

Decolonising Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education: Innovations in Theory, Policy, and Practice

Participant information sheet

You are invited to take part in a research project. This sheet explains what the research is about and what taking part will involve so that you can make an informed decision about whether to be involved or not.

Please take some time to read this information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. If you have any questions or if you would like more information, please let us know.

This document is available in an accessible, easy-read version. A translation of this document is also available, please let us know if you need them.

Este documento está disponible en español. Por favor, díganos si lo necesita.

Este documento está disponível em português. Por favor, diga-nos se você precisa.

What is the research project about?

This project is about Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) within Higher Education (HE). We aim to develop a new approach to responding to SGBV in HE by bringing together learning and experiences from people with lived experience, activists, academics, and policymakers in the Global South. The project has a strong emphasis on prevention and culture change in HE institutions so that outcomes for victim-survivors are significantly improved.

As we develop new ways of thinking, we hope to decolonise typical or dominant understandings of SGBV in HE. This means critically questioning the viewpoint our information about SGBV comes from and the frame used to examine it. It also involves engaging with learning from institutional practices and feminist struggles in the Global South and applying these to how we prevent and intervene in SGBV in HE globally.

Who can take part?

The project will speak to people in different countries including Argentina, Brazil, Nigeria, and South Africa. We will work with partners in every country.

We would like to hear from you and encourage you to contact us if you live in one of these 5 countries, and have at least one of the following experiences (we understand you may fit into more than one group):

1. You work at a university or Higher Education institution (including academic, research, administration, facilities, and or management staff)
2. You are a student at a university – you may also have personal experience of SGBV while at university.
3. You are an activist involved in campaigns relating to SGBV in HE.
4. You are a policy maker working on issues relating to SGBV in HE.

What will taking part involve?

If you decide you would like to be involved in this project, you will be invited to take part in an **individual interview** (online Zoom) and/or a **focus group** (online using Zoom) with others who have had similar experiences or who work in a similar field.

You can choose which activity you take part in – you can choose to take part in both – and you can choose where, when, and how you take part. We will be as flexible as possible and will try to accommodate any access needs.

The interview or focus group will take place with an experienced woman researcher. She will ask simple, open-ended questions, and there is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answer. The researcher is interested in your thoughts, experiences, and anything you feel is relevant or important to the topic of SGBV in HE.

If you would like to take part, we will contact you before the interview or focus group to discuss how it will work and to make sure it is safe for you to be involved – this includes ensuring taking part will not have any significant negative consequences for you. We will also make sure you have any support you may need to take part.

If you are unable to participate in an interview or focus group because of concerns regarding your safety or wellbeing, we will try to create alternative more informal opportunities for you to share your thoughts with us, if you would like to.

Will I be recorded and how will the recordings be used?

Yes, the interviews and focus groups will be recorded using basic recording equipment if they take place in-person. If they are online they will be recorded using the ‘record’ function on Zoom.

You will be asked for your consent to be recorded before the interview/focus group begins. The audio recordings made during this study will only be used for analysis. They will not be used in any other way without your consent, and no one outside of this project will have access to the original recordings.

Do I have to take part?

No. Taking part is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part if you do not wish to. You can change your mind and stop taking part at any time without giving an explanation or reason. You can choose not to answer any question or refuse to undertake any task asked of you, even after the study starts.

How long will it take?

An interview will take about 60 – 90 minutes. A focus group will last about 60 – 90 minutes.

Are there any disadvantages to taking part?

During the interview/focus group, you will be asked about topics related to sexual and gender-based violence. This may make you feel upset or distressed during or after the interview/focus group, and it may reawaken or ‘trigger’ past traumatic memories. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to, and you can stop the interview at any point – you don’t have to explain why. Support is available during and after the interview.

What do I do if I feel distressed?

If you feel upset or distressed at any stage, please let the researcher know. There will be a specialist support provider available during the interview/focus group to provide emotional support, should you require it.

