
Researching the Un/Speakability of Gender-Based Violence in Academia: Promoting an Interdisciplinary, Intersectional, and Multi-Level Context-Oriented Approach

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ABSTRACT

This paper introduces an interdisciplinary, context-oriented, and multi-level approach to analysing the un/speakability of gender-based violence (GBV) in academia. It argues that in-depth understandings of GBV require attention to nationally and culturally embedded contexts alongside interdisciplinarity. Drawing on cultural studies, gender studies, and linguistics, the approach adopts a social constructivist perspective in which gender and sexuality are shaped by power relations and intersectional positionalities manifested in (non-)verbal practices and performances. Building on insights from the UniSAFE study, the contribution suggests going beyond existing approaches by proposing a multi-level, discourse-based framework encompassing macro-/socio-cultural, meso-/organisational and micro-/individual dimensions. This allows for a profound and contextualised understanding of the ambiguities, grey zones and difficulties of voicing GBV. It also links individual lived experiences to larger systems of power. The proposed research design integrates qualitative and quantitative methods, using multiple sites, researchers and sources. It offers a robust framework to examine GBV in Central and Eastern European academia and beyond.

KEYWORDS

gender-based violence, un/speakability, academia, interdisciplinarity, intersectionality, context-orientation, multi-level analysis

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INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) denotes a widespread, global phenomenon that affects all social contexts from the large-scale social, political, and economic levels down to organisations, communities and the lives and experiences of individuals. It can be defined as “any type of harm that is perpetrated against a person or group of people because of their factual or perceived sex, gender, sexual orientation and/or gender identity” (COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 2025). From a socio-cultural perspective, such violence is a manifestation of larger societal patterns of dominance and oppression, of “gendered systems of power” (FITZGERALD & CORTINA, 2018, P. 218). On the one hand, GBV is dependent on historical development and national frameworks and plays out differently in various European contexts. On the other hand, it is an expression of systemic (gendered) power relations and dependencies that is evident throughout Europe and Western societies. These gender relations are characterised by heteronormativity correlated with heterosexual desire (BUTLER, 1990), in which concepts of essentialised femininity and masculinity (HAUSEN, 1995; MAIHOFFER, 1995) are linked to existing narratives, norms and discourses surrounding violence (CAMERON, 2024). Feminist and queer movements have long been fighting for equal rights and against GBV, challenging societal forces that essentialise and normalise violent and misogynist discourses and practices. Yet, GBV persists on a global scale (BONDESTAM & LUNDQVIST, 2020, P. 389) and anti-feminism, a re-traditionalisation of gender roles and retro-sexism represent current trends (CAMERON 2024, P. 3FF; BUTLER 2024; PILYARCHUK & GRAF, 2026).

The normalising yet also the challenging of gender regimes thereby happens in and through language and discourse(s) (FAIRCLOUGH & WODAK, 1997; WETHERELL, 1998; LAZAR, 2014; WETHERELL & EDLEY, 2014), e.g., via formal policies or informal disclosures such as #MeToo (VON MIQUEL ET AL., 2025). Thus, to analyse these complex power relations in a comprehensive and precise manner, sufficient attention must be paid to the discursive interconnectedness of public discourse, institutional structures, individual and institutional practices and modes of subjectivation. Furthermore, all these aspects need to be considered in a context-specific manner. While there is a continued high prevalence of GBV in European societies as a whole (e.g., between 11% [the figure for Latvia] and 41% [that of France] of working women have experienced unwanted sexual behaviour at the workplace according to

an EU survey; ^(EUROPEAN UNION, 2024)), specific sectors and institutions such as the extremely gendered organisations of the sports sector and, more recently, academia have come to public attention in this regard. With 62% of the respondents having experienced GBV at their research institutions, the recent UniSAFE survey, which was funded by the EU and included 46 research organisations, yielded alarming results ^(LIPINSKY, 2024). Only 13% officially reported their experiences, pointing to the workings of a systemic, normalised and silencing gendered regime in higher education, which persists despite existing equality measures and interventions and is discursively perpetuated ^(PILINKAITĖ SOTIROVIČ ET AL., 2024).

Academia is often perceived as a seemingly gender-neutral, meritocratic organisation ^(HARK & HOFBAUER, 2018; JACKSON-COLE & GOLDMEIER, 2023). However, research on the glass ceiling or the leaky pipeline phenomena ^(MITTNER, 2023) has long evinced that academia, too, builds on and manifests larger societal patterns of oppression, which result in “inequality regimes” ^(ACKER, 2006). These regimes disproportionately affect some more than others, e.g., racialised women or LGBTQI+ people ^(FEDINA ET AL., 2018; UNISAFE, 2022A; GUSCHKE, 2023; PILINKAITĖ SOTIROVIČ ET AL., 2024). Accordingly, vulnerability to GBV depends not only on gender, but also on further social categories and contexts. GBV and such particular vulnerabilities in academia as an organisational context are still under-researched ^(PANTELMAUN & BLACKMORE, 2023). To date, only a few studies have taken a broader approach that considers social categories beyond gender ^(BONDESTAM & LUNDQVIST, 2020, p. 8; GUSCHKE, 2023). Furthermore, only more recently have “microaggressions [and other forms of GBV] and their gatekeeping role in academia at all levels” ^(BRANLAT, 2023, p. 173) received increased attention. Qualitative studies on the multi-faced lived experiences and understandings of GBV in the context of larger discursive contexts, systemic pressures and (gendered) organisational cultures are largely missing.

In this paper, we propose a specific methodology for an interdisciplinary, intersectional and contextualised multi-level research design to address these research gaps. Existing research on GBV in academia has primarily studied prevalence or experiences and perceptions of students ^(LIPINSKY & SCHREDL, 2023), considering academia primarily as an educational space. Yet, other academic groups such as, e.g., pre- and post-doc researchers or racialised staff members ^(GUSCHKE, 2023) in academia as a working space

would equally profit from a more context-specific and in-depth research going beyond prevalence and determinants (SEE PILINKAITĖ SOTIROVIČ & BLAŽYTĖ, 2023). Therefore, our suggested approach includes groups that are characterised by particular vulnerabilities or multiple inequalities, and focuses on the relation between their individual experiences and practices and larger – institutional and societal – systems of power. Un/speakability and affective framings thereby gain special attention, as GBV is closely related to victims'/survivors'¹ difficulties in terms of understanding, voicing and reporting (FERNANDO & PRASAD, 2019; HERSHCOVIS ET AL., 2021). As “part of the unspoken forces of organizational worlds” (HEARN & PARKIN, 2001, P. 11), silence and silencing play an important role in maintaining inequality regimes within organisations (PILINKAITĖ SOTIROVIČ ET AL., 2024). Understanding such “network silence” (HERSHCOVIS ET AL., 2021) means acknowledging all the different groups that have been subjected to GBV, and contributing missing insights into context-specific institutional and societal mechanisms that render possible the persistence of GBV.

