

Gender-Based Violence and the Law

Global Perspectives and Eastern
European Practices

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11 What makes academia (un)safe Experiences, observations, and consequences of gender-based violence in different stages of individual researchers' careers

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Vilana Pilinkaitė Sotirovič and Giedrė Blažytė†*

1. Introduction

This chapter provides an analysis of qualitative research data from 54 individual interviews about the experiences and observations of gender-based violence in research performing organisations, including universities, and its impact at both individual and organisational levels. The objective of this analysis is to shed light on the prevalence of gender-based violence through qualitative research, aiming to enhance our understanding of how some students and academic staff may face higher risks due to diversity grounds (gender identity, sex, age, ethnicity/race, sexuality, and disability) as well as functional characteristics such as being early in their research career, holding short-term or temporary contracts, or having a mobile status. These interviews were conducted as part of the UniSAFE research project. Therefore, this analysis contributes to one of the main objectives of the project: to produce robust knowledge regarding gender-based violence in universities and examine its mechanisms, determinants, experiences and consequences.

Most recent research has explored sexual harassment and harassment issues within academic contexts, focusing on scientific knowledge about sexual harassment¹ and its definitions² and the prevalence³ of sexual harassment in

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- 1 Fredrik Bondestam and Maja Lundqvist, "Sexual Harassment in Higher Education – a Systematic Review," *European Journal of Higher Education* 10, no. 4 (October 1, 2020): 397–419, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2020.1729833>; Sabine C. Jenner, Pia Djermeester, and Sabine Oertelt-Prigione, "Prevention Strategies for Sexual Harassment in Academic Medicine: A Qualitative Study," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 37, no. 5–6 (March 2022): NP2490–515, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520903130>; Paula McDonald, "Workplace Sexual Harassment 30 Years on: A Review of the Literature: Workplace Sexual Harassment," *International Journal of Management Reviews* 14, no. 1 (March 2012): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2011.00300.x>.
- 2 Marijke Naezer, Marieke van den Brink, and Yvonne Benschop, *Harassment in Dutch Academia. Exploring Manifestation, Facilitating Factors, Effects and Solutions* (Utrecht: LNVH: Landelijk Netwerk Vrouwelijke Hoogleraren, 2019), www.lnvh.nl/uploads/moxiemanager/LNVH_rapport_‘Harassment_in_Dutch_academia_Exploring_manifestations_facilitating_factors_effects_and_solutions_rsquo_.pdf.
- 3 Emanuela Lombardo and Maria Bustelo, "Sexual and Sexist Harassment in Spanish Universities: Policy Implementation and Resistances against Gender Equality Measures," *Journal of*

universities. In their comprehensive overview of the scientific research on sexual harassment, Bondestam and Lundquist⁴ highlighted that much of the research on its prevalence relies on quantitative methods to measure the scope of sexual harassment in academia, primarily covering campus-based data. Research in the last 20 years has mostly applied national legal concepts of sexual harassment and a binary understanding of gender, which suggests the missing aspects of capturing both variety of forms of gender-based violence and personal experiences that arise due to diversity grounds.⁵ Additionally, relying on the use of legal definitions of sexual harassment in research hinders the recognition of behaviours that do not fall under the law but are nevertheless unwanted, hostile and intimidating and violate a person's dignity.⁶ As a result, some research suggests shifting the focus to analysing patterns of behaviours that mistreat individuals and create a hostile study and work environment.⁷ This perspective broadens the conceptualisation of gender-based violence as an expression of unequal power relations, dominance and structural inequality⁸ and makes it possible to grasp the range of experiences that unveil the various forms of gender-based violence. Analysis of empirical data of interviews of persons at higher risk of gender-based violence in academia can complement the analytical definitions of sexual harassment and physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence rather than taking these definitions as a starting point.⁹

Many studies have revealed the high prevalence of sexual harassment in academia, particularly in the US and English-speaking countries.¹⁰ One of the first Europe-wide quantitative surveys on the prevalence of sexual harassment was conducted by the European Agency for Fundamental Rights in 2014. The survey results showed that every second woman (55%) in the European Union has experienced sexual harassment at least once since the age of 15 and one in five (21%) in the year prior to the survey.¹¹ In the UniSAFE project, a survey of 46 European universities with sample data from 42,186 respondents

Gender Studies 31, no. 1 (May 10, 2021): 8–22, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2021.1924643>; Rossalina Latcheva, "Sexual Harassment in the European Union: A Pervasive but Still Hidden Form of Gender-Based Violence," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 32, no. 12 (June 2017): 1821–52, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517698948>.

4 Bondestam and Lundqvist, "Sexual Harassment in Higher Education – a Systematic Review."

5 Ibid.

6 Latcheva, "Sexual Harassment in the European Union."

7 Naezer, van den Brink, and Benschop, *Harassment in Dutch Academia. Exploring Manifestation, Facilitating Factors, Effects and Solutions*.

8 Sofia Strid et al., "UniSAFE D3.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework," September 27, 2021, 29, <https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.5529667>.

9 Hearb et al., "From Gender regimes to violence regimes: Re-Thinking the Position of Violence," *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 29, no. 2 (June 15, 2022): 682–705. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxaa022>.

10 Latcheva, "Sexual Harassment in the European Union"; Bondestam and Lundqvist, "Sexual Harassment in Higher Education – a Systematic Review."

11 Latcheva, "Sexual Harassment in the European Union."

suggested that 62% of the survey respondents had experienced at least one form of gender-based violence since they started working or studying at their institution.¹² The results showed that, in academic settings, women and non-binary people were more likely than men to experience all forms of gender-based violence, except for physical violence, which was reported by more men. Respondents from minority groups based on gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity or disability were more likely to disclose experiences of gender-based violence. The most prevalent form of gender-based violence was psychological violence (57%), followed by sexual harassment (31%).¹³ Adding to the quantitative research, this chapter presents the findings of qualitative research conducted through interviews that describe the personal stories, emotions and lived experiences of individuals in their immediate work or study environment. By disclosing the diverse and difficult situations faced by individuals at risk due to their identity or the precarity of their professional position, we aim to improve understanding of the causes and consequences of gender-based violence and grasp the dynamics of power and dominance that underpin it in academic settings. Power, as many researchers argue, is always gendered, and the unequal distribution of power in any organisation, including universities, “normalises” misconduct that aims to violate a person’s dignity, create hostile work environments and block professional advancement.¹⁴

This chapter follows the framework of feminist research on inequality and violence regimes and conceptualises gender-based violence as a form of power, inequality and control.¹⁵ The conceptualisation provides an understanding

12 Anke Lipinsky et al., “Gender-Based Violence and Its Consequences in European Academia, Summary Results from the UniSAFE Survey,” 2022, <https://unisafe-gbv.eu/project-news/results-from-the-largest-european-survey-on-gender-based-violence-in-academia/>.