After the interview/focus group, the researcher will conduct a short debrief with you, and you will be given information about organisations offering free support immediately after the interview or focus group.

The researcher will 'check in' with you a few days after the interview/focus group to ask how you are doing. If you need further support after the interview/focus group please let the researcher know, so she can signpost you to support from a specialist provider, if you wish.

Are there any advantages of taking part?

By taking part in this project, you will have the opportunity to have your voice heard. The information you share with the researcher will help further our understanding of sexual and gender-based violence in HE and will contribute to how policies and practices are developed in the future to improve how we address the issue in a way that is more survivor focused.

Consent and confidentiality

We understand consent as an ongoing process therefore you will be asked for your consent at different stages of the research project; you can change your mind about giving your consent at any point and you do not have to give a reason.

If you decide to take part, you will be asked to read and sign a separate consent form. The consent form will describe how everything you share with us will remain confidential and your identity will be kept anonymous. If you choose to take part in a focus group, your identity will be known by the other people in the focus group, but you do not have to share your real name or workplace (where applicable).

Information that could be used to identify you, another participant, where you work, or your institution, will be changed and anonymised in any reports or papers available in the public domain, to protect your identity and to ensure your safety.

There are a limited set of circumstances in which we may have to break confidentiality. These are connected to issues of extreme risk and safeguarding, as described below. We will discuss these with you before the interview/focus group.

Safeguarding concerns

If you share information with us that indicates that you are a risk to yourself, that a person with care or support needs is at risk, or which indicates that you are at extreme risk without any support or assistance in place, the researcher has a responsibility to disclose this information to the relevant safeguarding authority or support agency, in the locality in which the interview/focus group is taking place. This will only happen after we have discussed everything with you. This is the only circumstance in which your confidentiality will be broken.

What will happen to my data?

What you tell us during the interview/focus group will be transcribed (written down) in an anonymised format, so that the researchers can carry out analysis. If you provide any personally identifiable information, it will be treated confidentially and in accordance with the University of Westminster's ethical guidelines.

After the study has finished, you can withdraw your data up until 30 days and you do not need to explain why.

This research is being conducted in accordance with the University of Westminster Ethics Code. All data will be securely stored and managed in accordance with the Data Protection Regulation 2018 and the General Data Protection Act 2018.

You will not be personally identifiable in any reports that are written for this study. What you tell us may be shared with other researchers working on the project or with transcribers, but before the responses are shared all identifying details will be removed.

Your anonymised data may be used for future research and may be analysed a second time. This future research may be unrelated to this study and could be conducted by other researchers not connected to this project.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

The data you share during this project will be used to push for institutional change and to build new, decolonised understandings of SGBV in HE. This new learning will be communicated in different formats including journal articles, accessible open-access reports and summaries.

We also aim to develop a 'toolkit' to address SGBV within academic institutions globally. This toolkit will consist of policy recommendations, training materials, guidance and ideas for campaign strategies. This toolkit will be translated into different languages and will be available for free to anyone who would like to use it via the project website.

Ethics and risks

This study has received full ethical clearance from the University of Westminster ethical review board (ref: ETH2122-3121). It is informed by the Survivors' Charter for the involvement of people with lived experience of abuse, and the principles of ethical interviewing of survivors. It has been fully risk assessed to ensure the wellbeing and safety of everyone that participates in the study as far as possible.

Who is funding this project?

UKRI

Please contact the research team if you have any questions about this research

Dr Adrija Dey (deya1@westminster.ac.uk) or Dr Jessica Wild (j.wild@westminster.ac.uk)

Address: University of Westminster, School of Social Sciences, 115 New Cavendish Street, London, W1W 6UW

What if something goes wrong?

If you would like to make a complaint about this project please contact:
Professor Dibyesh Anand (Head of School of Social Sciences): D.Anand@westminster.ac.uk

If you would like to take part in this study, please complete the sign-up form by following [this link](#), if you have not already done so.

Thank you for reading this information and for your interest in the project.