All these aspects lead to challenges that need to be addressed by an adequate methodological design that would allow for analysing the different levels on which the violent effects of a gendered regime manifest themselves. The proposed approach responds to these methodological challenges. It has been designed in an interdisciplinary exchange between cultural studies, gender studies and linguistics as both social and cultural sciences to address the aspects raised here. It relies on a multi-level and mixed methods design which puts discourse centre stage and is qualitative at its core. Furthermore, it carries the possibility of a precise contextualisation that would move beyond simplified understandings, for example the understanding of *the* Central and Eastern European as a homogenous context. As it takes societal, institutional and individual factors into account, such an approach can be applied to researching any higher educational context. At the same time, it advocates a nuanced analysis of context-specific discourses and practices, facilitating an examination of their relationship to European policies addressing GBV or international norms emerging within higher education systems. In the context of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), this allows for a more complex understanding that unravels it as a region defined by diverse historical and political frameworks, discursive practices and understandings that cross national boundaries and ask for transnational collaboration. Such specificity is essential,

as curbing GBV requires policies and tools tailored to the particular realities of each context, while concurrently considering its overarching features.

The paper is structured as follows: in the first part, we outline relevant concepts such as GBV in academia as an extremely gendered organisation, and un/speakability. We also summarise the recent UniSAFE study with a particular focus on the CEE countries and conclude by formulating the research desiderata, which inspire our promoted research approach. This approach is detailed in the second part of our paper. We start out with theorising our interdisciplinary, intersectional and multi-level research design before addressing its potential operationalisation and challenges. While the suggested approach is suitable for any academic context, we end by discussing its application against the backdrop of CEE academia.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND ITS UN/SPEAKABILITY IN EUROPEAN ACADEMIA

Before presenting our own methodological approach, we will zoom in on some relevant concepts with regard to GBV in academia and summarise the state of the art of the existing research with a special focus on CEE. Furthermore, we will lay out the serious consequences of GBV centering on un/speakability and silencing especially on the institutional and individual levels as carved out by current analyses.

GBV IN ACADEMIA

Generally, GBV is conceptualised as a particular form of violence. Violence represents a socially constructed concept whose interpretation and perception have been shifting across times and cultures. Galtung (1990) introduced a triangular model of direct, structural, and cultural forms of violence that relate to physical force, attitudes, beliefs and symbolic spheres. As such, violence often spills out in and through language and discourses (BOU-FRANCH, 2016, P. 2). To concretise GBV, we draw on the definition from the recent UniSAFE project (2021–2023), an extensive EU funded research project which involved 46 research institutions (universities and research funding organisations) across 15 Eastern and Western European countries in a survey. The survey was disseminated to members

of staff and students (18 years and older) in Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and the United Kingdom, and among an international association of mobile researchers (UNISAFE, 2022B). Sample data from 42,186 respondents was thereby collected, and it included data from four CEE countries: the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland and Serbia.

UniSAFE's broad understanding of GBV – an extension of the EU's definition in the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 2011) – encompasses “all forms [of violence]: physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, economic violence, sexual harassment, gender harassment, and organizational harassment – in both online and offline contexts” (UNISAFE, 2022A). GBV exists on a continuum which includes a variety of actual or potential (violent, transgressive or demeaning) behaviours and related attitudes, ranging from sexist or offensive comments, bullying, exclusion, or sabotage to physical transgression, abuse, or rape (BONDESTAM & LUNDQVIST, 2020). Some of these forms are more explicit, clearly defined, and legally punishable, while others are implicit, subtle, and/or difficult to grasp or recognise, and thus often remain unpunished. The “more frequent, less intense, and often unchallenged gender harassment” (SOJO ET AL., 2016, P. 222) represents the most widespread form. It includes a range of non-/verbal, degrading, insulting and hostile behaviours such as sexist remarks and jokes, sexual references, and work-family or gender policing, e.g., comments about who is traditionally responsible for care and domestic work. Such behaviours often take the form of “microaggressions” (YEP & LESCURE, 2019). As such, they are hard to pinpoint, label and persecute, yet, according to Sojo et al. (2016, P. 222), these “low intensity experiences” nevertheless often have damaging effects due to their high frequency. GBV can thus be a “cumulative experience” in which harmful experiences add up over time (BERDAHL, 2007, P. 645) and these experiences tend to gradually escalate into more severe forms of violence. This continuum also bears on how people experience and react when it comes to reporting. Another significant factor is the social, institutional and national context in which GBV occurs.

To research GBV as a continuum and in all its forms in academia, institutions of higher education must be viewed and contextualized as “(extremely) gendered organizations” (ACKER, 1990; SASSON-LEVY, 2011).

A gendered organisation draws on and re-establishes gendered institutional norms and hierarchies and includes both vertical and horizontal gender segregations (ACKER, 1990, P. 140). A significant underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, their partial exclusion in some fields of work and markedly different experiences for those with a minority status are the consequences (SCHWITER ET AL., 2011; FLORES & BAÑUELOS, 2021). Sasson-Levy (2011, P. 393), who coined the concept of “extremely gendered organizations”, argues that the gendering of organisations occurs at the structural (e.g., policies), the cultural (e.g., ideologies about femininity and masculinity) and the interactional levels (e.g., interpersonal relations). To understand their simultaneous, intertwined and complex influences on the gendering of organisations, all three levels must be empirically and analytically considered.

Academia as a(n) (extremely) gendered organisation relies on a specific formation of subjectivity that can be conceived as bourgeois masculinity (MAIHOFFER, 1995). The central aspects of this kind of subjectivity are domination and (self-)subjugation (FOUCAULT, 1989), which are also key for becoming a successful academic. Therefore, a specific masculinity has evolved as hegemonic masculinity (CONNELL, 1995) in academia. It features the following characteristics: the ideal scientist and researcher, the “homo academicus” (BOURDIEU, 2001), is conceptualised as male, rational, knowledge-oriented, competition-driven, dedicated to his work, socially independent and without caring responsibilities (ZIMMERMANN & WEIBEL, 2020; ZIMMERMANN, 2022). Mechanisms of homosocial reproduction (VAN DEN BRINK & BENSCHOP, 2014) maintain this hegemonic masculinity in recruiting (NENTWICH ET AL., 2021) and male networking. Accordingly, the seemingly gender-neutral concepts of excellence and meritocracy stipulated for academia need to be questioned as they invisibly (re-)produce and privilege a historically developed form of masculinity that constantly asserts itself as hegemonic. It goes without saying that academia pressures male academics too by fostering and reproducing the above-mentioned characteristics of masculinity. Still, the concepts of excellence and meritocracy are proposed as a system of equal opportunities, gender and sexual neutrality, and a lack of biases, yet disregard “intersections of privilege with talent, effort and achievements” (JACKON & GOLDMEIER, 2023, P. 99). Major inequalities regarding gender and sexuality become visible, for instance, in skewed university

demographics, glass ceiling /cliff and leaky pipeline phenomena (MITTNER, 2023) and an overall chilly climate (BRITTON, 2017; LEE & MCCABE, 2021).

