

Gender-Based Violence Against Women in Universities of Greece: Attitudes, Victimization and Help-Seeking

Study overview (English)

GBV in higher education is increasingly recognised as a systemic problem, yet pathways which link gender-related attitudes and victimisation with formal help-seeking intentions remain insufficiently understood in Southern Europe. Using an anonymous survey completed by 550 female students along with structural equation modelling, the study explores how different forms of victimisation impact student's willingness to seek help in the context of Greek universities. The study found that Coercive Control was the form of gender-based violence most strongly linked to help-seeking.

Study overview (Greek)

Η έμφυλη βία (GBV) στην ανώτατη εκπαίδευση αναγνωρίζεται ολοένα και περισσότερο ως ένα συστημικό πρόβλημα, ωστόσο οι μηχανισμοί που συνδέουν τις στάσεις που σχετίζονται με το φύλο και τη θυματοποίηση με τις προθέσεις αναζήτησης επίσημης βοήθειας παραμένουν ανεπαρκώς κατανοητοί στη Νότια Ευρώπη. Χρησιμοποιώντας ένα ανώνυμο ερωτηματολόγιο που συμπληρώθηκε από 550 φοιτήτριες, σε συνδυασμό με μοντελοποίηση δομικών εξισώσεων, η μελέτη διερευνά πώς διαφορετικές μορφές θυματοποίησης επηρεάζουν την προθυμία των φοιτητριών να αναζητήσουν βοήθεια στο πλαίσιο των ελληνικών πανεπιστημίων. Η μελέτη διαπίστωσε ότι ο καταναγκαστικός έλεγχος ήταν η μορφή έμφυλης βίας που συνδέεται πιο έντονα με την αναζήτηση βοήθειας.

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Background

Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education

Gender-based violence (GBV) is increasingly recognised as an **institutional problem** in higher education, which may occur over physical, relational, and digital settings. Forms of GBV include sexual harassment, surveillance, sexual assault, monitoring, intimidation and other forms of coercive control.

Recent Greek and European research confirms that GBV is prominent in university settings, with Greek students documenting **technology-facilitated** sexual violence and non-consensual image distribution.

Help-Seeking Behaviour

For a variety of reasons which the paper explores, a survivor of GBV recognising harm does not always translate into them seeking formal help. In the context of Greek universities, the study underlines that students may lack confidence in institutional procedures, may perceive formal services as difficult to access or may even feel uncertain whether their experience 'counts.'

Help-seeking intentions therefore need to be examined not only in relation to victimisation, but also in relation to the attitudinal and perceived-control factors that shape whether formal support appears possible.

Further Reading

Kokkinos C.M., Papioti T.-A., & Voulgaridou I. (2025) Predictors of Proclivity, Enjoyment, and Acceptance of Non-Consensual Intimate-Image Distribution Among Greek University Students. *European Journal of Investigation in Health, Psychology and Education*, 15(8):150. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ejihpe15080150>.

Lee, J. Y., & Shin, Y. J. (2022) Using the Theory of Planned Behavior to Predict Korean College Students' Help-Seeking Intention. *The Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research*, 49(1), 76-90.

Latcheva, R. (2017) Sexual Harassment in the European Union: A Pervasive but Still Hidden Form of Gender-Based Violence. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 32(12), 1821-1852.

Key Findings

The study primarily looked at **Coercive Control** and **Sexual Harassment/Assault** as two common yet differentiated forms of GBV in the context of Greek universities, along with attitudinal analysis exploring the impact of **Acceptance of Dating Violence** and **Benevolent/Hostile Sexism**.

Point 1

Coercive Control

- This was the form of GBV which displayed the **strongest link** between GBV and help-seeking intentions.
- Behaviours such as monitoring, isolation, threats and control over resources may accumulate and lead formal support appear necessary to the victim/survivor.

Point 2

Sexual Harassment/Assault

- By contrast, this form of GBV showed a **marginal association** with help-seeking.
- This is consistent with a pattern in which forms of sexual harassment/assault are normalised, trivialised and thus unreported within higher education.

Point 3

Acceptance of Dating Violence

- This attitude was **positively associated** with help-seeking intentions.
- A possible explanation of this is that normative acceptance of dating violence suggests a proximity or familiarity with conflictual relationships.

Point 4

Benevolent/Hostile Sexism

- This had **no significant direct effects** on help-seeking intentions.
- Sexism appeared to be less of a direct predictor of help-seeking intentions and more as an element of the overarching normative environment in which abusive dynamics may be interpreted.

Key Practice and Policy Implications

1.

Develop policies which understand coercive control as a patterned and relational form of abuse

- Current policies centre mainly on isolated procedures or clearly punishable acts.
- Revise codes of conduct, reporting procedures and risk assessment methods in order to address monitoring, isolation, economic control and threats, even when no single event is 'extreme.'

2.

Treat navigability of support systems as a core design challenge

- Perceived control over accessing services has both direct and indirect associations with seeking help.
- Making services visible, minimising barriers, providing 'one-stop' support centres, confidential online routes, clear procedural information and agreements between universities and other specialised agencies.
- Allow students to seek advice even when unsure whether their experience 'counts.'

3.

Interventions should treat dating violence and benevolent sexism as scripts that normalise control and delay recognition of harm

- Rather than treating them as abstract beliefs.
- Teaching interventions can include recognising patterns of control, reframing narratives in which control is conflated with care and encouraging peers to support victims in trusting their own perceptions.

4.

Recognise the need for customised intervention

- Each student has different needs and concerns which impact their personal perceptions and help-seeking intentions.
- Rather than being reactive, intervention needs to proactively address this intersection.