13 Ibid.

14 Naezer, van den Brink, and Benschop, Yvonne, *Harassment in Dutch Academia. Exploring Manifestation, Facilitating Factors, Effects and Solutions*; Pat O’Connor, “Why Is It so Difficult to Reduce Gender Inequality in Male-Dominated Higher Educational Organizations? A Feminist Institutional Perspective,” *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 45, no. 2 (April 2, 2020): 207–28, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03080188.2020.1737903>; Jeff Hearn and Wendy Parkin, *Gender, Sexuality and Violence in Organizations: The Unspoken Forces of Organization Violations* (London and Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2001). Lombardo and Bustelo, “Sexual and Sexist Harassment in Spanish Universities.”

15 Strid et al., “UniSAFE D3.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework”; Jeff Hearn et al., “Interrogating Violence against Women and State Violence Policy: Gendered Intersectionalities and the Quality of Policy in The Netherlands, Sweden and the UK,” *Current Sociology* 64, no. 4 (July 2016): 551–67, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392116639220>; Joan Acker, “Inequality Regimes: Gender, Class, and Race in Organizations,” *Gender & Society* 20, no. 4 (August 2006): 441–64, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243206289499>; Sofia Strid and Mieke Verloo, “Intersectional Complexities in Gender-Based Violence Politics,” in *Intersectionality in Feminist and Queer Movements: Confronting Privileges*, eds. Elizabeth Evans and Éléonore Lépinard, Routledge Advances in Feminist Studies and Intersectionality (London and New York: Routledge and Taylor & Francis Group, 2021); Sylvia Walby, Jo Armstrong, and Sofia Strid, “Intersectionality: Multiple Inequalities in Social Theory,” *Sociology* 46, no. 2 (April 2012): 224–40, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038511416164>.

of gender-based violence as a system of behaviours and attitudes that disproportionately affect individuals based on their gender¹⁶ and helps to identify how this violence occurs, its various manifestations and its impact on individuals. Research informs us that hierarchical relations based on gender, class, race and other inequalities contribute to the dynamics of violence exercised by those who are in higher-rank positions towards their lower-rank subordinates¹⁷ and to the normalisation of violence.¹⁸

The understanding of gender-based violence in this chapter goes beyond the legal definition as *quid pro quo* sexual harassment and a form of discrimination, which is broadly used by legal scholars.¹⁹ By analysing the narratives and stories shared by victims and survivors about their lived experiences, a more nuanced perception of the different forms of gender-based violence and contexts in which it occurs is revealed. The research findings uncover patterns of misconduct, rather than isolated instances, demonstrating how these behaviours misuse trust and authority and create unsafe study and work environments in universities. By investigating the various manifestations of gender-based violence and the contexts in which they occur, this chapter provides empirical knowledge that contributes to the ongoing scientific discussions regarding the conceptualisation of “what is violence”²⁰ and the need for structural and cultural change within EU research institutions²¹ as well as

16 Council of Europe, “Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention),” May 11, 2011, www.coe.int/en/web/gender-matters/council-of-europe-convention-on-preventing-and-combating-violence-against-women-and-domestic-violence.

17 Sofia Strid et al., eds., “Intersectional Complexities in Gender-Based Violence Politics,” in *Intersectionality in Feminist and Queer Movements: Confronting Privileges*, Routledge Advances in Feminist Studies and Intersectionality (London and New York: Routledge and Taylor & Francis Group, 2021).

18 Bondestam and Lundqvist, “Sexual Harassment in Higher Education – a Systematic Review”; O’Connor, “Why Is It so Difficult to Reduce Gender Inequality in Male-Dominated Higher Educational Organizations?”; Jeff Hearn and Linda McKie, “Gendered and Social Hierarchies in Problem Representation and Policy Processes: ‘Domestic Violence’ in Finland and Scotland,” *Violence Against Women* 16, no. 2 (February 2010): 136–58, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801209355185>; Rosaura Gonzalez-Mendez and Juana Dolores Santana-Hernandez, “Professional Opinions on Violence Against Women and Femicide in Spain,” *Homicide Studies* 16, no. 1 (February 2012): 41–59, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088767911428959>.

19 Committee on the Impacts of Sexual Harassment in Academia, Committee on Women in Science, Engineering, and Medicine, Policy and Global Affairs, et al., *Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine*, eds. Paula A. Johnson, Sheila E. Widnall, and Frazier F. Benya (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.17226/24994>.

20 Hearn et al., “From Gender Regimes to Violence Regimes: Re-Thinking the Position of Violence,” *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 29, no. 2 (June 15, 2022): 682–705, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxaa022>.

21 O’Connor, “Why Is it so Difficult to Reduce Gender Inequality in Male-Dominated Higher Educational Organizations?”

the development of comprehensive institutional policies to stop gender-based violence in academia.²²

2. Methodology

2.1 *Research methods*

To collect research data, a qualitative methodology was employed, consisting of individual, semi-structured interviews with researchers who indicated that they have experienced and/or witnessed gender-based violence in universities. This qualitative approach helped to gather diverse experiences, perceptions and interpretations from individuals whose voices often go unheard, ignored or silenced. In addition, this qualitative method allowed for a deeper understanding of the contexts in which these experiences arise and how they impact an individual's health, well-being and professional life.²³

Purposive sampling was used to select research participants with information and invitations to participate in the study disseminated through a) the UniSAFE project and its partner institutions' websites, b) social media channels such as Facebook and LinkedIn, c) various academic networks such as the Women in Academia Support Network, and d) using an optional link included in the quantitative survey conducted as part of the UniSAFE project in research performing organisations and the Marie Curie Alumni Association.

In total, 81 contacts were received through the dedicated email provided in the call for participation in the research. Each of these contacts was sent detailed information about the purpose of the research, the interview process and ethical statements including assurances of confidentiality. During this process, some potential interviewees withdrew from further participation or did not reply after their initial agreement. Ultimately, 54 online semi-structured interviews were conducted in the period of February–May 2022. These interviews were carried out by six partners of the UniSAFE Consortium.²⁴

The majority of the interviews were conducted in English, while 16 interviews were conducted in the native language of the interviewees. The interviews ranged from approximately 30 to 90 minutes.

22 Lombardo and Bustelo, "Sexual and Sexist Harassment in Spanish Universities."

23 Committee on the Impacts of Sexual Harassment in Academia, Committee on Women in Science, Engineering, and Medicine, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, et al., *Sexual Harassment of Women: Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine*, eds. Paula A. Johnson, Sheila E. Widnall, and Frazier F. Benya (Washington, DC: National Academies Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.17226/24994>.

