

Ending Gender-Based Violence at Workplaces: A Literature Review on Preventive and Responsive Measures within Organisations

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SUMMARY

Gender-based violence (GBV) constitutes a significant contemporary challenge for organisations, given its multifaceted nature and widespread impact on women's personal and professional spheres. By adopting a systematic literature review methodology, the paper aims at offering an overview of measures, initiatives and policies addressing GBV and implemented by organisations. Five main clusters of measures against GBV are detected, addressing training programs, internal corporate support measures, external public policies and bodies, the role of civil society organisations and communication. Therefore, we propose a two-by-two interpretive framework including a space (internal/external to the organisation) and a time dimensions (preventive/responsive), which could serve academic and practical efforts. We intend to contribute to current literature on GBV by enriching the theoretical background with insights from organisational behaviour and management theories. The paper also provides practitioners with a set of measures against GBV within organisations, adaptable and implementable to different contexts.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) constitutes a significant contemporary challenge for organisations, given its multifaceted nature and widespread impact on diverse demographic groups across sectors. It is attested that more than one in five employed people (almost 23 per cent) have experienced violence and harassment at work at least once in their careers (International Labour Organisation and Lloyd's Register Foundation, 2022). Nevertheless, women are twice as likely as men to report experiences of unwanted sexual advances, physical contact or other forms of GBV at work (Aeberhard-Hodges and McFerran, 2017; UN Women and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2023).

From their part, scholars have been denouncing GBV and its consequences, while also promoting measures to enhance gender equality within organisations. It is widely acknowledged that psychological, physical, economic and symbolic forms of violence negatively impact on employees' productivity, presence and risk, thus provoking losses of earnings for involved organisations (Tremblay, Gendron and Malsch, 2016; Van Laer, Verbruggen and Janssens, 2019). These organisational drawbacks add up to personal negative ones in terms of loss of self-confidence and well-being, which may impair victims' conditions in the long term.

Given the relevance of the issue, organisations have started implementing measures, policies and tools in favour of GBV victims and their recovery. Nowadays, it is not uncommon to see dedicated figures charged with diversity management and effectively supporting managerial leadership on the topic (Nkomo *et al.*, 2019; Janssens and Zanoni, 2021). However, these measures are often meant to formalise persistent sexual discrimination practices and hinder lawsuits from GBV victims. As a consequence, organisations risk to become places where economic, social and job inequalities are crystallised and exacerbated (Benschop, 2021).

Therefore, we underline the existing gap between theory and practice, academia and organisations, formal measures and practices pertaining to GBV. The present paper is willing to explore in depth the existing dynamics and measures supportive of GBV victims within organisations. We performed a literature review to deeply understand what policies and tools organisations have at their disposal and implement against GBV. Therefore, with our paper we aim to address preventive and responsive measures against GBV within organisations.

The paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, we will firstly provide a literature review on extant policies and laws to contrast GBV in organisations at international and European levels, as well as their impacts on organisational outputs. Then, in Section 3 we will briefly outline the research gap we wish to address, while the methodology used to conduct our literature review will be included in Section 4. We will then present the results of our research and we outline the main contributions to academic literature and business practice, respectively in Sections 5 and 6, to conclude with a summary of our study, its main limitations and avenues for future research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 The international scenario

The United Nations' Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (CEDAW) defines discrimination against women as *"any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."* Among the identified specific forms of GBV the CEDAW includes sexual coercion, gender-based workplace discrimination, stigmatisation and social exclusion, sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse (United Nations, 1979).

Afterwards, the CEDAW implementation was importantly fostered by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 and its Platform for Action (BPfA), which served as grounding base for subsequent commitments, documents and policy approaches addressing gender-based inequalities. Since then, other international conventions, such as the ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation), ILO Maternity Protection and ILO Domestic Workers Conventions were concluded to prevent and protect against workplace violence (EFFAT, 2019).

At the European level, despite important norms released since the 1990s (Cotroneo, Brown and Karwot, 2021) the Directive 2002/73/EC38 on the implementation of the equal treatment principle on access to employment, vocational training, promotion and working conditions for men and women was the first to define sexual harassment as *“any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment”* (EFFAT, 2019).

A milestone was later reached in 2011 with the signature of the Council of Europe Istanbul convention, i.e. the most advanced protection system against female violence at international level (De Vido, 2017). Indeed, the convention defines and criminalises various forms of violence against women, including physical, sexual and psychological violence, stalking, sexual harassment, female genital mutilation, forced marriage, abortion and sterilisation. Moreover, the document requires the implementation of comprehensive and coordinated comprehensive policies among national and governmental entities involved in prevention, prosecution and protection activities.