Such male- and masculine-dominated working environments as academia, with their hierarchical power structures and performance pressures as well as their precarious working conditions, are notorious for GBV (O'CONNOR ET AL., 2021). Also, in academia, power is placed in the hands of a few, turning them into gatekeepers for careers, funding, and professional advancement (SCHÜTZ ET AL., 2021; PANTELMANN & BLACKMORE, 2023; PANTELMANN & WÄLTJ, 2023). Within such an environment, it does not come as a surprise that GBV is a serious and extensive, even a ubiquitous and systemic problem (LIPINSKY, 2024, P. 6). Context-specific results might be difficult to compare (BONDESTAM & LUNDQVIST, 2020; LIPINSKY & SCHREDL, 2023), but current data show that the relevant numbers in the US-American and European context remain remarkably stable and high (HATTERY, 2022; ZIMMERMANN ET AL., 2023). Bondestam and Lundqvist found that GBV "occurs in all disciplines in higher education and is reported by all groups (students, doctoral students, all staff)" (2020, P. 401).

THE UNISAFE STUDY

In this vein, the recent UniSAFE survey reports alarming rates: 62% of the respondents had experienced at least one form of GBV since they started working or studying at their institution (UNISAFE, 2022A). Its more fine-grained analyses found that women (66%) and non-binary people (74%) are significantly more likely to experience GBV than other groups (except for physical violence, which was found more in the answers of non-binary people and men). Moreover, respondents who identify as LGBTQ+ (68%), who reported a disability or chronic illness (72%), and who belong to an ethnic minority group (69%) were more likely to have experienced at least one incident of GBV compared to those who do not identify with these characteristics (UNISAFE, 2022C). In relation to all the forms and intersectional dimensions, cismen are disproportionally less affected by GBV and it is mostly they who act as its perpetrators.

Unfortunately, the UniSAFE survey data was not interpreted in terms of nation states. Therefore, it does not provide a direct response to the question of the specificities of GBV in each individual participating

country's academia, including those of the four CEE countries – the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland and Serbia. But the results reveal that GBV is a serious and widespread problem throughout Europe, preventing, among other consequences, many talented academics from continuing in their fields. The systemic structures and power inequalities within academic institutions in these CEE countries bear resemblance to those in other European countries: the aggregated survey results provide evidence of various forms of GBV throughout European academia, including psychological violence, sexual harassment, gender harassment, economic violence, sexual violence, physical violence and online violence. Furthermore, some qualitative inquiries were conducted: Pilinkaitė Sotirovič and Blažytė (2024) conducted 54 individual interviews² which focus on individual experiences and highlight, e.g., that most often different types of violence interlink and overlap. Like in the UniSAFE study as a whole, the interviewees were not differentiated into national or institutional contexts or particular academic groups with specific vulnerabilities. Thus, the results contribute to Europe-wide understandings and not to understandings of specific contexts, such as specific CEE countries or intersectional positionalities. The interviews suggest that throughout Europe, hierarchical structures, power inequalities and institutional contexts like universities and research funding organisations (RFOs) facilitate GBV (IBID., P. 213 FF.).

Besides the online survey and interviews, the UniSAFE project also entailed a call for national expert reports that address some general specifics of each European country. The focus here was on policies and legal frameworks. A large number of CEE countries contributed such national reports, namely Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia (UNISAFE, 2021).³ All of these CEE countries except Serbia joined the EU after 2004. The national reports of the twelve CEE countries attest to similarities and differences that allow for an initial categorisation of how GBV is perceived and potentially addressed in existing policies. Regarding the similarities, all the reports from the CEE countries indicate negative reactions and resistance from academic and research institutions to the idea of engaging in the topic of GBV in academia; all the reports, however, also point out individual GBV cases that led to public attention and forced leaders and managements of universities and RFOs to react. Furthermore, in all the CEE countries, the topic emerged only after the country had joined the

EU⁴ – which might point to some influence of EU guidelines and requirements for education and research within the EU (*IBID.*). Still, there are major differences in the importance GBV is given in universities or RFOs within the group of CEE countries. A first overview of the legal, discursive and policy frameworks is provided by the “Report on the European Policy Baseline” (*FAJMONOVÁ ET AL., 2021*), which analysed and compared the country reports. Even though in all the participating CEE countries, GBV is addressed in a general law, there are significant differences among the countries in this respect: as such, only the Czech Republic has developed action plans for implementing policies to fight GBV in universities and RFOs based on the Istanbul Convention. It provides services for victims/survivors and requires evaluations and a report about the achievements in this area to the Secretariat of the Government Council for Gender Equality (*IBID., P. 95*). Yet, only in Lithuania and Romania did sexual harassment at universities become a public issue after the #MeToo movement started. Concurrently, the authors of the Czech national report highlight a huge lack of a general understanding of how harmful GBV is for victims/survivors in society. Thus, even if the Czech Republic has implemented significant steps at the level of institutional policies towards the elimination of GBV in universities and RFOs, the general societal attitude towards GBV shows little positive development: neither the #MeToo movement nor the Istanbul Convention was perceived in positive ways in the national media (*IBID., P. 5*). The authors of the Czech national report conclude that “the topic of GBV is still largely dismissed in Czech society” (*IBID.*).

THE UN/SPEAKABILITY OF GBV IN ACADEMIA

Regarding the consequences of GBV, young academics such as pre- and post-doc researchers are particularly vulnerable groups due to their existential dependency, the competitiveness in the research system and precarious working conditions (*EU 2022.CZ, 2022, P. 1*). Thus, an intersectional positioning due to age, employment status, care-responsibilities, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity/race or disability can foster additional organisational, economic or social power imbalances and dependencies and a particular exposure to GBV. Prior psychological studies about the effects of GBV in workplaces such as academia have also indicated that serious psychosocial, physiological and professional consequences occur not only for the individuals involved, but also for bystanders, teams and the entire

work organisation (BONDESTAM & LUNDQVIST, 2020, P. 402; FITZGERALD & CORTINA, 2018). The adverse effects for organisations may include a high personnel turnover, a spending of resources on cases or legal fees, reduced productivity and creativity and the employer having an overall bad reputation (E.G., LESKINEN ET AL., 2011; FITZGERALD & CORTINA, 2018).