24 Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences (ISAS) (Czech Republic), GESIS Leibniz-Institute for the Social Sciences (GESIS) (Germany), Jagiellonian University (JU) (Poland) Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences (LCSS) (Lithuania), Universidad Complutense de Madrid (UCM) (Spain), Yellow Window (YW) (Belgium).

2.2 Research participants

In total, 54 research participants (48 women, 5 men and 1 person who identified themselves as non-binary) participated in the study. Interviewees were recruited from all over Europe, representing 20 different nationalities²⁵ including both EU and non-EU countries.

The ethnic diversity of the interviewees does not vary much; the majority (70%) described themselves as ‘white’ followed by 18% who identified themselves as ‘Black/African/Caribbean/Latino’ and ‘Mixed or Multiple’, Asian, or multiple (Table 11.1).

More than half (55%) of the interviewees were 40 + years old, 22% were 30–39, 15% were 20–25, and 6% were 18–24 years old. One interviewee did not provide their age.

The research participants represented a wide variety of disciplines within the social sciences, humanities, natural and medical sciences. During the research, interviewees were at various stages of their careers, from master’s students to full professors, and held different lengths of work contracts in research-performing organisations (Table 11.2).

Responding to the question about sexual orientation, the majority of research participants (81%) identified themselves as heterosexual, while 15% indicated that they belonged to the LGBTQI+ community. Two interviewees preferred not to disclose their sexual orientation.

Responding to the question about their religion, 61% of interviewees indicated that they did not have a particular religious affiliation.

Research participants were also asked whether they consider themselves to have a disability or chronic illness. More than a quarter (27%) of all study participants indicated that they did have a disability or chronic illness, while the majority (69%) answered negatively, indicating that they did not have a disability or chronic illness. Two individuals did not provide a response to this question.

2.3 Data analysis

To prepare for the data analysis, the audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed using selected transcription software such as Otter.ai or MS Word. Transcriptions of the interviews conducted in participants’ native language were translated using eTranslation – the online machine translation service provided by the European Commission.²⁶ To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, all interviews were pseudonymised, including names of the

25 Three interviewees indicated that they hold more than one nationality. Seven participants preferred not to say, and four did not indicate their nationality.

26 More information https://ec.europa.eu/info/resources-partners/machine-translation-public-administrations-etranlation_en#usingmtec.

Table 11.1 Interviewees' ethnic group (n=54)

	N	%
White	38	70
Black/African/Caribbean/Latino	4	7
Asian	2	4
Mixed/Multiple	4	7
Prefer not to say	3	6
Did not say	3	6

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Table 11.2 Interviewee's position/status during participation in the study (n=54*)

	N	%
Postgraduate student	3	5
PhD student	13	23
Researcher at an early career stage	6	10
Researcher on temporary contract	10	17
Visiting researcher**	0	0
Researcher on short-term contract	1	2
Permanent contract	6	10
Other***	18	31
Did not say	1	2

* Three participants of the study assigned themselves to several different positions.

** None of the interviewees identified themselves as holding the status of 'visiting researcher' in the template of the socio-demographic data. However, during the interviews, several of them shared experiences of gender-based violence during the period they were 'visiting researchers'.

*** Other: Contracted teacher (non-academic status), Senior researcher, Master's student, Technician, Full professor, Director of research, Assistant professor, etc.

Source: Compiled by the authors.

interviewee, perpetrator, research-performing organisation and location (city), and, in some cases, the field of research.

Once the transcripts were ready for analysis, they were uploaded to MAXQDA software. To analyse the collected qualitative data, an inductive-deductive analysis approach was applied. This approach was chosen because it allows for the use of "complex reasoning skills throughout the process of research".²⁷ The first step was to develop a codebook using a deductive analysis approach. The interview data were organised into categories that aligned with the research questions:

- Contextual factors of research performing organisations that facilitated gender-based violence

27 John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2013).

- Experiences/observations of the various forms of gender-based violence the interviewee faced
- Consequences of said violence from the perspective of victim, perpetrator and/or the institution

Applying an inductive analysis approach, codes and subcodes were added to capture categories and themes that emerged from the interviews. The coding process enabled the grouping and organising of data with shared characteristics into categories,²⁸ allowing for the identification of patterns relevant to the research questions. The data derived from the interviews and analysed inductively provided insights into the relationship between contextual factors and experiences of gender-based violence as well as its prevalence in universities. In addition, it helped to reveal the consequences for both individuals (victims and perpetrators) and universities.

3. Institutional contexts facilitating gender-based violence

Recent research findings suggest that, despite efforts to promote gender equality and structural change in academia, universities continue to be gendered organisations where power is unequally distributed.²⁹ Men continue to dominate higher-ranking academic and management positions, while lower-level positions are typically occupied by women.³⁰ European statistics indicate that women make up 42% of academic staff, but only 26% of them hold the highest-grade positions, and only 23% are in decision-making roles in research.³¹ There is generally a higher representation of active male authors compared to female authors when looking at peer-reviewed publication outputs.³² The dominance of men within the top leadership structures of universities and the competitive and individualised culture of academia, indicated by the research, helps to uncover the gendered context of universities, encompassing not only formal structures³³ but

28 Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles and London: SAGE, 2016).

29 Lombardo and Bustelo, “Sexual and Sexist Harassment in Spanish Universities”; Liisa Husu, “What Does Not Happen? Interrogating a Tool for Building a Gender-Sensitive University,” in *The Gender-Sensitive University: A Contradiction in Terms?* eds. Eileen P. Drew and Siobhán Canavan, Routledge Research in Gender and Society (London and New York: Routledge, 2022), www.routledge.com/The-Gender-Sensitive-University-A-Contradiction-in-Terms/Drew-Canavan/p/book/9780367533908.

30 Lombardo and Bustelo, “Sexual and Sexist Harassment in Spanish Universities.”

31 European Commission, “She Figures 2021,” 2022, <https://ec.europa.eu/research-and-innovation/en/knowledge-publications-tools-and-data/interactive-reports/she-figures-2021>.

32 Ibid.

33 Joan Acker, “Inequality Regimes: Gender, Class, and Race in Organizations,” *Gender & Society* 20, no. 4 (1990).

also informal ones shaped by norms, attitudes and values.³⁴ These latter factors contribute to the tolerance of sexual harassment³⁵ and affect the framing of the institutional response. The empirical evidence derived from the conducted interviews, analysed below, adds to these findings and identifies contextual factors that facilitate gender-based violence in universities. These factors are related to hierarchical structures, power inequalities, male-dominated leadership, gender discrimination and gender stereotypes.