Nevertheless, the above-mentioned international instruments did not specifically address the situation of women at work. Thus, the recent 2019 ILO Convention on the elimination of violence and harassment at workplaces specifically forecast new tools and measures to eliminate mechanisms allowing the persistence of violence within job contexts (International Labour Organisation, 2019).

2.2 Gender-based violence and workplace impacts

Although violence can target all workers, international reports confirm that the female workforce is the most affected by sexual harassment practices (Gender, Equality and Diversity and ILOAIDS Branch, Conditions of Work and Equality Department at ILO, n.d). In addition, specific groups of women such as the young, poor, indigenous or belonging to ethnic minorities, affected by disabilities, migrant or with different sexual orientations are likely to suffer from discrimination on the workplace (Stern, der Heijden and Dunkle, 2020).

The way and the frequency of such episodes can greatly vary among job fields. For instance, in sectors traditionally distinguished by a masculine organisational culture, such as the military one, discrimination and violence are more recurrent due to gendered opinions of competencies, which may reinforce stereotypical perceptions about women (Mavin, Grandy and Williams, 2014; Bloksgaard, Fekjær and Moberg, 2020). In line with the social role theory, this may occur as traditional gender roles affect male and female job roles expectations. As women cover more managerial or non-traditional job positions, they violate gender stereotypes within workplaces and undermine consolidated power roles (Becker and Wagner, 2008; McLaughlin, Uggen and Blackstone, 2012). Violence is almost considered the norm in contexts of long-standing tolerance of sexual harassment practices for both sexes, too, such as in the tourism and hospitality sectors (Kensbock *et al.*, 2015; Hennekam and Bennett, 2017).

UN Women (2011) observes that, whether violence occurs within the job context or outside of it, the detrimental effects of GBV at workplaces are substantial and constitute costs to both victims and employers alike. Sexual harassment episodes can end up in large monetary costs for employers, particularly in terms of medical care and counselling, case settlement, reputation and economic losses of productivity. GBV issues are especially relevant to the economic growth and reputation of organisations, given the wide benefits of more gender equal workplaces outlined by academic literature (Strenio, 2020). Only to mention some advantages, gender balance at work is beneficial to

risk management and open innovation practices within organisations, while also improving overall profits and corporate social responsibility aspects (Branicki *et al.*, 2023). Importantly, victims tend to suffer from significant health, psychological, economic and career costs, as they usually take more days off or reduce their working hours due to impairments related to their well-being, dignity and integrity (McDonald, 2011; Weatherall, 2019).

Because of its heavier impact on women, GBV may worsen pre-existing gender gaps at the workplace, therefore reinforcing inequalities both in the professional and social spheres (UN Women, 2011). According to feminist theories, power asymmetries are at the core of sexual harassment practices, serving as equaliser against women holding power positions and conceived as non-fitting some job tasks due to stereotyped gender roles in societal and work contexts (McLaughlin, Uggen and Blackstone, 2012). Particularly, the main impacts of GBV can be seen on:

- Pay and career progression: GBV victims may reduce their working hours or quit their jobs, risking prolonged periods of unemployment or withdrawal from the workforce. Sexual harassment may also discourage applications for higher-level positions that are better-paying or more visible (Van Laer, Verbruggen and Janssens, 2019).
- Occupational segregation: because of gender roles and stereotypes, as well as of traditional organisational practices, workplaces dominated by one gender may lead to heightened instances of violence. This may contribute to perpetuate existing patterns of gender inequalities in job tasks and roles, while also contributing to the crystallisation of pay gaps and gender-based competencies stereotypes (Yamak *et al.*, 2015; Wright, 2019).

Overall, in line with social identity theory, traditional gender roles and established norms shape workplace ecosystems and organisational cultures, which affect how people consider female workers and their job positions (Becker and Wagner, 2008). Therefore, male-dominated work environments could be more tolerant to GBV, especially when women do not conform to traditional social roles expectations.

Despite the negative impacts that GBV has on women's job opportunities, episodes of discrimination and violence are widely under-reported by victims (Gómez-González *et al.*, 2022). A survey conducted in the United Kingdom found that almost 79% of the targets of sexual harassment at workplaces do not report these episodes (TUC, 2016). Some scholars also report that GBV prevalence based on health systems data or on police reports may be underestimated between 11- and 128-fold, depending on the region and type of reporting (Palermo, Bleck and Peterman, 2013). On the one hand, this is due to the normalisation and acceptance of sexual harassment practices to the benefit of career progression opportunities, as it is commonplace especially in certain job sectors (as mentioned above). On the other hand, victims tend to minimise their violence experiences as they usually fear reprisals and stereotyping from co-workers, supervisors, family members or employers, also given the lack of effective reporting mechanisms and the evidence challenges that such episodes may imply (Kensbock *et al.*, 2015).

