

This project was funded by the EU CERV-2021-DAPHNE, under the Grant Agreement, 101049295

**PRESS / Preventing - RESponding – Supporting – young survivors ofGBV:
sexual harassment, sexual and cyber violence**

Project: 101049295 — PRESS — CERV-2021-DAPHNE

**Work package WP3 – MONITORING/ENHANCING THE CAPACITY OF
MEDIA PROFESSIONALS**

**Deliverable 3.3. – Guide for Gender-Sensitive Reporting on SH /SV
and CYV**

July 2023

Credits

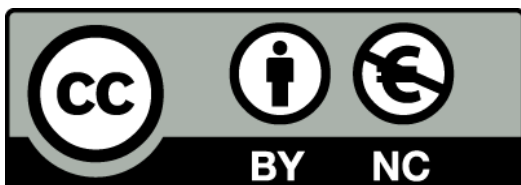
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Acknowledgements: Special thanks to the acclaimed teaching fellows who taught in the ToT for media professionals and to the participants, who attributed valuable time and expertise in the context of work package 3 of the “PRESS” project.

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This Guide was developed in the context of the [PRESS](#) project.

Project Coordination: Centre for Research on Women's Issues 'Diotima'



Project Partners:

- National and Kapodistrian University of Athens - Faculty of Communication and Media Studies
- Genderhood



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Executive Summary

The present NKUA Guide is written as part of the project PRESS (PRESS / Preventing - RESponding – Supporting – young survivors of GBV: sexual harassment, sexual and cyber violence) (Deliverable 3.3.), which is implemented by a consortium comprising of the Centre for Research on Women's Issues 'Diotima' (Co-ordinator), the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (Department of Communication and Mass Media [NKUA]– partner), and the NGO Genderhood. The project is funded by the EU CERV-2021-DAPHNE, under the Grant Agreement, 101049295.

The Guide aims to empower journalists and media professionals in treating the coverage of sexual harassment and violence, online and offline, supporting the voice of survivors, and addressing what the Guide names structural violence. The Guide also contains advice / suggestions as to how to approach those matters, with the purpose to undermine patriarchal hierarchies, so as to create a political and social environment, political and social ‘mores’ that support survivors and name, discourage and demand accountability for sexual harassment and violence, online and offline.

Among the most important advice regarding the media treatment of sexual harassment and violence, the Guide suggests that

- the links between harassment and violence become prevalent,
- the links between online and offline harassment and violence are stressed
- the journalists interested educate themselves about consent, language, triggering and psychological issues of survivors and of those dealing with others’ trauma
- the journalists interested approach women and LGBTQ+ experts for advice and interviews
- the journalists interested allow for sexist views of women and minority groups
- the journalists interested present the whole personality of the survivors, and do not approach them merely as survivors

- the journalists interested present the uniqueness of each story, avoiding stereotypical views about people and acts.

Introduction

The present NKUA Guide is written as part of the project PRESS (PRESS / Preventing - RESponding – Supporting – young survivors of GBV: sexual harassment, sexual and cyber violence) (Deliverable 3.3.) , which is implemented by a consortium with the co-ordination of the Centre for Research on Women's Issues 'Diotima', with partners the Department of Communication and Mass Media of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA), and the NGO Genderhood.

The aim of the Guide is to give an overview of the proposed guiding principles for media coverage of sexual harassment and violence, online and offline, adhering to ethics that protect the individuals and groups surviving such practices. The Guide aims to assist media professionals towards promoting a harassment free work environment, promoting ways to raise awareness on the issues through reporting on traditional and digital media and promoting recommended routes towards a culture of consent, juxtaposed to rape culture.

The authors would like to especially thank the teaching fellows of the Training of Trainers for media professionals of the PRESS project, for their insights which also informed this Guide: Dr. Patricia Gerakopoulou, Dr. Manina Kakepaki, Dr. Anastasia Chalkia, Ms. Christina Agoritsa, and Ms. Thomais Kavvoura.

Definitions

As it was also stated in the State-of-the-Art Report of the PRESS Project (Deliverable 2.1.), MacKinnon's seminal work on sexual harassment (1979) argued that the law should recognize two different forms of sexual harassment. The first, a quid pro quo type, where a woman's sexual compliance secures benefits or allows her to avoid harmful retribution; The second, harassment as a **persistent condition of work**, which is linked with the creation of a **hostile** working environment (see also Sapiro 2018). The State-of-the-Art Report also determined that the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention No. 190 addresses sexual harassment as an integral part of gender-based violence.