Yet measures against GBV within gendered organisations are often resisted or met with a cultural re-gendering via discursive practices and a recreation of the organisation's gender hierarchy (PAWELCZYK, 2021, P. 552; PILINKAITĖ SOTIROVIČ ET AL., 2024, P. 3). Though measures and guidelines have been implemented to create safe spaces, "what has been done (...) [up] to this point has not been sufficient, nor effective, and [has been] too much centered on the individual" (BONDESTAM & LUNDQVIST, 2020, P. 412). Though the UniSAFE project adopted a holistic and systemic approach, it has not centred on understanding the intricate complexities and interdependencies that exist between individuals, organisations and larger systems. According to Hattery (2022), GBV in all its (non-)verbal forms is still used as a deliberate strategy and tool to maintain gender inequality in academia. It is employed to police and sanction particularly those who transgress hegemonic gender constructions or invert gendered hierarchies. Moreover, university leaders appear to make limited efforts to address GBV within their policies (HUCK ET AL., 2022), supporting those who possess and generate privilege and power, often for fear of losing reputation and prestige (PILINKAITĖ SOTIROVIČ ET AL., 2024, P. 1). This creates a "network silence" (HERSHCOVIS ET AL., 2021) on the organisational level that allows for GBV to persist as a taboo in academia (PANTELMANN & WÄLTJ, 2023).

Building on Hershcovis et al. (2021), Pilinkaitė Sotirovič et al. (2024) identified beliefs, behaviours and attitudes that contribute to organisational "network silence" and its three main dimensions, "silencing", "not hearing" and "self-silencing", and thus to unspeakability in academia. On the individual level, the effects of network silence play out as non-reporting, un/speakability and silencing. Most of the relevant survey-based research in academia documents that even if legal and societal attitudes and conditions have changed, the number of official reports of GBV is consistently low (E.G., MACNEELA ET AL. 2022A, 2022B): in this vein, the UniSAFE survey evinced that among the respondents who had experienced GBV, only 13% (23% of the staff members and 7% of the students) reported the incidents (for an

overview of similar results, see (BONDES-TAM & LUNDQVIST, 2020, P. 40)). The three main reasons for the non-reporting/remaining silent were insecurity about whether the incident was serious enough to report (47%), not recognising the behaviour as violence at the time (i.e., insecurity in recognising, interpreting, and labelling and thus conceptualising and expressing experiences; see also (VALLS ET AL., 2016) (31%) and a lack of faith in organisational reactions (26%) (UNISAFE 2022C; LIPINSKY, 2024, P. 22). Other reasons include fear of retaliation, particularly in connection with the future of one's academic and professional career (LINKOVA ET AL., 2023). Lipinsky (2024), however, found that reports of GBV increase with one's professional and academic status. This suggests inequalities in the access to support and in the distribution of negative professional and psychosocial consequences (IBID., P. 22FF).

In previous research, unspeakability has often been associated with rape and the hegemonic scripts and discourses that govern how rape trauma can or cannot be articulated (LONEY-HOWES, 2018; CAMERON, 2024). Such socio-culturally widely circulated and discursively powerful myths form the basis of "rape culture," which stereotypically shames femininity and blames victims/survivors, thereby causing additional emotional strain (LAVOYER, 2024). Yet, affirmative consent policies and laws, which are implemented in most European universities, imply a normalisation of resistance and voicing against GBV (METZ ET AL., 2021), and thus an acceptance of its speakability, creating further tensions for victims/survivors.

Especially in cases of stark power imbalances, remaining silent or self-silencing becomes a strategy against social isolation and retaliation alongside a loss of control (LIPINSKY, 2024; PILINKAITE SOTIROVIC ET AL., 2024). Network silence tends to support the gendered power relations and established networks of institutional breadwinners and to protect institutional interests, i.e., funds, rankings or prestige (IBID., P. 4–5). In such an atmosphere, those who seek to report incidents of GBV are perceived as tarnishing the institution; their claims are often belittled or "not heard". The reported incidents are framed as isolated cases, and the psychosocial burden of the reporting and responsibilities is placed solely upon those affected although "a systemwide change to the culture and climate in higher education is required" (NATIONAL ACADEMIES OF SCIENCES, ENGINEERING, AND MEDICINE, 2018, P. 176). Again, these aspects point to a high relevance of socio-cultural gender norms in academia: hegemonic masculinity leads to inequality

regimes that normalise and cover up the unspeakability of GBV. The discursive and affective practices involved are “part of the gendered domination of organizations” (PILINKAITĖ SOTIROVIČ ET AL., 2024, P. 3; FERNANDO & PRASAD, 2019) and influence possibilities of voicing, listening to and defining experiences of GBV on the individual level (CAMERON, 2024). All in all, network silence seems to be a core reason for the low reporting rates in today’s European academia. Further, an in-depth understanding of how such an atmosphere influences the lived experiences and practices of victims/survivors or bystanders seems to be urgently needed to bring about real change.

TOWARDS AN ENHANCED RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE ON GBV IN ACADEMIA

Regarding the unspeakability and silence surrounding GBV, applying “network silence” (HERSHCOVICS ET AL., 2021) to academia (PILINKAITĖ SOTIROVIČ ET AL., 2024) is an innovative and promising starting point for an analysis of GBV, as suggested in this paper. The concept of “network silence” does not only centre on the victim as the person who is silent but considered responsible for speaking up (HERSHCOVICS ET AL., 2021), but casts a wider scope of organisational responsibility for silence and pays attention to social network compositions and belief systems. Additionally, it allows for a discursive view.

Yet, the proposed interdisciplinary, intersectional and multi-level approach adopts an even larger scope and fills further gaps: it analyses individual, organisational and societal perceptions, forms and discourses of GBV, building on multi-level approaches as proposed, e.g., by Sasson-Levy (2011) or in the UniSAFE project. In contrast to the latter, however, it centres not on policy as its analytical basis and starting point, but on the discursive webs that permeate and are embedded in both society as a whole and academia. It also focuses on the individual meanings, perceptions, understandings and pressures, i.e., on the lived experiences of the individual. For the first time, non-reporting is related to the concept of un/speakability, which captures and explores the uncertainties, ambiguities, grey zones and difficulties of understanding and voicing GBV. Unspeakability allows us to investigate the discursive closures and affective ambivalences involved. At the same time, speakability points to the discursive circumstances that lead to speaking about GBV. Thus, un/speakability considers the lived experiences of individuals as an intertwinement

of personal, organisational and societal discourses and practices. In this way, the outlined approach also takes intersectional positionalities into account. While the survey as well as some qualitative contributions to the UniSAFE study did highlight the significant role of intersectional inequalities in GBV in academia, the dimension of the overlap of categories of difference such as gender and racialisation or multiple inequalities received rather limited attention (SEE, E.G., PILINKAITĖ SOTIROVIČ ET AL., 2024). Our multi-level approach provides suggestions for analysing intersectional inequalities and GBV in more depth. As such, a broad understanding of un/speakability underlies this paper and its approach that goes beyond rape discourses, myths and acts of sexual violence. The mechanisms and effects of silencing and self-censorship are investigated as they play out on the continuum of GBV and underlie individual and collective processes (HERSHCOVIS ET AL., 2021; DUFFY ET AL., 2023).