3.1 *Hierarchical structures and power inequalities*

Half of the interviewees in this study reported that they experienced and/or observed hierarchical structures and power inequalities. Many interviewees described the hierarchy in the universities as ‘stiff’, ‘old fashioned’ and ‘based on power control’ (PC/W/40–49³⁶) and said that it can appear as if a student, lecturer or early-career researcher is playing with fire within this hierarchical structure.

Due to the power imbalance, students and/or staff who are more dependent on the university often feel compelled to adapt to the university’s context. As some interviewees noted, “when you’re a PhD student or a postdoc, you don’t really go against the higher bodies” (PhD/W/25–29), and “be clever not to make sharp moves. So you’re playing with fire, but there’s no other way. And you can’t complain to anybody because then you are in a direct fight with that tiger” (TC/W/40–49). It seems that the general cultural pattern in universities is to support those in power and even promote them, leaving others feeling powerless and having to deal with personal problems on their own.

Interviewees also highlighted the impact of unequal power relations based on gender and ethnicity. They mentioned that, while there may be gender diversity in top management positions, there is a notable absence of racial and ethnic diversity, particularly in management and top-level positions: “Academia is not the most notoriously open, as you can probably imagine. You’re a person of colour in academia, and as a female, I can’t even imagine the nonsense that you deal with” (PhD/W/40–49).

Racist comments and prejudices performed by professors were often not taken seriously by the university, contributing to an unfriendly environment for researchers from non-native origins and their exclusion and marginalisation.

34 Hearn et al., “From Gender Regimes to Violence Regimes.” Re-Thinking the Position of Violence,” *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 29, no. 2 (June 15, 2022): 682–705, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxaa022>.

35 Naezer, van den Brink, and Benschop, *Harassment in Dutch Academia. Exploring Manifestation, Facilitating Factors, Effects and Solutions*.

36 Here and afterwards, the main sociodemographic data of the interviewee at the time of interview are provided, e.g. Position/Gender Identity/Age Group. Annex 1 at the end of this chapter provides the full names of the abbreviated positions.

3.2 *Men dominating leadership*

Men dominating leadership positions in academia also has a detrimental impact on women and their efforts to get promoted. Women reported being excluded from academic activities such as co-authoring publications, presenting conference papers, or participating in round-table discussions. They were denied opportunities to hold leadership positions because “leaders were always men” (TC/W/40–49).

Women described how they were excluded from research but needed “to prepare all reports and all the documents for the team, but otherwise men had to do the research” (TC/W/40–49). Women could be questioned and accused of occupying a man’s place in academia: “Why are you working here? You’re taking a man’s place” (NAS/W/50–59). Some interviewees pointed to “nepotism” or “protection of each other” (PC/W/40–49) and to “corruption and favouritism when the same kind of elites are reproducing themselves” (ASP/W/40–49).

The analysis indicates that men’s dominance is never questioned or challenged: “the director has been in this position for 30 years now . . . he probably thinks he is the king of this huge institution” (TC/W/n/a). Additionally, power is usually connected to the money generated by professors who secure grants, funds or projects that benefit the university, further reinforcing their influence and control.

3.3 *Gender discrimination*

Gender discrimination in the immediate work environment is a practice that appears deeply rooted in universities, having been experienced by one-sixth of the interviewees. Some detailed barriers to professional growth because they got pregnant and took care of their small children: “my career was as slow as a snail because of two children. And I missed some scholarships. . . . My professor told me that I could choose between my career and family in that time” (TC/W/50–59).

Gender discrimination in terms of promotion and payments was also highlighted. Women researchers observed that their male counterparts were more likely to be promoted, while women faced intrusive questions from professors about their personal lives, such as their plans for children, relationships or marriage. Professors justified this behaviour by arguing they needed to plan future projects and anticipate the impact of potential childcare leave. But “this doesn’t happen with the male students” (PhD/W/30–39).

3.4 *Gender stereotypes*

Usually, male professors or team leaders allowed themselves to make sexist jokes or comments about women’s appearance that contributed to unfriendly dynamics between women and men in teams. There appeared to be a strong

preconception that women “are less brilliant, or they don’t pursue their research so well” (PC/W/40–49), “women are stupid and too sexy” (TC/W/40–49), women usually “cause more problems when they enter sciences” (NAS/W/50–59), or women students were extremely patronised and treated like small children while professors “undertake a father’s role” (PhD/W/30–39; PC/W/40–49).

‘White man’ privilege frequently emerged by way of silencing women, questioning their competence and laughing at what they were saying, while other male colleagues in the team never interfered or stopped improper behaviours. Several interviewees described this kind of behaviour as “a very macho culture which means that people in charge don’t worry about it” (PhD/M/25–29).

Some interviewees described academic staff making homophobic and transphobic jokes or comments and using homophobic slurs with others accepting it as “normal” (MS/M/18–24). Racial prejudices and stereotypes were mentioned as well, particularly highlighting the sexualisation of women students from different racial backgrounds, even though the universities had “systems in place for training against racism and the gender prejudice . . . but it doesn’t seem . . . that the university has a culture” (n/a/W/60+).

Overall, the experiences shared by individuals at risk for gender-based violence in their immediate work or study environment suggest that discriminatory practices, male-dominated leadership, power inequalities and gender stereotypes facilitate the prevalence of gender-based violence in universities. In such organisational contexts, victims tend to avoid reporting incidents due to fear of further violence or negative repercussions for their economic or mental well-being.

4. Prevalence of gender-based violence in academia

The analysis presented in this chapter is based on the victim-based approach, meaning that the perception of victims is central to understanding how they describe, interpret and assess the incidents that happened to them.³⁷ It shows how interviewees construct and define the misconduct they have experienced, their feelings and their trauma. By telling their stories, the interviewees were able to describe how and why they felt the misconduct happened to them and how they recognised or did not recognise the violence or harassment in their immediate work or study environment. The analysis shows patterns of misbehaviours perpetrated by those in power towards those who are dependent on them due to their academic or work status. The analysis starts by describing the general pattern of incidents and the identities of victims and perpetrators. It then delves into the various manifestations of gender-based violence, starting with the most frequently reported narratives of psychological

37 Naezer, van den Brink, and Benschop, *Harassment in Dutch Academia. Exploring Manifestation, Facilitating Factors, Effects and Solutions*.

violence, as described by interviewees, followed by other common experiences that could be defined as sexual harassment, gender harassment, economic violence, and online and organisational violence as well as physical and sexual violence.

