



Article

Theorising Gender-Based Violence Policies: A 7P Framework

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Abstract: This paper presents and critically interrogates a comprehensive 7Ps framework for analysing and addressing gender-based violence. It takes the UN and the Council of Europe's models as points of departure and develops the framework beyond the current state of the art, explains its different components, and offers reflections on its use in the practice of gender-based violence research. The UN 3P model, encompassing prevention, protection, and prosecution, later developed by the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention into a 4P model, comprising prevention, protection, prosecution, and integrated policies, has since been revisited, elaborated upon, and expanded in work focusing on gender-based violence in particular domains, such as female genital mutilation or gender-based violence in sport. To study gender-based violence in academia, the comprehensive 7Ps analytical framework has been deployed to interrogate the policies in place at national and institutional levels, including sexual harassment. Based on empirical data and conceptual analysis in the EU project UniSAFE: Gender-based violence and institutional responses: Building a knowledge base and operational tools to make universities and research organisations safe (2021–2024), the paper argues that the refined 7Ps model, comprising Prevalence, Prevention, Protection, Prosecution of offenders (and disciplinary measures), Provision of services, Partnerships between actors, and Policies specifically addressing the issue, allows for a more encompassing approach, in turn allowing a more fine-grained understanding of variations and explanations for success (or lack thereof) in terms of outcomes.

Keywords: gender-based violence (GBV); policy analysis; higher education; research; 7P



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1. Introduction

It is now well established that gender-based violence is a widespread systemic problem in higher education and research, with severe negative consequences for institutions (economic, reputational), individuals (health and wellbeing and relatedly study and career outcomes) and societies (Anitha and Lewis 2018; Bondestam and Lundqvist 2020; Humbert et al. 2022). To recall the most recent data on prevalence from the Horizon 2020 UniSAFE project, gender-based violence does not affect people in academia equally: overall, 62% of the more than 42,000 UniSAFE survey respondents experienced at least one form of gender-based violence since they started working or studying at their institution; for women it was 66%, for non-binary people 74%, for LGBQ+ 68%, for those who reported a disability or chronic illness 72%, and for those belonging to an ethnic minority group 69% (Humbert et al. 2022; see also Lipinsky et al. 2022). Previous research confirms the increased risk of gender-based violence among already marginalised groups in the context of universities and research organisations, including ethnic/racial minorities (Roudsari et al. 2009; Wemrell et al. 2019), sexual minorities (Messinger 2011), migrants (Gonçalves and Matos 2020), and younger people (Voth Schrag 2017). Research also shows that specific groups of people in academia are more at risk due to their structural position in the system or the

nature of the research work; these include doctoral candidates, early-career researchers, and researchers on temporary contracts and in otherwise precarious positions, mobile researchers, researchers on field trips (especially in remote settings) and others (Blazyte and Pilinkaite Sotirovic 2023).

The fight against gender-based violence is a long-standing issue, and over the years there has been a shift in this endeavour from a criminal justice approach to a more comprehensive and holistic approach that embodies the interplay between individual, community, and systemic factors that contribute to gender-based violence (Strid et al. 2021a; Humbert et al. 2021). This has been reflected in the gradual evolution of the P model, which attests to the growing need for a multi-faceted approach to address the complex and pervasive issue of gender-based violence and ensure that survivors receive the support they need to heal and recover from the trauma of violence.

In this paper, we present the conceptual and theoretical framework of the 7P model including Policy, Prevalence, Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Provision of services and Partnerships. The paper is based on findings from the EU-funded project UniSAFE: Gender-based violence and institutional responses: Building a knowledge base and operational tools to make universities and research organisations safe (2021–2024). We first describe the history and development of the 7P model from an earlier 3P UN model and 4P Council of Europe model. Second, we present the results of the application of the 7P model in UniSAFE, and third, we critically reflect on the relevance and usefulness of the model, providing some suggestions on next steps. This ongoing work has brought to focus additional critical points to refine the analytical comprehensiveness of the 7P model embedded in feminist analyses of violence as reflecting and reproducing structures of power and inequality, as well as the existence of violence on a continuum (Hearn et al. 2022; MacKinnon 1989; Kelly 1988), highlighting the need to address gender-based violence as a feature of institutional change (O'Connor et al. 2021). The 7P model has been previously developed and applied in the grey literature and in the context of sports and gender-based violence (Leye et al. 2013; Mergaert et al. 2016), but it has not previously been tested and theorised. Hence, this paper contributes to the theoretical debates in the research field of gender-based violence by providing insights into the current policy preoccupation in the European Research Area with eradicating gender-based violence as an element of institutional change through gender equality plans.

