

The Infrastructures of Complaint at EUR: Making sexual harassment public

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The Erasmus logo, featuring the word "Erasmus" in a stylized, cursive script.

Abstract

Sexual harassment in universities is a widespread issue. Universities have responded to the issue of sexual harassment by putting in place formalised reporting processes through which victims are able to seek help. However, current complaint procedures at Dutch universities have been found able to worsen existing inequalities. The concept infrastructures of complaint was used to refer to the procedures put in place by the EUR to deal with sexual harassment. This infrastructural approach was taken because these procedures can be viewed as infrastructure, for their main purpose is to invisibly keep things moving. This study used both interviews and document analysis in order to research how sexual harassment is made public by the infrastructures of complaint at the EUR. It was found that infrastructures of complaint was a lacking term, thus this term was changed to infrastructures of reporting and complaining. The main findings showed that these infrastructures make sexual harassment public through their annual reports by means of tables. This method of making sexual harassment public makes the issue of sexual harassment and the people behind it invisible. It also ensures that the infrastructures of reporting and complaining remain invisible, and because of this, the structures of the university will remain intact and the publication of sexual harassment will remain unchanged.

Key words: infrastructures of reporting and complaining, public, sexual harassment

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Introduction

At the beginning of 2022 Erasmus Magazine uncovered disturbing findings concerning sexual harassment at the Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR). It was found that two out of three students had experienced sexual harassment, of which almost half of the students indicated the harassment originating from people connected to the EUR (Sukmana & Ficheroux, 2022). Students rarely reported their experiences with sexual harassment to any complaints procedure put in place within the university. A possible explanation of this underreporting is that very few students are aware of how and where they can go to with their report of sexual harassment. One in three students who participated in the study were aware of how to find the confidential adviser network, only twelve percent knew where to report sexual harassment and merely seven percent knew where to file an official complaint (Sukmana & Ficheroux, 2022). Another noteworthy finding in this study was that 80 percent of the women who participated reported having experienced sexual harassment compared with 35 percent of men. This finding is reflected in society as it has been found that women experience sexual harassment much more often than men (Wood et al., 2018).

Sexual harassment in universities is a widespread issue (Klein & Martin, 2019; Ssali et al., 2020; Wood et al., 2018). The sexual harassment of women by men is a public issue, rather than a private trouble (Hoffmann, 1986). Private troubles are isolated events causing personal difficulties for individuals, but sexual harassment cannot be resolved by individual solutions, as sexual harassment is the consequence on individuals lives by the institutional arrangements in which individuals live. Sexual harassment is fundamentally an issue about visibility, for it commonly occurs in situations where the victim and the perpetrator are the only ones present (Karami et al., 2020). Accordingly, it has been difficult to battle sexual harassment because victims often feel a reluctance to report or make complaints in fear of

jeopardising their careers or suffering other negative consequences. Having encountered sexual harassment negatively influences one's life, victims of sexual harassment go through depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), shame, alcohol use, and disruptions of academic experiences (Wood et al., 2018).

Universities have responded to the issue of sexual harassment by putting in place formalised reporting processes through which victims are able to seek help (Ssali et al., 2020). But, despite these processes, victims rarely make use of the options universities provide for reporting sexual harassment. Current complaint procedures at Dutch universities have also been found not only ineffective in bringing about a cultural change, but also able to worsen existing inequalities (Essanhaji, 2022). This study uses the concept infrastructures of complaint to refer to the procedures put in place by the EUR to deal with sexual harassment. This infrastructural approach is taken because these procedures can be viewed as infrastructure, for their main purpose is to invisibly keep things moving, to support the bigger structures within the EUR, just like infrastructure "exists to support other economic or social activities, not as an end in itself" (Loenen, 2006, p. 18). Another aspect of infrastructures within organisations is how they are able to shape what type of information is visible or invisible, they have this ability through reporting systems and procedures (Almklov & Antonsen, 2014). This ability to make information visible can simultaneously make other important processes invisible. This aspect of infrastructures is central to this study, as the way in which the infrastructures of complaint make sexual harassment public can have implications that are able to make the processes behind the complaint of sexual harassment invisible together with the dominant structure in which it is able to prevail (Essanhaji, 2022). This is exactly what this study aims to investigate.