More generally, our proposed, predominantly qualitative research methodology takes the findings of the UniSAFE survey and the national reports as a starting point and zooms in on the relevant yet still under-researched aspects. The novelty of the proposed methodology lies in its potential for an in-depth, discourse-based examination of context-specific factors that lead to GBV in each national research and education setting. The discursive analysis of the specific context on the macro level allows us to understand how different discursive manifestations, i.e., dominant and alternative discourses regarding gender, sexuality and violence, shape GBV not only in each society, but also in its academia. This again helps us to map out specificities as well as differences on the micro, meso and macro level, such as the specifics in different CEE countries like the Czech Republic, Lithuania and Romania. As such, the specificities of GBV in a given CEE country can be examined within its unique historical, societal and cultural context. A final novelty is the focus on the embeddedness and intertwining of discourses, which influence and shape policies, organisational codes of conduct and reactions, expert opinions, as well as individual perceptions and interpretations.

To research the complex phenomenon of GBV and its un/speakability in academia in its nuances, roots and systematic embeddedness warrants an interdisciplinary, intersectional and multi-level approach that builds on a multi-source and multi-method analysis. Such an approach

can be adapted to specific academic environments such as those found in the CEE countries and beyond.

THEORISING AN INTERDISCIPLINARY, INTERSECTIONAL AND MULTI-LEVEL APPROACH

Our suggested approach draws on linguistics, cultural studies and gender studies within an interdisciplinary framework that is united by a social constructivist perspective to investigate GBV and its un/speakability in academia. The approach builds on the central assumption that gender and sexuality are routine non-/verbal and interactional performances and accomplishments in which discourse plays a vital role (WEST & ZIMMERMAN, 1987; BUCHHOLZ & HALL, 2004; EHRLICH ET AL., 2014; KIESLING, 2014; LEVON & BELINE-MENDEZ, 2016; GILDEMEISTER, 2020; BUTLER, 2024; CAMERON, 2024). We promote “a conceptualization of gender-based violence as discourse” (ESPOSITO, 2021, P. 3; SEE ALSO MERCÉ & MARUENDA BATALLER, 2026) and understand discourse as language use as well as discursive and social practice (FAIRCLOUGH, 1992; CAMERON, 2024). Discourse not only constructs and reproduces social identities and relations, but also systems of knowledge, cultural values and belief (CF. ESPOSITO, 2021, P. 2). In our shared interdisciplinary understanding, gender and sexuality as intersectional categories are intricately associated with other categories of discrimination such as ethnicity, race or age (CRENSHAW, 1989; HOLZLEITHNER, 2024). Therefore, intersectionality is a guiding perspective in the proposed methodology, embedded in the context-specificities of the respective nation state, the given organisation and the individual experience (RISBERG & PILHOFER, 2018; NASH, 2024).

This interdisciplinary framework combines the common and individual potentials of the three disciplines: linguistics, cultural studies and gender studies. Starting from the concrete linguistic expressions, linguistic analysis traces the (co-)construction and verbalising of GBV as well as its un/speakability in its intricate relation to cultural, organisational, and individual discursive meaning-making processes (CAMERON, 2024; MERCÉ & MARUENDA-BATALLER, 2026). Yet, linguistic analysis not only focuses on explicit performances, “the ‘there’ in the interaction” (KULICK, 2005, P. 616), but also investigates “what is barred from performance, what is not and cannot be performed – the not-there, the unsaid traces, the absent presences that structure the said and the done” (IBID.). Linguistic analysis

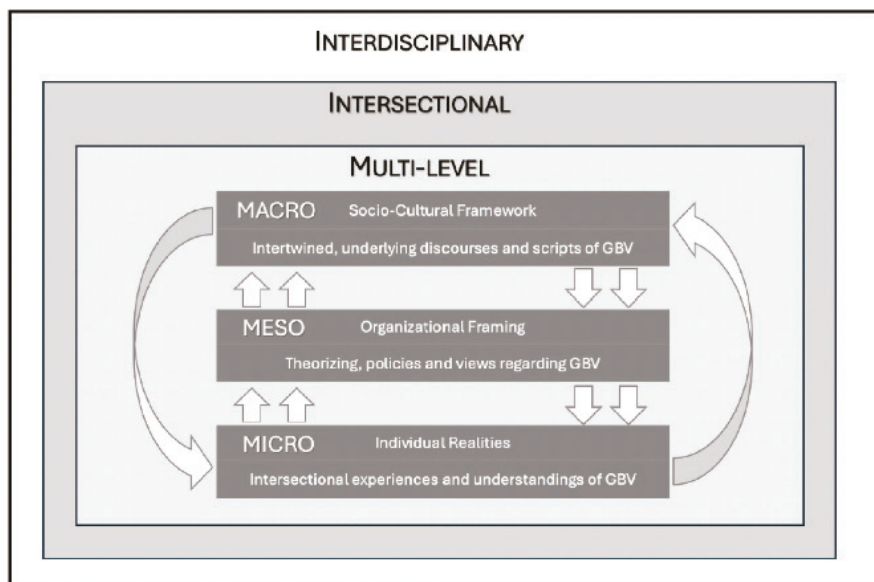
considers speakers as socialised into “what must remain unspoken and unspeakable”; it argues that in conversing, speakers also create silences (IBID., P. 620). According to Kulick (2005, P. 622), in this “dual indexicality of language”, what is said manifests also what is or must be left out. In this design, the linguistic analysis contributes to investigating and understanding GBV as expressed in concrete linguistic and ideological layers of language and discourse as well as in what remains unspoken and unspeakable. Cultural studies and gender studies, in turn, examine power, hierarchy and heteronormativity as core elements of gendered discrimination and violence. As Foucault (1976) argues in his study on sexuality and truth, discourses are produced and maintained by socially and culturally approved power structures. In particular, he showed the powerful knowledge-creating force of sexuality, including socially sanctioned violence. Sexualised violence became the basis for feminist criticism in gender studies in the 1970s (SCHMINCKE, 2015, P. 273FF.; BÜHRMANN, 1995). Women began to write about their individual and structural experiences of violence, e.g., in the medical system (BINSWANGER, 2020, P. 114). Gender studies interrogate and denaturalise structural and cultural dimensions of violence that are deeply embedded in the dominant gender order. This gender order is not only organised along the matrix of heteronormativity, but links masculinity with the authority to dominate and violate (MEUSER, 2010; BOURDIEU, 2011) and femininity with vulnerability (GEIER, 2005; BUTLER, 2011). Intersectionality studies have deepened the perspective of gender studies (and linguistics) showing that the impact of other societal differences on GBV and discrimination can lead to blind spots and unspeakability (CRENSHAW, 1989; ESSED, 1991; LEVON & BELINE-MENDEZ, 2016). An intersectional analysis addresses context-specific ways in which different dimensions of violence against subordinated or marginalised groups occur. In it, special attention is given to feminised, gender-nonconforming individuals, and racialised, migrantised and further marginalised “others”. Experiences of GBV within and among these groups not only relate to each other, but also rely on each other, potentially summing up and supporting its persistence (GRISARD ET AL., 2022, P. 8FF). Intersecting categories require special analytic and methodological attention regarding power hierarchies and their effects on discrimination as well as GBV in academia. They need to be considered on the whole continuum from the explicitly violent to the most subtle forms. In her recent study on discriminatory practices in Danish academia, Guschke (2023) highlights the impact of the intersecting categories of race, sexuality and gender. Her results show that racialised

and/or queer members face even more sexual harassment and discrimination than gender-conforming women.