Evolution of the 7P Model

There are many efforts to analyse gender-based violence. In terms of approaches, one of the most commonly used is the UN framework of prevention, protection, and prosecution (UN 2006). This model has been picked up by the EU (European Commission 2010, 2017, 2019) and civil society organisations. The UN model was further developed by the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, better known as the Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe 2014). In this section, we first review these two models and their limitations, present the further development of the model, and close with a presentation of the initial 7P model used in UniSAFE.

The UN model recognises the importance of preventing violence against women from happening in the first place. Prevention measures focus on addressing the root causes of violence against women, such as gender inequality and discrimination, and promoting gender equality through education, awareness-raising, and legal and policy reforms. Protection relates to access to essential services and support. It includes access to healthcare, legal assistance, and shelters, as well as supports participation in the justice system. Prosecution focuses on holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. This includes strengthening legal frameworks and law enforcement responses, as well as ensuring access to justice and participation in legal proceedings without fear of retribution.

While the UN model has many advantages, there are limitations. First, the UN approach was developed to address violence against women rather than gender-based vio-

lence. Because of this, other groups are excluded, such as men and non-binary individuals who experience violence based on their gender or gender identity. Further, focusing on violence against women only may reinforce harmful gender stereotypes, which can lead to the exclusion of others from efforts to eliminate violence. Furthermore, the UN model was not developed to adequately address intersectionality. Rather, it tends to treat women as a monolithic group, which may not adequately address the experiences of marginalised groups, such as women from ethnic or religious minorities, indigenous women, or women with disabilities. Finally, the UN approach has a strong focus on criminal justice responses, which may not always be the most effective way to address violence.

The Council of Europe's approach to violence against women builds on the UN approach and develops it in three main ways. First, prevention explicitly involves men and boys in efforts to prevent violence against women. This is a major step in the right direction, as involving men in prevention has been identified as crucial in numerous studies (Casey et al. 2018; DeKeseredy et al. 2000; Flood 2015)—not only because men are the dominant perpetrators of violence, but because non-violent men have a positive role to play in preventing and stopping violence (Connell 2014; Flood 2019; Jewkes et al. 2015). Second, the P for Policy is added to the three Ps of the UN, in that the Council of Europe developed a comprehensive set of policies and guidelines to address violence against women. These include developing national action plans, implementing anti-discrimination measures, and promoting the participation of women in decision-making processes. Third, while the Council of Europe approach recognises multiple discrimination in relation to violence against women and includes—in its interpretation and Explanatory notes—specific reference to Roma or Sámi women, or lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LBTI) women, it has also been criticised for its limited focus on the intersectional nature of violence (Choudhry 2016) and for framing some forms of violence in a culturalist lens (Peroni 2016).

To adequately address gender-based violence, it is important to recognise the root causes of violence, specifically the gendered nature of violence embedded in unequal gendered power structures, gender inequality and discrimination. This requires a more comprehensive approach that includes prevention measures and efforts to promote gender equality, and a conceptual shift from violence against women to gender-based violence.