Both sexual harassment and sexual violence, online and offline, and the way they are addressed in the media, are linked with sexual violence in politics, because of the indisputable public / political character of the media. The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights addressed violence against women in politics as different from political violence "in that it is gendered, often sexualized, and has a chilling effect, **detering current and future generations of women from representation, voice, and agency in politics. It also has a detrimental impact on plurality and the inclusion of different needs, issues and topics in the political agenda**" (The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights 2022).

Online sexual harassment and violence has the same effects and seems to have the same objectives: to deter from the public space, to eliminate the presence of those targeted.

GREVIO, the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, addresses digital violence against women in its General Recommendation No. 1. According to them "The digital dimension of violence against women encompasses a wide range of acts online and through technology that are part of a continuum of violence that women and girls experience for reasons related to their gender, including in the domestic

sphere, in that it is a legitimate and equally harmful manifestation of the gender-based violence experienced by women and girls offline”. Further, “GREVIO’s understanding of the concept of violence against women in its digital dimension encompasses both online aspects (activities performed and data available on the internet, including internet intermediaries on the surface web as well as the dark web) and technology-facilitated (activities carried out with the use of technology and communication equipment, including hardware and software) harmful behaviour perpetrated against women and girls” (as quoted in The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights 2022).

As violence in the above observations is extended to mean also ‘harmful behavior’, it is evident that it also includes harassment, seen as another form of violence ‘in the continuum of violence”. The Council of Europe lastly, also clearly sees sexual harassment, particularly at the workplace, as a form of sexual violence (Council of Europe 2023b).

Gender – based harassment and violence forms

Gender-based harassment and violence can take the following forms:

- **Physical violence and harassment**, when there is a deliberate bodily abuse, or the threat of that, or the negation of the control of the body, as well as the limitation of agency. This is a violence type that is not sexual, and it involves acts that may cause hurt, or displeasure. It can leave permanent damage, or not (Council of Europe 2023).
- **Psychological violence and harassment**, when for example threats can be made, even when they are not acted upon, but create an environment of hostility (see also McKinnon on work harassment). Threatening the individual’s mental state or well-being, this form of violence is also based on fear.
- **Sexual violence and harassment** is the type of violence that comprises sexual coercion.

- **Economic violence and harassment** – when violence ranges from abuse to one’s property to attempts to undermine one’s livelihood. Economic harassment can be the withholding of resources (see also Krook and Sunin 2019).
- Additional to the above, which can be combined and don’t usually appear isolated, is **semiotic harassment and violence** – “not only part of a broader continuum of violence, but also the most widespread, concealed, and trivialized form of violence against women”, and **symbolic violence and harassment**.
- **Symbolic violence** (Krook and Sanin 2019) is the violence which has as an objective to retain the patriarchal hierarchy intact, it attempts to punish the victim for trying to abolish stereotypes, while it rewards perpetrators psychologically, ‘increasing their self-esteem’,
- **Semiotic violence and harassment** acts through degrading and sexist representations and language.

In a symbolic annihilation, women are **firstly erased as actors** in the political imagination of the public, through exclusion and ignoring.

Secondly, they are **linguistically erased**, when there are no female forms that are accepted;

thirdly, they are **erased using misogynistic language** (remember the term ‘Bitch’, for Hilary Clinton in the Trump campaign (Krook and Sanin 2019).

Sexual harassment and violence as a structural / institutional social and political problem

Symbolic and semiotic violence and harassment, are part of what can be seen as a circle of power, of control over the agency of women. Hierarchical social and political structures and institutions may target women and other sexually perceived minorities, to exercise what can be seen as symbolic / semiotic sexual harassment and violence against them. Such institutions

can be health establishments that address women as ‘weak’ or less valid in their assessment of their symptoms, or determine as healthy only the very thin bodies, or the Church, when and if they are trying to control the way in which society, and women themselves perceive their bodies and their ability to give birth / or perceive their sexuality. When those hierarchical institutions promote specific patriarchal ways of perceiving the gendered body they can be bearers of institutional harassment. In the case of the Church, when it demands that women will have children, or sees them as ‘a devil temptation’ when they show their body, and in the case of other institutions such as the Medicine establishment when the doctors assess women’s bodies in patriarchal ways (see normalizing the so-called “husband stitch” (National Organization for Women 2021; Murray 2022).

The European Commission Report on ‘Criminalisation of Gender Based Violence against women in European States, including ICT-facilitated violence’ (2021), addresses a series of social and political forms of gender-based harassment and violence, which shows the ways in which harassment is structural, and broad.