Finally, as GBV is most frequently expressed in and through language use as well as discursive and social practices, a multilevel perspective helps to unpack the underlying dominant and alternative discourses surrounding gender, sexuality and violence. Such discourses are at play within the particular area of interest and the individual (non-)narrating of experiences. In any society, the normalising yet also the challenging of gender regimes happens via linguistic and discursive expressions and interventions (FAIRCLOUGH & WODAK, 1997; WETHERELL, 1998; LAZAR, 2014; WETHERELL & EDLEY, 2014). These larger discursive systems of power influence both organisations and individuals within said society, creating a context-dependent network of discursive intertwinements at different levels. To capture the complexity and continuum of GBV in academia, it is thus vital to investigate all of these levels with their differing unspoken rules, norms, understandings and discursive practices as well as their interrelatedness and embeddedness. To this end, the approach proposed here includes three distinct yet interrelated levels of discourse-based analysis: *the socio-cultural macro level, the organisational meso level and the individual micro level*⁵. This allows for addressing GBV and un/speakability as a personal, structural and social as well as private and public phenomenon (SEE BOU-FRANCH, 2016, P. 2; ESPOSITO, 2021). This multi-level approach facilitates a unique and under-employed focus on individuals or particular stakeholder groups (e.g., pre-/post-docs, non-academic staff, etc.) with a focus on both an individual's membership in a particular group and their individual intersectional positionality. It aims at carving out individual perceptions, ambiguities, and difficulties in the understanding, labelling and voicing of GBV, relating these issues to socio-cultural/organisational structures, norms and ideologies. Concurrently, while UniSAFE's organising principles for research and recommendations (i.e., the 7 Ps – policies, prevalence, prevention, proception, prosecution, provision of services, and partnerships) may play a role, the qualitative and explorative nature of this proposed research design leaves room both for other relevancies to emerge and for further differentiation of existing ones.

Figure 1 summarises and illustrates this approach to analysing GBV and un/speakability as well as the three levels and their interrelatedness in academia.

FIGURE 1: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY, INTERSECTIONAL AND MULTI-LEVEL APPROACH TO RESEARCHING GBV IN ACADEMIA



OPERATIONALISING AN INTERDISCIPLINARY, INTERSECTIONAL AND MULTI-LEVEL RESEARCH DESIGN

To investigate the un/speakability of GBV in academia from an interdisciplinary (i.e., linguistics, cultural studies and gender studies), context-sensitive and intersectional perspective on the macro/socio-cultural, meso/organisational and micro/individual levels, we suggest a research design that considers that multiple data sets should be collected at various research institutions to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the socio-cultural context under scrutiny. That is, we promote a research design which applies a multi-source, multi-site and multi-researcher framework (JOHNSON ET AL., 2017) alongside a multi-method QUAL-quan analysis (HESSE-BIBER, 2022).

In alignment with the approach outlined above, researching GBV at the socio-cultural/macro level entails naming and denaturalising the

structural and cultural dimensions of violence, discrimination and power that are deeply embedded in the dominant gender order. They surface in the form of discourses about masculinity, femininity, sexuality, victimhood, and shame. An analysis at this level addresses the intertwining of dominant and alternative discourses with general societal debates to find out how GBV is discursively conceptualised and discussed in a particular socio-cultural environment – such as a national context – and how this conceptualisation possibly influences the voicing of GBV and the limits of its speakability. As data for this level of analysis, a body of literature written by practitioners and experts from fields that aim to speak out against and counter-act GBV is proposed. This literature contains knowledge- and practice-based discourses about GBV in a specific context. The texts articulate a critique of social domination and power abuse by those who enact GBV and are based on the experiences of practitioners either working with victims of GBV or in related fields such as law or engaging in a (queer-)feminist critique of the current gender order, including GBV. The texts aim at awareness-raising and capacity-building to counter-act GBV on a societal, institutional and individual level. As such, these texts include both dominant and alternative discourses, those perpetuating a system of network silence and those challenging it. Alternative data sets to the practice literature on the topic may include social media debates, newspaper articles and other public discussions of GBV. The selected source type should, however, reflect social debates and possible counter-discourses as social practices.

Following Sasson-Levy (2011), in organisations as workplaces, views on gender, sexuality and violence become visible in the institutional framings of policies, in how their implementation is carried out and perceived and in how they are lived in interpersonal interactions. Within the concept of “network silence,” this is mirrored in aspects like silencing and not hearing (HERSHCOVIS ET AL., 2021). The analysis of the organisational or meso level therefore considers the legal, conceptual and procedural frameworks at the academic institutions of interest, including the discursive understandings of GBV that emerge from these documents. Though such documents also give access to national policies and frameworks, the question is how the procedural and theoretical frameworks are executed and put in practice. It is of interest which impact becomes visible regarding un/speakability, non-/reporting and their consequences and how these might

affect different members of universities in different ways. Relevant data for the analysis of the organisational level include legal or procedural documents of academic institutions (e.g., equality or diversity plans), publicly available mission statements, laws, policies, codes of conduct, brochures, websites, etc. Additionally, expert interviews (E.G., GLÄSER & LAUDEL, 2004) with relevant stakeholders (e.g., management, equal opportunity officers, employee representatives) are considered particularly promising means to understand how institutions actually approach, reflect on and deal with GBV. They help to gain more insights into the practices of implementing these theoretical texts but also into the socio-cultural discourses present in the organisational culture.

Finally, the state of the art above has evinced that the most pronounced gap concerns the individual/micro level, the intersectional lived experiences of the victims/survivors of GBV in academia, and the articulation of their own understandings and interpretations of the mechanisms and reasons for non/reporting or un/speakability. With the awareness that the socio-cultural and the organisational levels play into individual understandings, insights into individual perceptions become vital. Additionally, the greatest variation in experiences has been found between groups of people with different characteristics (LIPINSKY, 2024, p. 12); i.e., the various forms and manifestations of GBV affect different individuals and groups differently. At the individual micro level, the objective of this multi-level research design is to gain in-depth insights into the realities of everyday academic life, into the reflections and understandings of GBV, as well as into experiences with institutional and personal un/speakability, (non-) reporting, silencing, and their consequences. This helps to shed light on the societal and organisational forces maintaining inequality regimes and reproducing “network silence” and self-silencing (PILINKAITĖ SOTIROVIČ ET AL., 2024). Additionally, prevalence can be investigated here, though it is not at the centre of our approach.

