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Debora Ginocchio

Oriana Binik, University of Milan-Bicocca, Italy; Giulia Lausi, University of Rome "Sapienza", Italy; Silvia Ferrari, University of Modena and Reggio-Emilia, Italy; Tindara Addabbo, University of Modena and Reggio-Emilia, Italy; Isabella Merzagora, University of Milan, Italy; Annamaria Giannini, University of Rome "Sapienza", Italy; Giovanna Laura De Fazio, University of Modena and Reggio-Emilia, Italy; Georgia Zara, University of Turin, Italy

University of Modena and Reggio-Emilia, Modena, Italy

Sustainable Measures To End Gender-Based Violence in Academia: What Lies between the ERA Policy Paradigm and Reality?

Abstract:

Gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual harassment (SH) represent phenomena of social concern that relate to issues of gender equality. This qualitative study explored how Italian universities respond to GBV and SH within the framework of the European Research Area (ERA), applying the 7P Model (Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Provision, Policies, Partnerships, and Prevalence). Interviews were conducted with key experts at Italian universities to identify the discrepancy between the EU policy framework and its practical implementation in the Italian context. Furthermore, it was investigated how cultural and institutional contexts influence this implementation. Findings revealed persistent structural and cultural barriers, including entrenched hierarchical and patronizing dynamics that contribute to the normalization and minimization of GBV and SH. These dynamics hinder open dialogue, limit reporting, and reduce the effectiveness of institutional responses. Although several initiatives, such as awareness campaigns, dedicated services, and policy frameworks, have been introduced, they often lack coordination, continuity, and systematic evaluation. Moreover, insufficient funding, limited specialized expertise, and reliance on individual academic commitment weaken the sustainability of interventions.

The study highlighted the critical role of contextual factors, particularly cultural norms and institutional resources, in shaping the effectiveness of the 7P Model. It emphasized the need for comprehensive, well-resourced, and evidence-based strategies, alongside stronger inter-institutional collaboration and capacity building. Aligning institutional practices with international standards requires consistent implementation, engagement at all academic levels, and a shift toward a whole-campus approach capable of fostering long-term, systemic change.

Keywords: gender-based violence, sexual harassment, academia, prevention measures

Biography: Debora Ginocchio, postdoctoral researcher, Department of Law, University of Modena and Reggio-Emilia, Modena, Italy. I am a psychologist, psychotherapy trainee, and postdoctoral researcher in Criminology. After completing my Master's degree, I trained as a psychologist in a correctional setting, focusing on the psychotherapeutic treatment of perpetrators of gender-based violence, a role I'm continuing in my clinical training. My research focuses on the prevention of gender-based violence, particularly sexual harassment in academia, which was the subject of my doctoral thesis and several publications. I have taught seminars and workshops for university and high school students. I am currently a research fellow at the University of Modena and Reggio-Emilia, working on similar topics