Given this, scenario, several scholars acknowledge the pivotal role that organisations assume in creating and maintaining social inequalities (Amis *et al.*, 2018; Bapuji, Ertug and Shaw, 2020). Moreover, it is reported that tolerance of violence also depends on cultural values (Baines and Cunningham, 2011; Gbandi, Korem and Zinsou-Klassou, 2023). Nevertheless, it is important to remark that discriminatory practices against women should never either be accepted or tolerated (Shoultz *et al.*, 2015).

3. RESEARCH GAP

A consistent body of academic literature exists on GBV and its main effects on the workplace. While most of the studies address the issue within companies, others focus on non-governmental organisations dynamics, trade unions or religious organisations (Wright, 2019; Vveinhardt, Deikus and Jezerské, 2021). Moreover, while several studies are conducted in developed States, programs

and initiatives in States under development are also widely covered (Dwivedi and Saxena, 2015; Asencios-Gonzalez *et al.*, 2021).

Organisations need to urgently address the GBV issue within their scope of action, as they cannot anymore ignore that. Several organisations have adopted gender equality measures, dedicated structures and specialised personnel meant to prevent and/or put a remedy to discriminatory practices and violent actions impacting mostly on the female portion of the workforce over the last years.

As a consequence, academic papers covering case studies of programs, policies and good practices against GBV at worldwide level have proliferated. However, these examples are usually implemented in a locally circumscribed context or within single companies, and their geographical comparison to other enterprises or locations may be hindered by cultural, economic, religious and other differences (e.g. Dwivedi and Saxena, 2015; Stern *et al.*, 2018).

Additionally, scholars have often remarked the difference between posturing and everyday working lives pertaining to diversity acceptance (Nkomo *et al.*, 2019). That is to say, the coincidence between theory and practice, claims and actual support *ex ante* and *ex post* to potential victims of harassment episodes is often missing (Forsdike and Fullagar, 2021).

While direct verification of the effective implementation of measures by organisations to prevent discriminatory practices and GBV may be unfeasible, it remains viable to conduct a survey on the presence of successful initiatives and measures at global level. Such an approach may enable both public and private entities to identify and learn from effective strategies against GBV and sexual harassment that have been implemented in various locales. These entities may then adapt and replicate these successful practices within diverse settings and contexts. This undertaking is particularly pertinent given the critical juncture at which diversity management and organizational studies currently stand, characterised by a rapidly evolving landscape marked by hate crimes, racial violence, sexual harassment and gender offenses, which are underscored by pronounced and multiple fault lines at social and cultural levels (Nkomo *et al.*, 2019).

Given the fragmentation of the current scenario, our goal is answering to the research question of how organisations act in preventing and combating GBV and what measures they implement to address GBV and sexual harassment. On these bases, we aim to shed light on the nature of the academic literature pertaining to the role of organisations in preventing and combating GBV. Moreover, we intend to provide an overview of programs, policies and measures against GBV implemented by diverse types of organisations globally. Our literature review intends to report both existing research on organisational measures against GBV, as well as to present the dynamic evolution of the field, at the crossroad between organisation, management and gender studies. Consequently, this investigation contributes to a deeper comprehension of the multifaceted organisational dynamics pertaining to GBV and the strategies meant to address it, charting the path for more effective and inclusive interventions.

As a consequence, we are willing to produce a taxonomy collecting a wide range of policies and solutions to address these issues, while also promoting the adoption of a thorough perspective through a comprehensive approach to current literature (Pullen *et al.*, 2019).

4. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

To address our research question, this investigation adopted a systematic literature review methodology, distinguished by its rigorous and methodical approach to synthesising existing scholarly discourse. As delineated by Tranfield, Denyer and Smart (2003), a systematic literature review methodology adheres to precise protocols, transparent and reproducible procedures, to critically appraise extant literature. This methodology ensures the minimisation of researchers' bias, thereby enhancing the reliability and validity of the review's findings, and facilitating a comprehensive synthesis of research outcomes. Furthermore, it supports comprehensive identification of lacunae within the current academic landscape, offering a robust grounding base

upon which future research can be constructed. As a matter of fact, the systematic literature review is a suitable approach to understand the state of the art on the topic in academic research, to identify the lacunae existing in current literature on gender-based violence. In line with the objectives of gender studies, this approach would contribute to deepen the sociocultural consequences of sexual categorisations and how these affect men and women's everyday lives and practices. As everyday men-women relationships within workplaces are variegated, ranging from reverence to violence, we believe that a systematic literature review methodology aligns with the goals of gender studies in providing a better understanding of the meanings and the implications of sex in the social ecosystem, particularly within workplaces (Brown and Moorer, 2015).