Furthermore, despite the limitations discussed above, these two models have been applied in various studies. Other studies have continued to develop and expand the model into a more holistic conceptualisation. Notably, research on female genital mutilation (for example, the study on Female Genital Mutilation in the European Union and Croatia by Leye et al. 2013) adopted a broader perspective, emphasising the importance of partnerships (in this context in particular, with community groups where female genital mutilation is practiced) and the provision of (medical) services as well as the key role of prevalence (and incidence) measurement as a central underpinning for any effective policymaking. Recognising the relevance and usefulness of this broader perspective, an extended P framework was also applied in the EU-funded study on gender-based violence in sport (Mergaert et al. 2016), with adapted definitions of the Ps. First, whereas female genital mutilation is a criminal act in all EU Member States and calls for prosecution, gender-based violence is more generally considered, such as in studies that focus on sports, and occurs on a continuum and involves a spectrum of various forms of misconduct that may vary from seemingly mild or 'innocent' to grave acts that also constitute criminal behaviour. Moreover, sports, often being practiced in the context of clubs, disciplinary procedures, outside or in parallel to judicial proceedings, are to be considered and have been added to the P of prosecution. Partnerships, in the context of sports, are also important, for example, for the provision of reporting, capacity-building, support and counselling services, which can be organised by federations; as such, services are seldomly available at the club level. This study proved the relevance and applicability of this expanded model in the context of sports, both when considering elite and amateur sports. As the validity and robustness of the model had thus been proven for research on gender-based violence in different

settings (addressing female genital mutilation and in sports), pending some tweaking of the interpretation of the Ps, the 7P model was adopted in the UniSAFE project, for application in higher education and research organisations.

In summary, the holistic 7P framework is an extension of the conventional UN's and EU's 3P approach (prevention, protection, prosecution) (UN 2006, 2017; European Commission 2010, 2017, 2019) and the Council of Europe's (2014) Istanbul Convention's 4P framework (prevention, protection, prosecution, policies). It encompasses Policy, Prevalence, Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and internal disciplinary measures, Provision of services and Partnerships (see Box 1 below). It is important to recognise that in the 7P framework, measures can contribute to more than one P, and the delineation between the Ps is not always clear-cut. One example is actions that are delivered in partnership with other organisations. What the model offers is the ability to pinpoint various facets that contribute to addressing gender-based violence, as this allows different entry points to the analysis of the design and effectiveness of policies put in place.

Box 1. The refined 7P model (based on Mergaert et al. 2016; Strid et al. 2021b).

1. Policy is the basis of the approach and refers to both a coherent set of measures with a clear vision and strategy, and specific policy documents detailing such measures.
2. Prevalence and incidence estimates contribute to evidence-based policymaking. Data can be collected through surveys or administrative processes (e.g., the registration of complaints). Importantly, data collection and analysis must take an intersectional approach, taking into account, for example, people's ethnicity and origin, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, as well as their function within the organisation.
3. Prevention refers to measures that promote changes in social and cultural behaviour. This may include induction materials for both staff and students; internal and external publicity and training; and public statements and visuals.
4. Protection is about ensuring safety and meeting the needs of (potential) victims and survivors, with the objective to avoid (further) harm being inflicted. This includes clear processes, procedures, and infrastructure for reporting occurrences, and training for those responsible for handling cases. Protection may comprise measures such as a restraining order or offering a change of dormitory, student group, unit or supervisor.
5. Prosecution and disciplinary measures cover legal and disciplinary proceedings against perpetrators, and related investigative measures and judicial proceedings. This includes possible warnings, suspension, termination of employment and study, as legally appropriate, and liaison with legal, police and criminal justice organisations and professionals.
6. Provision of services refers to the services offered to support victims, families, bystanders, perpetrators and the community affected by gender-based violence. It can include counselling; legal, psychological and medical support; accommodating different exam, study or teaching schedules; and also rehabilitation programmes for perpetrators. Importantly, the availability of services needs to be well known by all staff and students as well as by managers and supervisors.
7. Partnerships relate to the involvement of relevant actors at all levels, such as governmental agencies, civil society organisations, trade unions, or staff and student associations.