Interviews represent the most promising data set here. Focus group interviews can provide insights into collective and shared experiences/situations as well as into co-constructed processes of meaning making and the multiple personal understandings and definitions of GBV (DEPPERMAN, 2013). Semi-structured individual interviews give a voice to victims/survivors as well as to bystanders of GBV, allowing them to narrate their

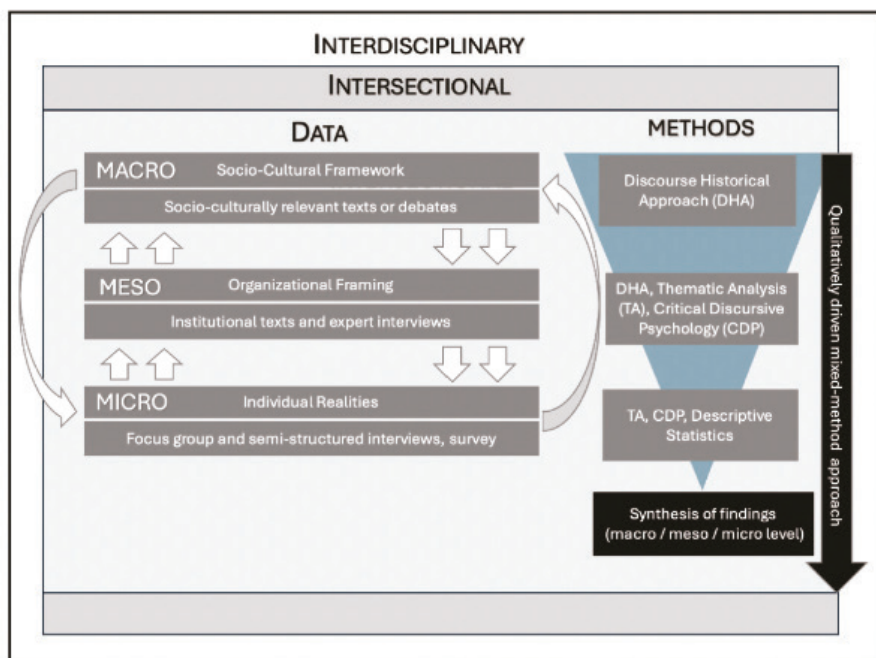
very own personally lived experiences. In addition, surveys, in turn, can generate quantitative data on a broader and anonymous scale, offering a more generalisable perspective on the phenomenon. When addressing prevalence, however, we propose a combination of this approach with qualitative data generation, e.g., using focus groups in a bottom-up process to generate a subset of questions tailored to a specific status group. It is particularly here at the micro level that intersectional categories can be investigated in the necessary qualitative detail. For this reason, collecting data from a diverse group of participants is vital.

Regarding our methodological approach to analysing this data, mixed methods research offers significant advantages for exploring issues of power and social justice (MERTENS, 2007). By thoughtfully combining qualitative (and quantitative) approaches, such a methodology can critically examine established assumptions about knowledge production, especially the relationship between researchers and participants whose voices have been silenced or unheard. Reflecting on power imbalances and context-specific practices within these interactions becomes essential. Furthermore, such a design promotes awareness of intersectional dimensions. This is made possible by applying a cyclical research model that starts with listening, fosters a continuous dialogue between various data types and their analyses and necessitates ongoing adjustments to the research process. This way, applying a mixed methods design provides a promising way to understand the un/speakability of GBV and its entanglement with power relations in academia and to develop counter-discourses and practices against discrimination.

Thus, a multi-method analysis, i.e., a qualitatively driven sequential mixed-method (QUAL-quant) approach (HESSE-BIBER, 2022) in which the quantitative part (i.e., the survey) is subordinated to the qualitative research, is suggested. The combination of various qualitative methods from linguistics, and cultural and gender studies – all based on critical and close readings of the collected materials – is facilitated via the Multi-Method Qualitative Text and Discourse Analytical Methodology (MMQTDA) (ALEJANDRO & ZHAO, 2024). This MMQTDA methodology allows for a complementarity of methods, the contextualisation of data, the unpacking of explicit and implicit dimensions of discourse, and the triangulation of findings (IBID., P. 467; SEE ALSO JOHNSON ET AL., 2017).

The qualitative analysis of the data collected at the multiple levels of interest is united by a discourse-based approach. Various discourse analytical methods – differing in their level of granularity – are chosen. For the socio-cultural framing, we propose analysing the practice- and knowledge-based texts using the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) within Critical Discourse Studies (REISIGL & WODAK, 2017; REISIGL, 2018; WODAK & MEYER, 2016). This approach is particularly suitable for mapping underlying discourses and their embeddedness in gendered power relations. The same method is applied to the collected organisational texts such as legal or procedural documents. Through the use of Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA) (BRAUN & CLARKE, 2022), a versatile method for developing, analysing and interpreting patterns across data sets, relevant themes for the development of open survey items can be derived from focus group interviews. In the analysis of individual and expert interviews, patterns in the form of recurring dilemmas, discourses, themes and (self-/other-)positionings are carved out from the participants' subjective experiences using TA and Critical Discursive Psychology (CDP) (WETHERELL, 1998). CDP allows for bringing together the micro levels of individual utterances and the socially constructed macro levels within interpretative repertoires, subject positions and ideological dilemmas. Therefore, it can be used to analyse un/speakability on the discursive level, e.g., in the form of (self-)silencing discourses or dilemmas, as well as on the individual level, e.g., via intersectional positionings. It also allows for a combination with Conversation Analysis (CA) (SIDNELL & STIVERS, 2013). The quantitative component suggested here consists of a standardised quantitative survey conducted across multiple universities. It is, designed to capture broad patterns and contextualise the findings of the qualitative research. For the survey data, descriptive statistics are calculated and open-ended responses are analysed using qualitative methods, such as TA, to identify common themes and patterns. These insights provide a rich understanding of the participants' perspectives, complementing the quantitative results. To deepen and interlink the emerging understandings of GBV at each level and generate valuable, in-depth insights regarding normalised structures, scripts and discourses in academia, the triangulation of methods, disciplinary perspectives and data culminate in a synthesis of all the salient findings and results. Figure 2 visualises the multi-level and multi-method research design and analysis.