The scope of our literature review was intentionally limited to scholarly works accessible in full text and published in English. This encompassed a broad spectrum of academic outputs, including journal articles, reviews, and book chapters within the domains of business, management, accounting, and economics.

In the first stage, we conducted a keyword search within the databases of Web of Science and Scopus to identify relevant literature on GBV within organisations. Our string query included terms central to our research focus - namely, '*gender-based violence*', '*mobbing*', and '*organisations*' - alongside their synonyms such as '*firms*' or '*companies*'. To further refine the scope of our inquiry in relation to gender, keywords such as '*women*' and '*female*' were included.

Acknowledging the significance of incorporating a diverse array of perspectives and evidentiary sources, the literature identification process was supplemented by a citation approach methodology. This entailed the inclusion of selected reports from additional sources, such as international entities, trade unions and EU bodies. The integration of these reports aimed to enrich the review with a more expansive array of insights and recommendations, thereby providing a holistic overview of organisational endeavours to combat GBV.

As for the timeframe, we decided to include papers from the year 2011, corresponding to the signature of the Istanbul Convention. This year was chosen to include the most contemporary evolutions and strategies among organisational responses to GBV, reflecting the current research trends in this critical domain.

In the below diagram, we present the systematic literature review steps (Figure 1).

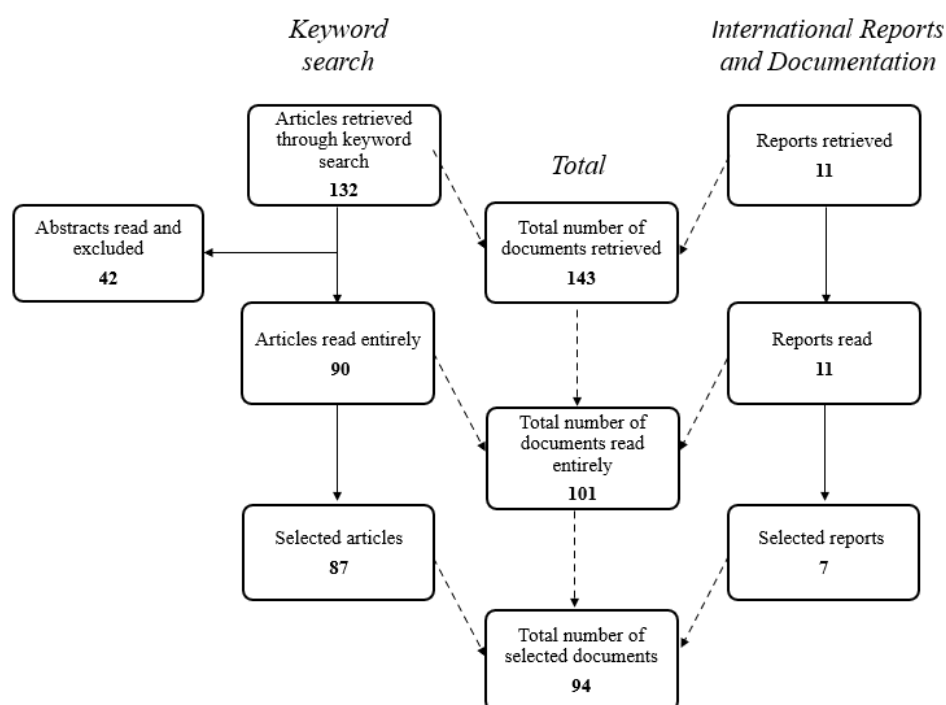


Figure 1. Steps undertaken for the systematic literature review. Source: authors' elaboration.

5. MAIN FINDINGS

In total, we retrieved 143 documents, among which 11 international reports realised by political bodies, NGOs or other international entities. After separately screening all papers' abstracts, we agreed on reading 101 documents (90 articles and 11 international reports) for the subsequent stage. In the end, we decided to include only 7 reports. While reading the documents, attention was focused on the measures and programs undertaken by organisations to effectively address GBV. After separately reading all the 90 papers, we selected only 87 of them. In the end, 94 documents were included in the analysis.

First of all, as for the timeframe of the screened articles for the literature review, we underline the contemporaneity of the subject matter, substantiated by a slight increase in the volume of scholarly publications in the most recent years.