2. Materials and Methods

The paper is based on materials collected and analysed in UniSAFE and re-analysed with the specific aim to discuss the implementation and development of the 7P model, and to theorise its potential. The material consists of the theoretical framework (Strid et al. 2021b), two sets of policy mappings, a survey, and two waves of three workshops with researchers and experts to gather input for the process of developing tools to address and eradicate gender-based violence in higher education and research organisations. The empirical material for the different strands of the UniSAFE research has been collected in European academic settings, higher education, and research institutions. These materials include different applications of the 7P model. More specifically, UniSAFE is a nine-partner EU-funded project that aims to produce better knowledge on gender-based violence in research-performing and research-funding organisations in Europe. It is designed to trans-

late the data and knowledge produced into operational tools for higher education, research organisations and policymakers. It examines the mechanisms of gender-based violence, its social determinants, antecedents and consequences, by developing an ambitious multi-level research design and holistic 7P research model, covering Prevalence, Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Provision of services, Partnerships and Policy. UniSAFE applies the state-of-the-art 7P model to collect comprehensive data, analyse their relations, synthesise and compare qualitative and quantitative evidence gathered at three levels:

1. Micro level: Prevalence and impacts of gender-based violence are analysed via data gathered by a survey sampling 46 research organisations (N = 42,000), by a Europe-wide survey of mobile researchers and interviews with early career researchers.
2. Meso level: Organisational responses and infrastructure are analysed via data gathered by in-depth case studies, interviews, and a strategic mapping of research organisations in 15 member states.
3. Macro level: Legal and policy frameworks are analysed via extensive mapping by national experts in EU26, the UK and three Associated States.

UniSAFE was designed to achieve its results through research, education and outreach activities between researchers, stakeholders and policymakers across Europe.

The 7P theoretical framework was first used to develop the methodological tools for the national-level mapping (survey, mapping grid, and national report). Code books (Fajmonová et al. 2023; Huck et al. 2023b) were created with detailed classifications of types of measures and actions under each of the Ps. This first mapping already indicated the complexity of the 7P model and the need for in-depth definition of several of the Ps. This especially included clarification in the classification of some measures as falling under Prevention or Protection (e.g., different types of training will fall under one or the other) and the recognition of the fact that some actions are classified under multiple Ps (primarily Protection and Provision of services, and Provision of services and Partnerships). For the analysis, it was also important to distinguish between external and internal Provision of services and Partnerships. Lastly, in relation to policies in the national-level policy mapping, an important distinction had to be made between, on the one hand, a given country having or not a policy in place at the national level to address gender-based violence in higher education and/or research and, on the other hand, mandating from the national level for higher education and/or research institutions to introduce policies at the institutional level. A further refinement of the 7P model was undertaken during the analysis of the institutional policies. For this mapping, specific methodological tools were also developed (institutional report template, institutional policy mapping grid), together with a code book (Huck et al. 2023a) with a detailed classification of types of measures and actions under each of the Ps.

The last type of material that has contributed to the conceptual discussions presented in this paper include the results from six workshops with different types of stakeholders (experts and practitioners involved in gender-based violence work in academia), organised to fine-tune the 7P theoretical model and to seek answers to hereto unsolved issues. Each workshop counted between fourteen and twenty-one participants from a variety of European countries. Three workshops were held in-person (in Madrid, Prague and Cologne) and three online. These discussions included the good practice standards for an institutional policy; unravelling practicalities, challenges and impediments related to the operationalisation of the different Ps; the application of disciplinary as opposed to judicial procedures and the ways in which they influence one another; the issues related to communication about cases and information sharing; and the integration of intersectional considerations. A first series of three workshops deepened the understanding of the 7Ps in a systematic way, while a subsequent series of three workshops explored solutions and ways to overcome problems in the implementation of policies, with the aim to formulate clear guidance, tips and suggestions in the UniSAFE toolkit (Yellow Window 2023a, 2023b). These workshops were the last step in the generation of insights into the model

and have afforded an opportunity to consider further developments based on the hands-on engagement with relevant stakeholders.