FIGURE 2: A MULTI-LEVEL AND MULTI-SOURCE RESEARCH DESIGN FOR GBV IN ACADEMIA



THE CHALLENGES OF AN INTERDISCIPLINARY, INTERSECTIONAL AND MULTI-LEVEL APPROACH TO GBV

Given the sensitivity of GBV, ethical questions and the safety of both researchers and participants represent major challenges to be addressed in such a research project. Research in this area must navigate complex legal and ethical landscapes conforming to both current laws and research standards (STRUZIŃSKA ET AL., 2024). On the one hand, researchers working with such a topic need specific support in building awareness, sensitivity and self-care tools in order to avoid psychological and emotional stress. On the other hand, researchers need professional counselling not only to develop adequate interview and survey questions but also to recognise and appropriately react to trigger situations. In this way, they can help prevent (additional) psychological stress for and a re-traumatisation or re-victimisation of the interviewees and thus provide a safe (interview) environment. As such, a victim-centred and trauma-informed approach

is essential (UNHCR, 2026). The participation must be strictly voluntary, and all participants should be thoroughly instructed on their rights (e.g., their right to withdraw consent), the data handling and privacy as well as on the intent and sensitive content of the research. Anonymity must be guaranteed for both individuals and universities via (pseudo-)anonymisation and aggregated results for entire groups (e.g., post-docs). Furthermore, a thorough data management plan must be put in place as the research involves highly sensitive data. For instance, the original and raw data may only be available to the researchers involved during the processing and sensitive data may only be stored on secure university servers. This is essential to help secure the participation of both individuals and research institutions. Approvals from ethics committees are thus major hurdles and milestones in the research process.

Additionally, low participation rates, a lack of diverse participants, which is necessary for answering questions regarding intersectionality, and a lack of organisational commitment represent major risk factors of such a research approach. However, prior research (E.G., FERNANDO & PRASAD, 2019; PILINKAITĖ SOTIROVIČ ET AL., 2024) has seen an (unexpected) active participation in similar research projects. Providing an anonymous platform for victims/survivors and bystanders to be heard may result in an increased engagement (SCHREDL ET AL., 2023). Yet, a good access to participants needs to be ensured beforehand. Their recruitment must be carefully planned and carried out via various channels. While official documents and practice literature on GBV are publicly available, our multi-level approach is also dependent on the participation of (various) educational institutions (e.g., for expert interviews but also for the dissemination of information). Such a collaboration might be facilitated via pre-existing collaborations, academic networks and overarching associations (e.g., associations of equal opportunity groups). Furthermore, a guarantee of anonymity on the one hand and “hot feedback” (i.e., immediate practical feedback based on the obtained data and preliminary analysis) on the other might motivate participation.

Generally, interdisciplinary research bears risks in overcoming structural and cognitive challenges and reconciling epistemes (HOLLAND, 2013). For this reason, concepts such as “discourse” and “scripts” must be clarified in relation to their underlying conceptual and disciplinary frameworks.

This is facilitated by a common social constructivist perspective on discourse(s) and similar epistemologies. Choosing compatible (qualitative) methodologies is also key. This helps prevent misunderstandings and assures integration into a unified framework, which in turn allows for a synthesis of findings.

Finally, within a transformative and social justice paradigm (MERTENS, 2007), a final challenge lies in the opportunity to feed the results back to all stakeholders within the hierarchy of academic institutions, from the decision-makers to the participants, in order for the un/speakability of GBV to be acknowledged and heard.

CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK: UN/SPEAKABILITY AS KEY TO UNDERSTANDING GBV IN ACADEMIA IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE AND BEYOND

The suggested approach can break new ground in its interdisciplinary, intersectional and multi-level design and in its qualitative, discursive focus on the un/speakability of GBV in academia. Its multi-level framework thereby allows one to gain new knowledge about individual experiences embedded in and shaped by specific academic and societal contexts and can thus be applied to any academic context. While prior research predominantly investigated one level at a time, here, the socio-cultural macro, the organisational meso and the individual micro level, with their respective epistemes and discursive influences on the understanding of GBV and its un/speakability, are in focus together. The innovative potential lies in the newly developed concept of un/speakability of GBV being analysed as a means of socio-cultural 'silencing' that is intertwined with institutional 'not hearing' and personal 'self-silencing,' or as a means of speaking out while accepting the grey zones and insecurities connected to its lived experience. The envisioned methodological layout is a primer in its special attention to the intersectional relevancies of individuals that may prove to be particularly vulnerable and under-researched in the academic organizational system. The methodological operationalisation reunites different data sets from various locations within a QUAL-quan framework, integrating various qualitative methods which are complimented by a quantitative survey.

Through an iterative exchange between different sets of qualitative and quantitative data, the research approach allows for revealing nuanced and context-specific findings. In this way, the research design may serve as a model for investigating different stakeholders, e.g., non-academic staff, and various European and international contexts and thus has a wide range of potential applications. For instance, it becomes possible to move beyond an understanding of Central and Eastern European as a homogeneous context. While historical circumstances have led to certain similarities between the CEE countries, each country can be considered with respect to the specificities that are shaped, e.g., by nation state legislations and language policies. National, regional and international intersecting specificities are important for understanding how a particular gender order gains influence within a concrete academic setting.

More generally, in its multi-level conceptualisation, the research design allows for accounting for the influences of an increasingly globalised, internationalised, and ‘neoliberal’ education system; e.g., on the tabooing of GBV see Pantelmann & Wälty (2023). At the same time, it facilitates well-founded cross-border comparisons and in-depth localised research as it takes organisational and national context-specificities into account. It is therefore suitable for generating country-specific, multidimensional results and bringing intersectionality to the fore. As individual universities have so far been reluctant to have their institutions examined due to concerns about reputational damage, our approach is particularly well-suited for analysing the academic settings of whole countries. It can also be used to compare two or more countries with each other to identify both similarities and context-specific differences, which are essential for developing strategies and measures to combat GBV in CEE countries – and beyond.

ENDNOTES

- 1 For a discussion of the various terms see Herscovis et al. (2021, p. 1834) and Samelius et al. (2014).
- 2 "Interviewees were recruited from all over Europe, representing 20 different nationalities including both EU and non-EU countries. (...) 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" (Pilinkaite Sotirović & Blažytė, 2024, p. 211)
- 3 "The countries were selected with a view to include both more and less advanced countries, countries with or without highly developed policies on gender-based violence in place, countries outside Europe that are significant in terms of mobility flows of researchers, and countries outside Europe that are the primary targets of international cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) for the next programme period 2021–2027" (UniSAFE, 2021).
- 4 As Serbia has still not become an EU-member, it can be considered an exception in this regard.
- 5 While the recent UniSAFE study was also conceptualised as a multi-level project, the suggested macro level here is not related to legal frameworks and national policies, but to socio-cultural discourses and scripts related to GBV that become visible and observable in policies and regulations yet also in public discourses and other cultural artefacts as well as in (personal) narratives.

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