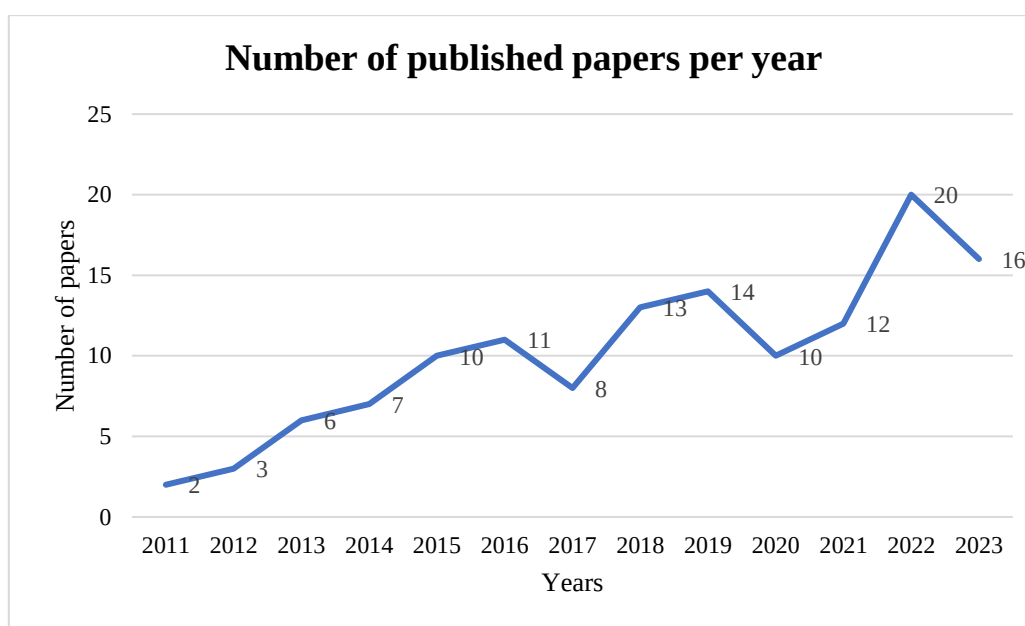


Figure 2. Number of papers retrieved per year. Source: authors' elaboration.

Regarding the content of the documents selected for the analysis, a wide variety of measures addressing GBV was detected. Therefore, we tried to cluster them within macro categories of identification, to convey a wider and more immediate perspective of identification.

5.1 Training and capacity building initiatives

The majority of the studies included in the literature review covers specific training programs, enacted at both the national/regional level or limited to the organisational one, meant to educate participants on sexual harassment prevention (Satrya *et al.*, 2017). These can be both continuative long-term programs or short-term and intensive, and may vary a lot in terms of their real effectiveness. The papers proposing this kind of capacity building measures target different social groups, by also including women with disabilities, companies' employees or couples in diverse geographical areas (Erdoğan, Genç and Aydın, 2019; Stern, der Heijden and Dunkle, 2020). To these add specific education programs for managerial figures (Dobbin and Kalev, 2020) or meant for civil society as a whole (Stern *et al.*, 2018), as well as bystander training which gives concrete tools to recognise and intervene in case of potentially harmful situations (Glenn *et al.*, 2018).

Peculiarly, one of the studies retrieved through our keyword search addressed GBV from a different standpoint, by considering intra-gender micro violence (Mavin, Grandy and Williams, 2014). Especially among women elite leaders, a toxic patriarchal environment may engender female misogyny and intragender competitiveness. In fact, diverse papers underline the importance of organisations not only in tackling GBV, but also in perpetuating social marginalisation and multiple forms of violence (Kagher, Otaye-Ebede and Metcalfe, 2021). Therefore, we underline the importance of awareness-raising activities on gender differences among men and women and on the female embodiment of violent experiences, which are key to cope with everyday working lives of women on the job place.

In combination with awareness-raising, dissuasion activities are also indicated as relevant to effectively address some types of GBV as mobbing (Erdiş, Genç and Aydınli, 2019). Mobbing is often experienced by working women and is highly impactful on female personal and family lives. Therefore, workplace repercussions are likely and common, such as stress burnout. Both contextual factors at the organisational level and socio-cultural identities could also contribute (Trujillo Flores, Rivas Tovar and Lámbarry Vilchis, 2014; Góralewska-Słońska, 2019). Therefore, working on a more inclusive organisational culture and preventing situational conflicts through comprehensive activities can be highly beneficial to prevention of mobbing situations.

5.2 Support measures against domestic and intimate partner violence

A non-negligible number of papers covers initiatives against domestic violence and intimate partner violence (IPV), whose tolerance widely differs across countries (Katz, Lopez and LaVan, 2017). Although these actions refer to physical, psychological and emotional abuses occurring at different settings than job places themselves, scholars focus on the negative repercussions that these may have on workforce well-being and companies' performance overall (Chan-Serafin *et al.* 2022). For instance, some scholars mention that work quality, productivity and female withdrawal rate from the job place may be heavily affected by negative episodes of this kind. Therefore, it is imperative to acknowledge that the domestic and job places are not dichotomous, but intertwined, and that organisations have a moral and political responsibility with respect to societal problems and (Wilcox *et al.*, 2020).