3. Results and Discussion

In this section, we first present the 7Ps and what they address; second, we discuss the main gaps in the current policies in terms of the 7Ps as well as in relation to key underlying features of feminist analyses of gender-based violence; and we continue with a presentation of the refinement of the individual 7Ps for the higher education and research sectors. The definitions of the UniSAFE 7Ps are presented in Box 1, which also exemplifies what the respective Ps may refer to in the setting of higher education and research.

The initial conceptualisation of the 7Ps in UniSAFE and their inter-relations is captured in Figure 1, where the measure of Prevalence of gender-based violence is at the centre, as a basis for the development of actions and measures in the other Ps of Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, Provision of services, Partnerships and Policies (Strid et al. 2021b). In the course of UniSAFE, this initial rendering was revised with Policy as the overarching framework in which the other constituents should be structured coherently, while Prevalence continues to have a central position, as the evidence to provide a basis for the design of the concrete actions elaborated in the overarching Policy, as shown in Figure 2.

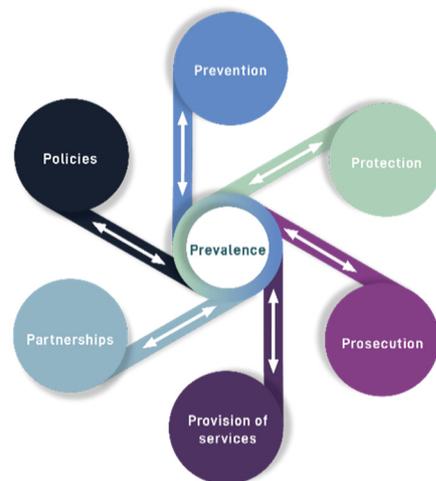


Figure 1. The initial UniSAFE 7P model (source: Strid et al. 2021b).

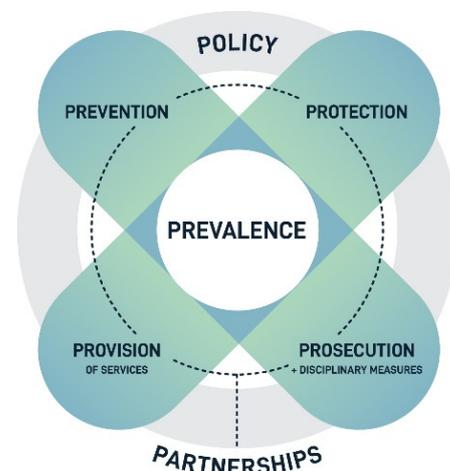


Figure 2. The revised UniSAFE 7P model (source: Mergaert et al. 2022).

3.1. Gaps in the Coverage of the 7Ps

It has long been recognised that without data, problems cannot be named, and policies and actions are not taken to address them. This is the logic behind the P for Prevalence taking centre in the model. The findings from the national policy analysis (Fajmonová et al. 2021, pp. 66–104) and institutional policy mapping (Huck et al. 2022) underscore how poorly addressed data collection in European higher education and research is. It appears that where national Policies exist that address gender-based violence in higher education or research, they address Prevalence. In contrast, there is no such clear-cut connection in the institutional policies. Here, Prevalence is amongst the least frequently addressed areas of action and, in addition, having a Policy does not mean that data collection on prevalence or incidence occurs. The Ps that are more frequently addressed are, at the national level, Prevention followed by Provision of services, Protection and Prosecution. At the institutional level, among the Ps addressed more frequently (at least on paper) are Protection, Prevention, Prosecution and Provision of services.

The lack of attention to Prevalence at the institutional level has also been confirmed in the UniSAFE case studies (Ranea-Triviño et al. 2022), while Prevention appears to be widely and consistently covered. It also seems that important efforts are being undertaken towards Provision of services and Partnerships. However, Protection and Prosecution are underdeveloped and applied in more fragmented ways. Finally, while Policies are covered less inconsistently, they appear to be key for ensuring higher levels of comprehensiveness around gender-based violence and better strategies that guarantee a victim-centred approach (Ranea-Triviño et al. 2022).