4.1 Findings on pattern of incidents, victims and perpetrators

The general pattern that emerged from the analysis demonstrates that various forms of gender-based violence were experienced by PhD students or early-career researchers and by researchers or teaching staff when they sought a promotion to a higher position. Some interviewees described experiences that happened 5, 10 or 20 years ago, though many revealed more recent and sometimes ongoing experiences. Regardless of when it happened, the experiences show a very similar pattern; they happened more than once and were often frequently repeated, lasting for months and years and demonstrating an interplay of multiple forms of gender-based violence.

The interviewees stated that the incidents mostly happened within the institutional setting, such as classrooms, personal offices of the staff (professors/lecturers, etc.) and canteens. Several cases happened on student campuses and at conferences, social events, and informal meetings of students and/or staff. Some interviewees also mentioned incidents that occurred online. Most interviewees shared more than one story of incidents they had experienced and/or observed and that might have happened at different points in time.

Among the interviewees, the majority (30) of participants reported both experiencing gender-based violence themselves and witnessing such incidents in their immediate work or study environments; 18 participants identified themselves as victims only while 6 out of the 54 interviewees shared only observations (Table 11.3).

According to the analysis, most of the perpetrators held positions of power within the institutional hierarchy – supervisors, managers, professors, lecturers (Table 11.4). Around a third of the perpetrators were colleagues. Students were rarely perpetrators. It is also clear from the pattern in Table 11.5 that most of the perpetrators were men. The number of female perpetrators is significantly lower.

Table 11.3 Number of victims and/or bystanders (n=54 interviews)

	<i>N</i>
Victim	18
Bystander (observed or is aware that such incidents happened)	6
Both	30

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Table 11.4 Status/position of the perpetrator* identified by interviewees (n=52 out of 54 interviews**)

	<i>n</i>
Professors/lecturers	23
Supervisor (when a victim is a (former) PhD student)	20
Colleague	18
Manager	10
Student(s) (where the victim is a student)	7
Student(s) (where the victim is a teacher, professor, lecturer, etc.)	6

* In some cases, the categories of the status/position of the perpetrator overlap. The data provided in the table are based on the testimonies of the interviewees indicating the status/position of the perpetrator when the incident happened.

** Two participants of the study talked more about the (discriminatory) policies and work environment of the universities they work or study in.

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Table 11.5 Gender of the perpetrator identified by interviewees (n=52 out of 54 interviews*)

	<i>n</i>
Man	37
Woman	5
Both	4
Not clearly identified	6

* Two participants of the study talked more about the (non-discrimination) policies and work environment of the universities they work or study in.

Source: Compiled by the authors.

Interviewees indicated that a) LBGTQI+ identification, b) ethnicity and migrant status, c) holding temporary work contracts, and d) physical or mental disability were all factors that increased the risk of exposure to gender-based violence.

4.2 Gender-based violence: testimonies of lived experiences

Next, we will discuss the main findings of our research, which present the scope of various forms of gender-based violence experienced and witnessed by research participants. The analysis of testimonies and stories suggests that the most frequent manifestations of gender-based violence are psychological violence, gender harassment, sexual harassment and economic violence. Less information is provided on sexual violence, online violence and organisational

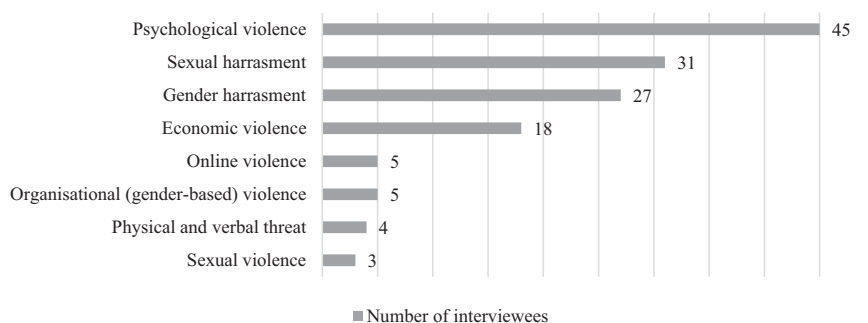


Figure 11.1 Prevalence of experienced forms of gender-based violence

Source: Compiled by the authors.

violence. Physical violence is almost absent in the interviewees' experiences (see Figure 11.1).

The examined narratives shared by victims and bystanders allow us to grasp the individual perceptions and interpretations of various forms of gender-based violence and to identify the patterns of verbal and non-verbal misconduct that manifest in different forms of gender-based violence.

4.3 Psychological violence

Psychological violence emerged as one of the most prevalent manifestations of gender-based violence identified by interviewees, as shown in Figure 11.1. Of the 54 interviewees, 45 experienced and/or witnessed psychological violence and described behaviours including coercive control, verbal abuse, isolation, exclusion, stalking and manipulation.

Participants, for instance, described feeling that their scientific performance was under intense scrutiny with the purpose of expelling them from their team if they were not seen to be professional enough to do the assigned tasks. This was particularly evident among early-career researchers and researchers on short-term contracts. One interviewee summarised that she was treated differently than men, because she was a woman:

I started to realise this is about gender, it's because I'm a woman. And it's because they feel entitled to supervise me, to scrutinise my work, . . . they treated me as . . . an intern with two male mentors, and that they had to teach me everything. Whereas, in truth, if you look at my CV, I had like double the amount of experience in training. The average score on my trainings was as good as theirs.

(NAS/W/50–59)

Verbal abuse was also recognised. In one case, a supervisor would scold, humiliate and demean his subordinate staff in front of other staff "as a waste of time" (NAS/W/50–59).

In another case, a professor publicly criticised a woman researcher for being less advanced compared to men (TC/W/30–39). One more interviewee shared that nobody in her team could challenge male professors:

once I disagreed, and I was very strongly attacked in return. . . The dean came to my office and said that this group is particular, and it has a strong identity. So, <you should . . . be submissive, and then wait, wait, and then just listen to them . . . until your voice grows>.

(ECS/W/30–39)

Women lecturers in a male-dominated faculty were isolated and excluded by cutting them “out of their meetings, plannings, everything . . . that has been happening” (AP/W/30–39). One interviewee recalled that colleagues would not keep in contact with her for fear of being punished as had once happened with her co-worker (NAS/W/50–59). In another case, when a woman became pregnant, she was ‘advised’ to opt out of her research field “voluntarily” (TC/W/50–59).

4.4 *Sexual harassment*

Sexual harassment manifests itself through various behaviours, including comments of a sexual nature, sexist jokes, and implicit or explicit non-verbal sexual actions (staring, gazing, infringing on personal space, physical contact). Of 54 interviewees, 31 described such patterns of behaviour.