As for the potential measures of support to victims, scholars report that it is necessary for organisations to acknowledge and implement specific measures ranging from paid leave to additional financial resources and flexible working hours (Jeremiah, Quinn and Alexis, 2018). However, these are far from homogeneously implemented across organisations and sectors, as bigger and more profitable organisations, those with a larger percentage of women managers and employee consultation appear to be more sensitive to IPV and, broadly speaking, GBV issues (Farhall, Quek and McVey, 2022; Branicki *et al.*, 2023).

To effectively address GBV, many companies have implemented formal mechanisms of complaint and reporting of violations, thus standing as responding measures enacted *ex post*. These formal reporting methods differ from other reactive measures such as ombuds offices (Dobbin and Kalev, 2020). The latter ones, indeed, remain neutral, informal and truly confidential in front of employees, thus entirely bypassing legalistic hearings. Additionally, several firms nowadays have started to offer additional security or screening services of phone calls.

5.3 Public policies and activism

Public policies are also among the most quoted measures across papers. Particularly, these are multifaceted and may be implemented within organisations, i.e. internally, or imposed from an external institution with a political or social role (Ali and Syed, 2016; Wright, 2019). An important related point concerns accountability, which often comes under the form of activism (Wilcox *et al.*,

2020). Grassroots and systemic activism engage the collective body on women's situation, give them support and play an advocacy role for specific policy changes in front of relevant bodies.

A new frontier also consists in digital activism, which is indicated as an effective tool to overcome GBV and female inequalities in a concrete and relevant manner (Lafuente, 2023). As a matter of fact, some papers indicate that the shift to technological solutions and digital devices could enhance women safety in terms of IPV and stalking prevention, within and outside workplace borders (Arvate *et al.*, 2022). In a broader sense they can support addressing gender stereotyping and violence at work, both traditional and psychological one.

5.4 Civil society organisations and other bodies' support

The role of trade unions emerges as valuable support to coordinate efforts and promote the implementation of common policies against GBV across organisations (Aeberhard-Hodges and McFerran, 2017). In addition, they can play a relevant role in breaking traditional patterns of job segregation for women and bringing about relevant issues in front of responsible institutions (Wright, 2019). However, adequate support from the managerial leadership is indicated as a prerequisite to foster the growth of a sustainable, open culture of mutual respect and gender equality within organisations (Pullen *et al.*, 2019).

Considering a public perspective, a minority of the examined papers also addresses different types of organisations, such as institutions and public order forces, by also reporting some innovative forms of support provided to women and meant to reduce GBV (Arvate *et al.*, 2022). These may act at the national level, such as the Brazilian structural advocacy organisations, or even at the supranational level, as in the case of the bodies and operators of the United Nations (Jeremiah, Quinn and Alexis, 2018; Chaney, 2022). Thanks to special institutional mandates, they can effectively intervene to protect women or relieve them from the burden of violence *a posteriori*.

In addition, scholars also remark the importance of female associations and collective actions allowing women to raise their voices and protect themselves from discriminatory practices to address GBV. In fact, both direct action and professional behaviour on the workplace constitute responding practices that may positively contribute to female emancipation and acknowledgment of their work (Hiramatsu, 2021; Tapias Torrado, 2022).

5.5 Feminist collective actions and the communication sphere

Given the multifaceted nature of the GBV issue, some papers mention actions addressing the semantic and meaning spheres of violence such as verbal abuse, which is a very common practice across sectors. As a matter of fact, women try to reshape the existing gendered ambiguities and stereotyped practices, aimed at female degradation, through actions of micro politics and resistance within organisations (Karazi-Presler, 2018; Alvinus and Holmberg, 2019). Therefore, they directly act on the masculine cultural background inherent in some organisations, such as the military.

Lastly, a transversal issue to consider is the role of communication and advertising. Among these, innovative practices to fight against GBV include storytelling and solidarity actions within feminist organisations (Weatherall, 2019; Cullen and Murphy, 2020). Additionally, public service advertising could serve a social sensitisation purpose against GBV, although female victims may not be pleased by those forms of communication (West, 2013). Conversely, controversial and offensive advertising violating gender violence taboos is likely to reinforce stereotypical images of female submission (Gurrieri, Brace-Govan and Cherrier, 2016). Overall, organisations should pay high attention to how they communicate their actions against GBV internally and externally, by adopting a wider corporate social responsibility perspective that takes into consideration a broad array of stakeholders (Branicki *et al.*, 2023).

6. DISCUSSION AND CONTRIBUTION

Thanks to our review of the literature, we aim at adopting a fruitful scholarly and managerial perspective on GBV. Scholars report the need for comprehensive and organic practices against GBV within organisations, as the issue needs to be confronted from several perspectives to be effectively tackled (Wilcox *et al.*, 2020). However, comprehensively addressing GBV requires an adequate mix of practical support from public and private institutions, as well as of preventive and responsive measures working for the re-education of the perpetrators and the rehabilitation of the victims. This appears as a viable path towards a corporate sustainability approach that includes the social, economic and environmental dimensions to the benefit of overall society.