3.2. Gaps in Addressing Intersectionality

The lack of attention to the intersectional nature of gender-based violence has been noted above. This is the case despite the evidence of a greater risk of violence for specific groups of people, which was also confirmed in the UniSAFE survey (Humbert et al. 2022) and interviews (Blazyte and Pilinkaite Sotirovic 2023). Intersectionality has therefore been a theoretical cornerstone in the research design of UniSAFE. The analysis of national and institutional policies points to a strikingly lacking intersectional understanding of the nature of gender-based violence (Fajmonová et al. 2021; Huck et al. 2022). The analysis of national policy in EU member states shows that only eight EU member states in any manner reference different grounds of inequality, and when they do, it is race, sexual orientation and gender identity that are addressed more frequently, followed by disability/health and age. This maps onto the vulnerable groups mentioned in the laws and strategies, where non-binary staff and students, ethnic minorities, and staff with disabilities are the ones that are mentioned more frequently—but still only in three national or regional laws in the EU-27 (Fajmonová et al. 2021). The situation is similar at the institutional level, where only 12 institutions out of 45 addressed intersectionality or different axes of inequality in their policies (Huck et al. 2022). The most frequent axes of inequality mentioned are sexual orientation, closely followed by gender identity and expression, race and (dis)ability. Other axes of inequality such as age, religion and beliefs and class are addressed marginally.

Thus, in sum, there is an overall lack of attention to intersectionality and a variable coverage of the different Ps, with some being seriously underdeveloped in both national and institutional policymaking and measures (Fajmonová et al. 2021; Huck et al. 2022; Humbert et al. 2022). While this may not be surprising considering the emphasis placed by the earlier frameworks on a limited number of Ps, the findings point to important weaknesses of current systems. Moreover, the qualitative work of UniSAFE has demonstrated additional gaps that exist between institutional policy design and implementation (Ranea-Triviño et al. 2022). Whereas institutional policy frameworks may exist on paper, the practice may be very different and marked by failure to effectively address gender-based violence, as shown through the case studies and interviews (Ranea-Triviño et al. 2022).

3.3. Further Refinement of the Conceptualisation of the 7Ps

Apart from yielding a fine-grained understanding about the state-of-play of policy design and implementation in European higher education and research, applying the 7P framework in the context of UniSAFE has also enabled a refinement of the definitions and understanding of each P in this setting. The qualitative work conducted in UniSAFE, in particular the workshops with experts and practitioners (Yellow Window 2023a, 2023b), but also the case studies and interviews (Blazyte and Pilinkaite Sotirovic 2023; Ranea-Triviño et al. 2022), has enabled the establishment of good practice standards for the implementation of each of the Ps. These refer to elements that affect the quality of how the respective Ps are addressed and therefore determine the potential of the institutional policy to deliver upon its ambition. In what follows, the implications for the different Ps are discussed.

Firstly, the importance of Prevention needs to be reinforced in ways that address the root causes of gender-based violence, such as the existence of structural power imbalances and persistent gender stereotypes, which are particularly pronounced in academia and render those in positions of dependence and working on precarious contracts more prone to various forms of abuse (O'Connor et al. 2021). Building on this point, when analysing Prevalence with an intersectional perspective, functional differences (referring to positions, types of contract, job profile) between individuals must be considered next to socio-demographic ones. When it comes to Protection measures, it is relevant to include other parties than only the victim-survivor who potentially need protection from retaliation. These can be whistle-blowers and bystanders, but also intermediaries, who may be colleagues or subordinates of the offender and may suffer exclusion and other forms of reprisal detrimental to their well-being, health and career. Furthermore, the understanding of Protection deserves to be extended to the protection from secondary victimisation (this is when the victim-survivor and their close ones suffer additional harm caused by inadequate responses to their situation) and re-traumatisation (for example through insensitive case handling or repeated demands for detailed accounts of incidents). Extending the definition of Protection in this way highlights the above-mentioned inter-related nature of some Ps, here specifically the provision of good-quality services. Looking at Provision of services, the training and capacity-building of the professionals who are to handle cases and support the parties involved are of course paramount. However, it has also become clear that various other parties beyond the victim-survivor need consideration: bystanders, whistle-blowers, intermediaries, family members, and affected community members are also important potential beneficiaries of services. The latter, for example, may benefit from services such as group counselling, which aim at repairing trust in the organisation and re-establishing feelings of safety and belonging. Offenders may be offered services too, such as the participation in (re-)training and rehabilitation programmes. This fits with an approach to disciplinary measures, covered under Prosecution, that aims at intercepting early signals of misbehaviour and of emerging patterns of misconduct, among other things, through active monitoring and intervening proportionately, to avoid escalations of violence. As to Partnerships, it is crucial that the institutions seek expertise where it is, to ensure the quality of its policies and their implementation. Especially when there are gaps in internal capacity, external partnerships can be a solution. It is thus paramount to establish which expertise, insights, skills, and so forth, are needed and to bring these together in the policy design, implementation or evaluation stage, as required. Altogether, the above suggests that the institutional Policy framework may need to be revisited in order to align it with these advanced insights.