There was a range of verbal behaviours reported, such as calling women and gay men by sexist names, for instance, “cutie or Blondie”, and “obsessively insisting on having a beer or wine” and “go out” (TC/W/40–49), or “talking about his own sexual experiences” (TC/W/40–49). Interviewees frequently mentioned comments and “jokes” about their bodies, particularly comments about long legs or big breasts. This objectification and sexualisation of their bodies was described by many as being an everyday experience (one-third of interviewees talked about this). One interviewee, for instance, said that “my supervisor . . . always made sexually explicit jokes which were also either directed at us or to other women in the lab” (PC/W/40–49).

Of the 31 interviewees, 23 described diverse non-verbal behaviours of a sexist nature. This included standing very close: “standing just 2 centimetres behind me, but without making noise” (PC/W/40–49) or “invading my personal space” (NAS/M/30–39). Unwelcome conduct that was identified also included going to dinners and “eating from my plate” (SR/W/40–49), “trying to make the atmosphere a little bit . . . intimate and kiss me in his office” (TC/W/30–39), “hugging” (PHD/W/25–29; OTH/W/40–49), “groping young lecturers when drunk during faculty parties” (TC/W/40–49) or “gazing at you basically as a sexual object” (PC/W/40–49).

In another case, an interviewee described how she shared the good news with her supervisor about receiving a scholarship, and “he raised his arms as

if to hug me. I'd never done it before. I just shook his hand. But I was happy and thought nothing bad in it. So, I did it. And then he hugged me, and his hands were very close to my butt, just to feel it" (PhD/W/30–39). Similar cases of unwanted touching, grabbing or attempted kisses were mentioned by a number of the interviewees.

4.5 Gender harassment

Gender harassment is defined as harassment on the grounds of sex but without explicit sexual connotations. These behaviours include making humiliating comments, silencing and applying stereotypical prejudices.

The analysis of the interviews suggests these behaviours were experienced by 27 out of 54 interviewees. Many interviewees shared experiences of being silenced, ignored or denigrated, and made invisible. One interviewee explained that she often felt as if she didn't have a voice and therefore became invisible, ignored, humiliated and silenced and wasn't able to change anything: "they just shut me down. They make me completely invisible. They do not engage in any kind of conversation with me. And it hurts. It's . . . heart-breaking" (AP/W/40–49).

Women in male-dominated teams often felt unwelcome and were made to feel inferior regardless of their academic achievements: "when a woman was talking, they (team members that are men) used to talk over her as if laughing at what she was saying" (SR/W/40–49). Another interviewee reflected that their supervisor often ignores their professional requests and needs, and then, at the end, their grades are very low regardless of invested efforts and other resources. In another case, the head of the department demanded that the interviewee leave the premises when "the professors" entered "the meeting room" (AP/W/30–39).

For women seeking a promotion in academia, there was a stereotypical perception that their success was attributed to feminine characteristics rather than their scientific achievements. A woman scientist's achievements could be misjudged, because "she is so pretty" that no one believes that she can do good quality work (TC/M/25–29) and be a competent researcher: "these are difficult studies. This is hard work. You will spoil your beauty . . . why don't you go do some modelling or find a rich husband" (ASP/W/30–39).

The experience of being "underestimated" or labelled as incompetent to do research, teach and/or progress in their career was a recurrent pattern of gender harassment identified by women researchers and lecturers.

4.6 Economic violence

Out of the 54 interviewees, 18 described incidents that negatively affected their work and had financial impacts. Some of them reflected on instances that illustrated patterns of injustice experienced by many women researchers in their universities. Such negative behaviours included being discouraged

from publishing or applying for promotions, limiting access to information and tools needed for research work, being labelled as incompetent, removing a person's name from projects or publications, stealing data or ideas, and making women researchers a "second-hand author".

Some of the most frequently described stories were around the refusal of promotions, rejecting courses or overloading someone with courses that were "not prestigious". One lecturer described that "the teaching responsibilities given to (her) were the 'leftovers'. We call them 'rubbish' courses so nobody wants to teach them" (ECS/W/30–39). Several interviewees recalled that their supervisor or manager informed them in advance that they should not apply for a promotion, because "he wanted . . . me to wait another five years . . . so that his new PhD male student would have finished his PhD and then take my place" (AP/W/30–39).

Limiting access to the information, resources or premises necessary for the research was another type of behaviour identified by the interviewees. For example, they did not get materials and equipment for their research although other students received what they needed:

The supervisor bought (materials) . . . for his favourite PhD students . . . that means they want me to give up My professors said, 'No, at the moment, there is no money for that'.

(TC/W/50–59)

Interviewees also shared examples of their research projects or data being appropriated or stolen. For example, the director of one research-performing organisation initially showed praise and admiration but later stole an interviewee's prepared international project and succeeded in using his authority, power and influential relations to remove her from the organisation (TC/W/n/a). The appropriation of a person's work manifests in the manner of receiving private benefits in exchange for recommendations, the prolongation of work contracts or promotions. For example, in one instance, an interviewee stated that the professor required her "to write an article, a book proposal and finalise another publication in one month" in exchange for the requested recommendation to go on a study visit (ECS/W/40–49).

4.7 *Sexual violence*

Sexual violence includes sexual acts, attempts to obtain a sexual act, sexual assaults and acts otherwise directed against a person's sexuality without the person's consent.³⁸ Analysis of the collected qualitative interviews suggests

38 Strid, Sofia et al., "UniSAFE D3.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework," September 27, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.5281/ZENODO.5529667>.

that interviewees seldom spoke about sexual violence, particularly when it came to their personal experiences. Only 3 out of the 54 interviewees talked about their personal experiences of sexual violence. Some of the interviewees mentioned that they knew about rape cases committed by students against women students on campus. Most often (12 out of 54 interviewees), they talked about attempts to have intimate relations and sex against their will. As one interviewee revealed, “a student was actually threatened by her supervisor; he basically demanded sex, he demanded that she (should) sleep with him (TC/W/40–49). As bystanders, some reflected on the experiences of their colleagues, friends or other staff members who faced intense flirting or proposals to spend time together in private or to have sex.

The stories shared reveal very traumatic experiences and a prevalence of victim-blaming attitudes in universities. In one particular case, when a rape was reported to police, the university community subjected the victim to intensive questioning and scrutiny, focusing on her having had a few drinks and insinuating that her consumption of alcohol had contributed to the incident, that perhaps she wanted the relations to take place or was somehow to blame (PGS/W/18–24).

4.8 Physical violence and online violence

Physical threats and physical violence were mentioned in very few interviews. Only 5 out of 54 interviewees said that they had personally experienced physical violence and verbal threats, and 3 out of 54 witnessed acts of physical violence on campus or in the classroom. Gay and trans people experienced physical violence most frequently, regularly facing physical or verbal assaults in a masculine study environment. There were incidents of gender-based violence where “women were the victims of sexual assault. And then the physical assaults were predominantly either on gay women or men or trans students” (PGS/M/25–29).