Consequently, along with our literature review we aim at proposing the following interpretive framework (Table 1).

SPACE DIMENSION	TIME DIMENSION	
	PREVENTIVE (ex ante)	RESPONSIVE (ex post)
	INTERNAL	Training and capacity building activities Communication and advertising Support services to victims: monetary, time flexibility etc. Formal mechanisms of complaint and reporting
	EXTERNAL	Education programs Public policies Communication Advocacy Activism Public policies Feminist collective actions

Table 1. the time (preventive/responsive) e space dimensions. Source: authors' elaboration.

The present framework includes a time and a spatial dimension, offering a useful taxonomy to both theory and practice. Indeed, it allows for constant updating and comparison over time, thus serving both as reference framework to guide researchers' investigations and to practitioners who are willing to better understand, adapt and implement available measures addressing GBV within organisations. It is possible to notice that some measures are inserted in more than one table field, as they can address both preventive and responsive purposes and serve as internal tool addressing GBV or conducted by other entities external to the organisation.

6.1 Theoretical implications

The exploration of measures undertaken by organisations to combat GBV reveals significant theoretical and empirical insights, necessitating a nuanced understanding of the intersection between organisational practices and gender dynamics.

From a theoretical standpoint, the integration of organisational culture and theories on workplace environments into the discourse on GBV illuminates how organisational norms, values, and beliefs significantly influence the reporting of such issues (Hennekam and Bennett, 2017). This perspective enriches traditional GBV theories by highlighting the role of corporate dynamics in perpetuating or mitigating violence, thus advocating for theoretical advancements that consider organisational culture as a pivotal element in addressing GBV.

Moreover, the review underscores the critical importance of adopting an intersectional lens in examining organisational measures against GBV (Wilcox *et al.*, 2020). By acknowledging the diverse experiences of violence across gender identities, races, ethnicities, and other social categories, this

review calls for a more inclusive theoretical background that accounts for the multifaceted nature of GBV within organisational settings, by also including feminist and non-traditional perspectives (Nkomo et al., 2019; Cullen and Murphy, 2020).

6.2 Managerial implications

Empirically, the review identifies some gaps on the implementation of organisational measures against GBV. Firstly, organisations should develop comprehensive GBV policies that clearly define the boundaries of unacceptable conduct, including sexual harassment, discrimination and any form of violence, along with the specific procedures for reporting actions and side protocols.

As our results demonstrate, a complementary role is played by regular training and capacity building programs, meant to equip employees, particularly women, with knowledge and skills to acknowledge and respond to GBV issues (Satrya *et al.*, 2017). Such programs should also aim at removing or preventing stereotypes and biases against the female workforce, as they perpetuate gender-based discrimination and other subtle violence forms. Additionally, organisations should provide accessible support systems for victims of GBV, including counselling services, legal assistance and flexible work arrangements, ensuring the availability of these resources and employees' awareness. Indeed, a supportive workplace environment is beneficial to both personal recovery and job outcomes overall. The adoption and implementation of GBV within organizations, however, necessitates a proactive and informed approach to foster a safe and inclusive work environment. Therefore, leadership commitment to gender equality and zero tolerance for GBV is crucial to drive real cultural change. On the one hand, managers play a determinant role in ensuring corporate policies against discrimination and violence against women are communicated and consistently enforced, in order to tackle GBV issues thoroughly and effectively from both the preventive and responsive standpoints. On the other, managers should encourage participation in capacity building initiatives for women and training programs to all employees, to cultivate a culture of respect and empathy within organisations. Enhancing inclusive behaviours and actively challenging discriminatory practices contributes to an organisational positive work environment that respects and values each individual.

Lastly, regular internal monitoring and evaluation of GBV measures are suggested, to assess the effectiveness of initiatives and possibly introduce data-driven adjustments. Ongoing evaluations can support continuous improvement and ensure that the organization remains responsive to the needs of its employees.

6.3 Policy implications

The results of our literature review highlight the key intervention role of policymakers and other public entities in preventing and addressing GBV.

First, public institutions can assume important roles in the implementation of policies stimulating firms to act against GBV, both before and after violence episodes. Thanks to policy measures and incentives, they may incentivise firms to promote training and capacity building initiatives aimed at preventing GBV. Additionally, they can favour the establishment of dedicated bodies or offices offering recovery to GBV victims, namely *ex post* support. Importantly, policy actors can both stimulate measures internal to firms or take action independently from them, thereby offering public services addressing GBV which are available to communities.