UniSAFE operationalises these insights through the development of a toolkit for research and higher education institutions, to be published in the Fall of 2023 (<https://unisafe-toolkit.eu/>, accessed on 27 April 2023), to guide them in the design and implementation of an effective policy framework, as well as an assessment framework to allow them to identify strengths and weaknesses of a given institutional policy approach.

3.4. Newly Emergent Insights: Principles Underpinning the 7P Model

The qualitative work (Yellow Window 2023a, 2023b; Blazyte and Pilinkaite Sotirovic 2023; Fajmonová et al. 2021; Huck et al. 2022; Ranea-Triviño et al. 2022) has yielded novel aspects and considerations that call for attention and may currently not be given the importance they deserve when it comes to setting up comprehensive policy frameworks. They are of relevance not only in the higher education and research sectors, but beyond, and constitute overarching principles that inform the implementation of the model: attention to power, intersectional inequality and victim-centred approaches as well as perpetrator accountability, proportionality, patterns, perspectives and parties. Without extending the 7P model with additional components, they provide a deeper understanding of the existing model, adding sophistication and complexity.

The attention to power, intersecting inequalities and victim-centred approaches have long been established in the scholarly literature related to gender-based violence, but as the UniSAFE research shows, they are rarely addressed in institutional policies. Power is closely linked to the hierarchical organisation, precarity and inequalities, which are key features of the current higher education and research sectors. It is linked to the root causes of gender-based violence and emphasises the need to aim, within a prevention strategy, at deeper, cultural change of organisational cultures, rather than merely focusing on instances of individuals' misconduct. The attention to intersectional inequality highlights the heightened levels of gender-based violence prevalence among groups in positions of multiple inequality and the need for intersectionality being reflected in all the 7Ps. Lastly, embedding institutional response in a victim-centred approach puts at the centre of policy the needs, well-being, and agency of the victim-survivors. With this, victim empowerment and safety inform the institutional response, which also pays attention to the cooperation and coordination of the trauma-informed response and the long-term nature of the support provided.

We complement the aspects established by existing scholarship with new insights based on the further theorisation of the model developed in the UniSAFE project. These entail perpetrator accountability, proportionality, patterns, perspective and parties, and call for a radical shift in mentalities within academia. The current situation, where power is held by just a few in pockets within the institution, allows offenders too frequently to go unsanctioned, sometimes for decades, enjoying greater protection than their victims. Attention to the role of perpetrators is thus in order and has been addressed in feminist research in relation to masculinity and socialisation and the use of power and control (Connell 2014; Hearn 1998; Strid and Meier Arendt 2020), and in working with men and boys as part of preventive strategies and developing perpetrator-focused interventions (Casey et al. 2018; DeKeseredy et al. 2000). The focus on perpetrators calls for proportionate remediation measures from the moment that irregularities are picked up, however 'minor' they may seem. It is therefore promising that some institutions are seeking ways to identify patterns of misbehaviour through active monitoring, moving away from reactive towards proactive approaches to eradicating gender-based violence. The aims of such policies are to tackle misconduct at its roots, not allowing it to evolve, grow or even flourish unimpeded within the institution, while ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the members of the community and fostering trust in the organisation and its leadership. Trust-building can be further achieved by paying attention to and incorporating different perspectives of the various target populations of the institutional policies and the involvement of the various parties relevant to the process. With the victim-centred, intersectional approach in mind, this would not entail only the victims-survivors and at-risk groups such as students, early-career researchers, LGBTQIA+, people from different ethnic and racial and socio-economic backgrounds, and other groups, but also all the different segments of the academic community—especially team leaders, HR, managers, supervisors, and gender-equality officers and their equivalents. The attention to the involvement of these diverse parties and their perspectives will help to build support for and wide-ranging participation in the policy development and its buy-in. Preparing the institution to embrace