Online violence is usually manifested as the non-consensual distribution of sexual images and text, certain features of which arise from the nature of information and communication technologies, e.g. instantaneousness, asynchronicity, personalisation, global connectivity and the reproducibility of images.³⁹ The analysis of the 54 interviews suggests that this type of violence was either rarely recognised by the interviewed participants or very seldom performed by the perpetrators. Only 5 out of 54 interviewees provided some narrative about online abuse that was a form of cyberbullying. For instance, one research participant talked about encountering hate and negative comments towards a lecture advertised on Twitter and WhatsApp. It appeared that the commentators had not listened to the lecture but nevertheless formed strong opinions about it (PhD/W/40–49).

39 Ibid.

4.9 *Organisational gender-based violence*

Manifestations of organisational violence in the form of abuse towards feminist students or Gender Studies as a discipline were limitedly discussed by the interviewees. Few instances of gender-based violence (5 out of 54) targeted the collective, group and organisational levels of universities. Homophobic attitudes were observed among academic staff and students during lectures and seminars for PhD students. This manifested in comments about gender ideology, the dilution of “traditional” gender roles and the disruption of traditional family structures by gay people (TC/W/40–49).

Some interviewees disclosed negative organisational attitudes towards feminist theoretical and methodological approaches in research. Academic staff could experience barriers to advancing in their research if they intended to use feminist methods (AP/W/30–39). As one interviewee explained, she was “kept on a shelf for seven years” before she was admitted to a PhD programme (TC/W/40–49).

Another example highlighted a pattern of accepting highly qualified women researchers who were heavily subsidised for five years from EU funds. However, in the long run, universities showed a lack of intention to provide more for these researchers and preferred them to leave their job instead of promoting them: “they’re getting extremely well-qualified, superbly performing foreign women researchers for very low bargain for five years. And then they get rid of them” (ASP/W/40–49).

4.10 *Multiple forms of violence*

The analysis of the 54 interviews reveals that, most often, different types of gender-based violence do not just happen in isolated or single acts. Generally, they interlink and overlap. The features of gender harassment such as ignorance, silencing and denigration often intertwine with the refusal of collaboration in a project or publications; postponement or rejection of a promotion; a reduction of the number of courses; or, on the other hand, an excess of non-significant courses, among other things. Verbal threats or abuse often create an unsafe and fear-inducing atmosphere, as women worry about losing a job/contract/position, leading to financial consequences. Manipulation and stalking as manifestations of psychological violence often overlap with sexual harassment and even sexual violence. Usually, this happens when a person in a more powerful position extorts unwanted sex from a dependent student/researcher/lecturer in exchange for promises to assist in publications and/or support in their career development. As one example illustrates, “He (the professor) is the one that sexually assaulted me. And he followed me around the world under the pretext of wanting to co-author a paper” (ECS/W/30–39).

5. Consequences of gender-based violence for individuals and institutions

The analysis of the stories about experienced gender-based violence reveals different consequences for victims, perpetrators and universities. It contributes to previous studies on the negative effects of harassment for individuals, organisations and science in general.⁴⁰

5.1 Consequences for the victim

The research findings demonstrate that the experienced incidents of gender-based violence had negative consequences for the victims' personal (39 interviewees) and professional (40 interviewees) lives. Only five interviewees claimed that the incident did not have any consequences.

Interviewees who indicated the incident they experienced or observed had impacted the victims' personal life mostly mentioned consequences for physical and mental health. They felt tired and exhausted ("I've had sleepless nights" (NAS/W/50–59)), stressed ("I had panic attacks" (TC/W/40–49)), depressed ("I was completely depressed. I was crying all the time" (PC/W/40–49)), suicidal ("it's bad enough for me that I've tried to kill myself several times" (PhD/W/25–29)) or anxious ("I had thoughts that I couldn't control any more . . . At some point, I (thought) that I would go mad" (RD/W/40–49)).

Some interviewees mentioned that these physical and mental health issues also limited their possibilities to work or leave the workplace, resulting in financial burdens for some victims: "I had to sell my house that I had bought two years ago, so economically, it was a bit nuts. . . . I was completely depressed" (PC/W/40–49).

Gender-based violence incidents also impacted victims' relationships with their family and friends as well as others in their immediate environment: "my friends couldn't understand what was happening; I got angry with friends" (TC/W/30–39).

Almost the same share of interviewees (40) indicated consequences for the victim's professional life, such as damage to the victim's professional development ("professionally, it made things . . . really complicated . . . when I have to find another position without recommendations and all (on) my own" (PC/W/40–49)), collaboration with colleagues ("networking occurs in quite informal settings as well as formal settings, so I think . . . you . . . may be missing out to some extent" (ECS/W/40–49)), and research funding and/or

40 Naezer, van den Brink, and Benschop, *Harassment in Dutch Academia. Exploring Manifestation, Facilitating Factors, Effects and Solutions*; Bondestam and Lundqvist, "Sexual Harassment in Higher Education – a Systematic Review."

publication opportunities (“I would have been able . . . to carry out powerful research before, . . . I knew how to move in that field, since I refused, I closed that door because . . . I didn’t want anything to do with that harasser and with that subject” (PIC/W/30–39)).

In some cases, the incidents – particularly if the victims reported or spoke about the incident publicly – did have a negative impact on getting higher positions and other career-related opportunities: “the Secretary of the Minister told me that I’m too controversial to get this function” (TC/W/n/a).

The analysis of the interviews reveals that victims prefer to a) change their workplace (“at the end of the day, you don’t have a choice; you just quit” (TC/W/40–49)), b) change subject/area of research (“then I just changed my research line; I went for a postdoc in a different field” (PC/W/40–49)), or c) leave academia entirely (“I’m planning to become an entrepreneur” (PhD/W/30–39)).

5.2 *Consequences for the perpetrator*

Although the incidents of gender-based violence had a huge negative impact on victims’ personal and professional lives, most of the interviewees (43) claimed that there were no consequences for the perpetrators.

As a few interviewees mentioned, the perpetrators did not receive any punishment mainly because of being in a more powerful position compared to the victim: “when we (enter academia) as women, we don’t have . . . the old boys’ network that they benefit from. So, if they do something wrong to us, there won’t be any boomerang effect on them” (PC/W/50–59).

In some cases, the perpetrators were promoted and remained respected members of the university: “he died with full honours. . . . Yes, this man’s name is still a source of pride and prestige” (OTH/W/50–59).

There was also one case when, despite the temporary suspension of the perpetrator, he continued to receive his salary from the institution: “He was suspended. . . . he’s been sitting at home for two years with full pay!” (NAS/W/50–59).