The Report addresses:

- non-consensual dissemination of intimate / private / sexual images,
- stalking,
- sexist hate speech,
- forced marriages,
- domestic violence,
- femicide,
- genital mutilation and other forms of control over women’s bodies as forms that sexual harassment and violence can take against women.

The above structural instances adhere to three forms of **structural sexual harassment**, relevant to the social and political control of women, but also of members of the LGBTQ+ community:

- Gender-based objectification
- Gender-based hypersexualisation
- Gender-based infantilization (Kanaouti, 2023).

Infantilisation is evident in the ways in which women are judged as incapable or unwilling to take responsibility in the public sphere – which is related to one of the two dimensions of semiotic violence, as Krook defines it, namely women seen as incapable (Krook 2022, also quoted in Kakepaki 2023). Objectification corresponds with women becoming invisible, either by being ignored as agents, or by other means, which is the second form of semiotic violence identified by Krook.

The third way of structural violence is hypersexualisation – or merely sexualization. “Hypersexualisation or the sexualization of public space, involves the attribution by the media of a sexual character to a product or behaviour that has nothing intrinsically sexual about it. Hypersexualisation can be seen in magazines, videos, films, the fashion industry and particularly in advertising. Such practices may

Trivialize sexuality

Use sexual stereotypes

Use the female body” (see Quebec government, Effects of stereotypes on personal development 2023).

Such practices make prevalent a normalization of porn which can be described as ‘porno chic’, a trend that ‘involves simulating pornographic images to increase sales’ (ibid.) or to attract audiences. This normalization serves patriarchal views of the female body, and can be seen as partly normalizing sexual harassment and violence.

Suggestions for media coverage of sexual harassment and violence, online and offline

Media coverage of sexual harassment and violence, online and offline, can be formed in terms of support for survivors, via the following suggestions:

1.

Understand that each case is different, and things cannot be generalized. This ensures respect for the survivor, and the effort to understand the specific circumstances, without generalisations that are stereotypical.

2.

Make prevalent the links between harassment and violence, avoiding dismissals of the first as less important.

3.

Examine the environment of the issue and the root causes, be it social, political, cultural, structural (as per the types of sexual harassment and violence discussed above).

4.

Ask for the opinion / view of specialists, and particularly women and members of the LGBTQ+ community specialists, making an effort to move beyond male experts.

5.

Keep learning about the issues, with **continuous training**, and using opportunities and guides, sharing experience and expertise.

6.

Make it clear that gender issues are not only women's issues. Intersectionality, minorities stories, can be of help to understanding and making it possible for others to understand.

7.

Make sure that the privacy of survivors is respected, and that no images appear in the story to which they have not clearly consented.

8.

Seek legal advice, to be aware of the laws regarding each case.

9.

Make a list of local experts and sources, as well as supporting organisations, which also support survivors.

10.

Use the above to give a clearer image of the story, so as to not only address what happened, but **how this can be tackled** in the future, socially, personally, and via institutions.

11.

Be aware of theories such as the 'ideal victim', which flatters public stereotypical notions of how a survivor must be absolutely helpless, and not fight back, or else the evidence does not convince the public that they were assaulted / harassed (see Lewis et al. 2021)

12.

Bring forward survivors' voices with consent that needs to be asked for and renewed with each new contribution.

13.

Educate oneself on the gender-based violence terminology, using language that does not re-victimize or trigger the survivors.

14.

Educate oneself on the gender-based violence triggers, which means avoiding image triggers in reporting.

15.

Educate oneself regarding the psychology of the SH/ SV survivors.

16.

Educate oneself regarding the psychology and support of the media professionals themselves, so as to tackle those issues without traumatizing themselves, especially when they are survivors themselves.

17.

Further to the above, **create a support group with colleagues**, so as to have / give support in tackling trauma (Gerakopoulou, 2023).

18.

Always be open to correcting oneself. Sexism is very often internalized, so much so that we don't realise it is there. A feeling that we have the best intentions, as journalists, is not enough to make sure that we will - and avoid the stigma that there are only a few journalists who are wrong (although it can be that the choices of some media outlets are thus).

19.

Allow for sexist behaviour / views in unlikely places – and respect those differences of opinion, as you do for males. Avoid polarization, avoid stereotypical thinking that women will not be sexist, just because they are women, or that members of the LGBTQ+ community will be ideologically in favor of LGBTQ+ rights in the way you expect (see Pantelidou-Malouta 2003).

20.

Be aware that with each non-sexist public portrayal / story, journalism is in a position to change the “mores”, to add to the effort of changing the ground so that such portrayals will be more frequent. (see also Center for Women's Global Leadership, 2021: 300-301; Kanaouti, 2023)

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