this new approach will require a thorough and open-minded rethinking and redesign of the institutional policy framework.

4. Conclusions

As the above demonstrates, the work performed under UniSAFE has confirmed the validity, relevance, and usefulness of the 7P model, not only to analyse existing policy frameworks, be it at national or institutional levels, but also to identify the strengths and weaknesses of these policy frameworks. This makes the model exceptionally interesting for practical purposes, as it pinpoints areas where improvements in policy frameworks are possible. Further, while the UniSAFE research has been run in a European context only, there is no reason to assume that the 7P model would not be applicable elsewhere. Further research may confirm this. Still, it is important to distinguish between what exists on paper and how policies are actually implemented (or not) in practice. The formal existence of policies thus must not be taken for granted but instead calls for a closer examination of how measures take shape in reality. This requires in-depth knowledge of the organisation, its functions and operations. As such, while the model may yield a good understanding of a given situation, the reliability of the findings may differ when applied by people with more or less knowledge of the institution. This makes the UniSAFE assessment framework—one of the upcoming project outputs to be made available later in 2023—a tool with promising potential when taken up by a core group of institutional change agents with the purpose of identifying where improvements can be made to the organisation's policy framework to address gender-based violence.

The issue of gender-based violence in higher education and research continues to evolve. One of the remaining challenges relates to serial predation and the mobility of these offenders within the academic system. This problem has only very recently started garnering attention, particularly by US universities as well as the US National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (Sohn 2022). Various systems of accreditation or flagging-up are under discussion, to ensure that the matter is taken up during the hiring process. The problem of serial offenders underscores the lack of perpetrator accountability and the greater protection currently afforded to perpetrators due to questions of personal data protection. In Europe, the GDPR legislation poses a particular stumbling block to information sharing across academic institutions.

Furthermore, the vital need to address gender-based violence through an intersectional lens is no longer only recognised by researchers and scholars studying the topic but is increasingly mentioned in the policies adopted. However, despite a growing recognition of this need, its translation into concrete steps and measures along the entirety of the 7Ps is still missing. Specifically, the need to address intersectional gender inequality in European research and higher education more broadly is now recognised in EU policy (European Commission 2020a, 2020b; Council of the EU 2021), but as the policy mapping conducted in the Horizon Europe GENDERACTIONplus project shows, intersectionality is highly underdeveloped, with only four countries having policies for gender equality in research and innovation that address more than one ground of inequality, and the translation of this into intersectionality is challenging (Zachariassen et al. 2023, p. 22). Similarly, at the institutional level, academic institutions need to move away from considering single axes of inequality towards an intersectional approach that recognises the multiple, reinforcing inequality characteristics. Lastly, to move forward, it is key that institutions evolve from reactive to proactive approaches. Such a policy shift will enable institutions to address gender-based violence at its root, preventing what may be seen as minor misconduct from escalating. This would recognise that gender-based violence is a continuum, embedded in unequal relations of power and discrimination and manifesting in many different and intersectional forms.

It goes without saying that putting in place a comprehensive policy framework to address gender-based violence is not a minor challenge for institutions, which are currently

not organised to act in this way. However, the benefits are multiple and the costs of not acting are higher.

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