reviewer-1

R1: This is a worthy topic for social work and social work education.

Response: Thank you! It feels very timely.

R1: I think the title should include the research design. “The Impact of Anti-DEI Legislation on LGBTQ+ College Students: A Survey of Trends” or something like that.

Response: That works well! We have changed it as suggested.

R1: The abstract should indicate the research design and include a statement or two about the actual data results.

Response: That is missing. Glad you caught it for us. We added information on the convenience samples in 2023 and 2025. There is a new sentence about the results too.

R1: I found the introduction and literature review very clear in summarizing current knowledge on the topic.

Response: Thank you!

R1: A summary of the gap in the research and purpose of the study (that research questions hope to address) is missing at end of this section to transition into the Methods section.

Response: We have added a transition sentence before the research question. We clarified in the recommendations that we are suggesting further research based on what we see in these datasets.

R1: It would be more helpful if the Methods section introduces the research design and then explain the data collection procedures (for the survey). Was the same exact survey sent on both occasions and the data then collapsed into one data set? How many items total were on the survey for the three types of stigma? And what other variable or demographic questions were asked?

Response: Point taken. It does help to highlight the issues and differences by including the survey year. The scales were the same but collected at different times from different respondents (all anonymous).

The Fall 2023 survey asked respondents to reflect on their recent time in high school. The Spring 2025 survey asked respondents to focus on the current period.

I've added clarification in the Figures about the samples and revised language in the results to clarify the different time periods.

R1: Data analysis: Were all 277 unique responses used in the analysis? What stats were run? Results: Demographics reported?

Response: Clarification has been added on how the secondary dataset was compiled maintaining separation between the fall 2023 and spring 2025 samples. Both groups met the same inclusion criteria and answered the same stigma scale questions.

R1: Also, if the graphs could use black and white contrasts of some kind? It's difficult to read when printed without color.

Response: Color has been changed to gradients or shades of grey in each figure.

R1: I'd like to see Limitations of the Study included (like with the Conclusion, e.g.). Also, connect the conclusions (or recommendations) more clearly to the data/results.

Response: Limitations statements have been added. Additionally, we encourage further focused research since this was exploratory and using a secondary dataset.

R1: References are all relevant and current/recent.

Response: Thank you!

R1: The methods section and recommendations need to be strengthened to add more clarity.

Response: Following your recommendations above and from reviewer 2, we have strengthened and clarified the method and recommendations. We added statements about how this is an initial exploration of the idea that anti-DEI

legislation may be impacting students. The secondary dataset indicates positive protective factors in college that are not as apparent in high school.

Reviewer-2

R2: The abstract is comprehensible but need to reflect the content of the manuscript

Response: We updated the abstract to include the sample, study and results summary.

R2: Try to build connection more between the stated aims of the study and the study design. The authors declare that they study the detrimental effects of anti DEI legislation, yet their design does not include any acceptable measure of effect (for example – pre-post). It is not clear what do they intend to claim by studying and presenting the LGBTQ student's sense of belonging in 2025 as their do not compare it to previous findings. It is not clear what is the meaning of the comparison between high school and college students. No information is offered on the 2023 study: how was it obtained and where, and how was the data collected. The response rate in both studies is not presented.

Response: We have worked on incorporating language that clarifies this is an initial exploration of the idea that anti-DEI legislation may be impacting students and focused on social stigma. The secondary dataset indicates positive protective factors in college that are not as apparent in high school. More research needs to be conducted with detailed focus on the relationship between stigma and anti-DEI legislation.