In some cases, perpetrators did experience negative consequences for their professional development (“he was six months without a job and salary” (PC/W/40–49)), collaboration with colleagues (“due to the incident . . . they want to hand him over as a doctoral student and not continue to supervise him” (PhD/W/25–29)), and/or research funding (PhD/W/40–49).

Three interviewees also mentioned negative consequences for perpetrators’ personal lives (“he was in the clinic, then he attempted suicide” (NAS/W/50–59)).

5.3 *Consequences for the universities*

About half of the interviewees (23) were not aware of the consequences of the gender-based violence incidents for the university. While 28 interviewees

talked about either positive or negative consequences for the institution, 10 participants indicated that, in their view, there were no consequences.

The interviewees mostly talked about negative consequences related to a loss of (prosperous) employees or students (“It was really bad for university . . . it was our loss, because we had a person who was really ambitious” (TC/W/40–49)), a negative impact on the university’s reputation (“they lose valuable candidates if things (continue) like that” (SR/W/40–49)), and/or financial issues (“I think they had sanctions from the (European) Commission, but for financial issues” (TC/W/40–49)).

The analysis also reveals the incidents had positive consequences for the universities, mainly manifesting in the establishment of new rules and guidelines (“we got an email . . . saying that you have to be very formal with your professors and respectful of their boundaries” (PhD/W/18–24)) or training for staff members. There were also positive changes in the work or study environment due to the suspension or dismissal of the perpetrator.

One interviewee described how the circumstances of the incident led to the establishment of an Equality Unit in the institution, the implementation of specific courses for staff members, as well as the adoption of “harassment protocols and how to detect them, how to act and how to prevent them above all” (PhD/W/18–24). Another participant of the study noticed that the incidents did raise awareness of gender-based violence, and more cases became public: “I think maybe now it’s a little bit different because we had here few public cases of sexual harassment in last six months. So, maybe it’s starting to be an issue” (TC/W/30–39).

6. Concluding remarks

This chapter provides evidence-based knowledge on the prevalence and consequences of gender-based violence in universities and contributes to the scientific discussion around conceptualising violence as an analytically and empirically open question.⁴¹ Examining the narratives of victims’ experiences reveals the nature of the misconduct towards them and the nuanced relations and manipulations that maintain power, dominance and inequality in an academic environment. Through the individual stories about the control of academic research – questioning the scientific competencies of researchers; excluding them from information; appropriating their research data, ideas and authorship; exploiting them for sexual pleasure; or stopping their professional advancement because of feminist research approaches – all of these demonstrate diverse features of gender-based violence that create a disrespectful, isolating and humiliating environment in academia. Our analysis suggests

41 Hearn et al., “From Gender Regimes to Violence Regimes.” Re-Thinking the Position of Violence,” *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 29, no. 2 (June 15, 2022): 682–705, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxaa022>.

that intersecting inequalities in terms of gender and race/ethnicity/migrant status significantly increase the risks of experiencing such behaviours, compounded by factors like dependency on supervisors or managers, temporary or short-term contracts, and sexist and racist attitudes and prejudices within the universities. Furthermore, normalised homophobic and transphobic attitudes negatively impact the well-being and professional advancement of LGBTQI students and researchers and contribute to a hostile atmosphere in academia. This knowledge adds to the current research findings⁴² that go beyond the legal definition of sexual harassment as a form of gender-based violence expressed as *quid pro quo* sexual harassment and a form of discrimination. The empirical evidence also suggests the need to expand the conception of gender-based violence to encompass the various sexual, psychological, economic, physical and other forms of violence or harassment that do not fit the conventional and accepted definitions.⁴³ The chapter raises awareness of the social dynamics in academia that perpetuate violence and inequalities. It also emphasises the importance of considering empirical evidence of gender-based violence in the development of comprehensive institutional policies to prevent, protect and hold individuals or institutions accountable for behaviours that harm victims personally and professionally.

Numerous studies have highlighted the structural and cultural factors that contribute to men's dominance in senior positions and the underestimation of women's achievements in academia. These factors maintain gender inequalities⁴⁴ and facilitate sexual or other forms of harassment.⁴⁵ Our analysis contributes to these research findings. It demonstrates that the formal hierarchical structures, male-dominated leadership, and informal practices that contribute to discrimination and reinforce gendered, racial and LGBT stereotypes and prejudices are ingrained in the everyday routines of institutional operations, resulting in negative consequences for students, staff and the institutions themselves. The research findings presented in this chapter suggest that women are more likely to experience misconduct, while the perpetrators are typically men who occupy leading positions. The perpetrators, shielded by their positions, often evade accountability. Meanwhile, individuals who are in more dependent

42 Naezer, van den Brink, and Benschop, *Harassment in Dutch Academia. Exploring Manifestation, Facilitating Factors, Effects and Solutions*; Lombardo and Bustelo, "Sexual and Sexist Harassment in Spanish Universities"; Bondestam and Lundqvist, "Sexual Harassment in Higher Education – a Systematic Review."

43 Hearn et al., "From Gender Regimes to Violence Regimes." Re-Thinking the Position of Violence," *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 29, no. 2 (June 15, 2022): 682–705, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxaa022>.

44 O'Connor, "Why Is It so Difficult to Reduce Gender Inequality in Male-Dominated Higher Educational Organizations?"; Lombardo and Bustelo, "Sexual and Sexist Harassment in Spanish Universities"; Strid, Sofia et al., "UniSAFE D3.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework."

45 Naezer, van den Brink, and Benschop, *Harassment in Dutch Academia. Exploring Manifestation, Facilitating Factors, Effects and Solutions*.

or precarious positions, in combination with possessing marginalised identity characteristics, are more susceptible to negative personal and professional consequences. Survivors/victims and bystanders of gender-based violence often prefer to remain silent about their experiences and even leave their institution or change their professional aspirations. Consequently, universities that tolerate gender-based violence more often suffer negative consequences such as the loss of talent, damage to their reputation and financial losses. However, progress towards change is rather slow. Further studies could explore the institutional informal practices, norms and attitudes that support passive and active resistance to structural and cultural change and consequently combat gender-based violence in academia.

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Annex I

<i>Position/status</i>	<i>Acronym</i>
Post-graduate student	PGS
PhD student	PHD
Researcher at an early career stage	ECS
Researcher on temporary contract	TC
Visiting researcher	VR
Researcher on short-term contract	STC
Permanent contract	PC
Non-academic status	NAS
Senior researcher	SR
Master student	MS
Technician	TCH
Research director	RD
Assistant professor	AP
Other (lecturer, professor, etc.)	OTH

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