Second, our literature review findings highlight the need for constant external monitoring mechanisms, aimed at incentivising firms' supervision and constant update of internal measures addressing gender equality (Glenn *et al.*, 2018). Regulatory norms may tackle barriers to career progression and equal pay between male and female employees, while also addressing the occupational segregation within firms' boundaries.

Third, the results point out the need for wider public collaboration with key stakeholders, such as trade unions, feminist associations, civil society or pressure groups. Cooperative efforts addressing

both the preventive and the responsive dimensions could be determinant to more effective and decisive measures against GBV within organisations. The involvement of different categories of stakeholders could contribute to reinforce the effectiveness of communication against GBV, too. This could also allow policymakers to broaden their scope of action, thus relying on multiple digital channels, target audiences and forms of communication.

Lastly, on the basis of our review we suggest public entities to dare funding innovative initiatives aimed at preventing or responding to GBV. Provided the availability of resources, we encourage policymakers to craft and implement new programs, experimentations and initiatives to give support to GBV victims and rehabilitate their perpetrators. This would allow for the trial, exchange and diffusion of best practices against GBV across countries and at different administrative levels.

7. CONCLUSION

To sum up, the literature review demonstrates the growing significance of the GBV issue within organisations, underscored by the growth of publications in the fields of management, economics and accounting over the last years. Moreover, results show that actions undertaken by organisations are variegated and target a wide array of working and social actors. In addition, they can be both internally self-handled by organisations and externally promoted by political institutions, supranational bodies or civil society actors such as NGOs (Korolczuk, 2013; Arvate *et al.*, 2022). We classify the measures implemented as addressing preventive objectives or standing as responsive actions, constituting ex post reactions to negative episodes of sexual harassment. Given this overview, we propose a framework for interpretation useful to research and practice, resulting from the combination of a contextual spatial dimension (internal/external to the organisation) and one pertaining to the timeframe of the measures under examination (preventive/responsive).

Although it is clear that organisations implement several measures to address GBV against women, it is necessary to understand which are the available options that may be adapted to the reference context. With our framework proposal, we hope to contribute to clarify policies goals and dimensions to consider to effectively address GBV within organisations of different types.

As a final remark, we underline that the adoption of a multi-perspective approach to reveal hidden differences and promote collaborative and comprehensive (not reductionist) thinking shows promising avenues to tackling GBV within organisations (Pullen *et al.*, 2019). Targeted approaches do not only address the challenges posed by GBV, but also constitute the grounds for more inclusive and dynamic workplaces. By adopting gender-sensitive strategies, organisations can foster a culture of inclusiveness and commitment to gender equality among employees, to the benefit of innovativeness and long-term growth (Timmerman and Bajema, 2000).

Overall, the responsibility for change towards higher gender equality stands not only with companies, but also within civil society organisations, people and actors who have concrete chances to bring about a new era in diversity management (Benschop, 2021; Jannssen and Zanoni, 2021).

7.1 Limitations and avenues for future research

The present paper is not without limitations. Despite the attention posed in the inclusion of international reports and non-academic literature, we may have inadvertently omitted insights from other organisational documents, policy statements and non-academic publications that could offer additional perspectives or innovative approaches. The primary examination of direct organisational measures to combat gender-based violence might overlook broader systemic, societal, or policy-level interventions that indirectly impact organisational practices, suggesting future research could benefit from a more holistic point of view.

As for the timeframe, given the rapidly evolving discourse on GBV and organisational responses, this review provides an overview up to the point of writing, meaning emerging trends and novel

organisational practices developed post-analysis may not be reflected. Moreover, the variability in definitions and measures of GBV vary across studies, complicating cross-study comparisons and synthesis of findings due to the lack of standardized definitions and metrics.

Furthermore, the potential for publication bias, where studies reporting significant findings or successful interventions are more likely to be published than those with null or negative results, could divert the comprehensiveness of the review *a priori*. Addressing these limitations by expanding the scope of literature and exploring systemic factors influencing organisational practices could provide deeper insights into the effectiveness and sustainability of measures against GBV in the organisational context.

While the retrieved measures represent significant moves forward towards addressing GBV, there is a pressing need for continuous research to enhance their effectiveness. Therefore, we leave to further research the exploration of the effectiveness of these preventive and responsive measures against GBV within organisations across countries, cultures, sectors and different job levels. In addition, scholars could deepen the exploration of some innovative approaches to prevention and ex post support to GBV, also through on-the-field research efforts conducted in cooperation with organisations themselves.

We also encourage further research on the intersectionality of GBV, exploring how factors such as race, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation impact individuals' experiences of GBV and their access to support. Lastly, we warmly recommend further investigation on the role of the male part of the population in GBV prevention as strategic to promoting gender equality and effectively tackle GBV.

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