Problem statement

According to Phipps (2018) “there has been very little work that explores in depth how sexual harassment and violence is framed by the structures, cultures and practices of the neoliberal university” (p. 227). Essanhaji (2022) also calls for more research with a focus on experiences of the people who are a part of infrastructures of complaint in order to better understand how institutions work and how complaint procedures function within institutions. This study aims to add to this gap by investigating the infrastructures of complaint at the EUR and analysing how they make sexual harassment public. Consequently, the research question this study will attempt to answer is: “How do the infrastructures of complaint at the EUR make sexual harassment public?.” This approach of researching the infrastructures of complaint was specifically chosen in order to emphasise and understand how institutions, like universities, are a part of the issue of sexual harassment and are able to recreate the issue (Ahmed, 2021). This study can serve as an eye-opener to understand how sexual harassment does not merely originate with men, but within institutional contexts in which sexual harassment by men against women is made invisible (Sundaram & Jackson, 2018). With this understanding we are one step closer to fighting the issue of sexual harassment at many universities, but for this study specifically at the EUR.

Theoretical framework

Infrastructures and the duality of visibility

Before exploring how infrastructures of complaint are able to make the issue of sexual harassment public, it is important to have a clear understanding of the meaning of infrastructures. Star (1999) posits that the collective understanding of infrastructures is as systems of substrates, for example, railroad lines, pipes and plumbing or wires. She addresses

good infrastructures as invisible by definition, as they constitute the background for other kinds of work (Star, 2002). However, she posits that infrastructures can become visible upon breakdown, for example, when a server is down or when there is a power blackout (Star, 1999). In her exploration of the meaning of infrastructure she focuses on its relationality. She views infrastructures as relations, never as things (Star & Ruhleder, 1994). This fundamental characteristic of infrastructure can be verified by the notion called “infrastructural inversion”. This notion, proposed by Bowker (1994), is a Gestalt switch, it shifts “attention from the activities invisibly supported by an infrastructure to the activities that enable the infrastructure to function” (Simonsen et al., 2020, p. 116). Infrastructural inversion puts emphasis on relations between infrastructures and their ability to cause change, rather than viewing only people and things as being able to cause change (Star & Ruhleder, 1994). Star (2002) demonstrates the relationality of infrastructures with an example: a teacher considers a blackboard as a working infrastructure essential for teaching, but for the school’s architect it is a variable in a spatial planning process and for the janitor it is a target for cleaning. So, infrastructure is not “a thing stripped of use” (Star, 2002, p. 116), it is fundamentally relational.

According to Larkin (2013) “infrastructures are built networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas and allow for their exchange over space” (p. 328). He defines infrastructure as matter that is capable of enabling the movement of other matter. Larkin (2013) considers infrastructures as things, but also as the relation between things. He views infrastructures as being present to the senses, but also as being displaced by the matter they move around on. For example, we see light, not electricity and we see computers, not cables. Larkin notes that this duality of infrastructures illustrates how infrastructures cannot be theorised in terms of the object alone when they operate consistently. In his analysis on the meaning of infrastructures, Larkin (2013) concludes that infrastructures “are objects that

create the grounds on which other objects operate” (p. 329), showcasing an emphasis on infrastructures as things and not as relational.

These two definitions provide us with an account of one of the fundamental questions in infrastructural research, namely the visibility of infrastructures. For, Larkin (2013) considers infrastructures as being visible, as clear structures, whilst Star (1999) regards infrastructures as being “by definition invisible” (p. 380). In Larkin’s view, visibility and invisibility are not ontological characteristics of infrastructures, rather visibility and invisibility are purposely brought about as being a part of technical, political, and representational processes, so the visibility of infrastructures is negotiated. (Colven, 2020). Often infrastructures are specifically designed to be invisible in order to serve the investments of the actors who created it with power and authority (Starosielski, 2012). Thus, the visibility or invisibility of infrastructures can be used as a tool. For example, underwater cables can be strategically made visible or invisible to distinct groups at different times (Colven, 2020). They can be hidden in order to satisfy residents or environmentalists but made visible to fishers in order to prevent damage to the cables by their anchors. This view of infrastructures does not disregard Star’s notion of infrastructures as being invisible by definition. Starosielski (2012) argues that “when infrastructure becomes visible in the public sphere, it tends to be either because it is invested with broader cultural significance or because it breaks down (and fails to maintain transparency in use)” (p. 40). This demonstrates how the visibility of infrastructures can be used as a tool, but can also be unmanageable once an infrastructure breaks down.

Bureaucratisation of sexual harassment

In the introduction there was already a brief description of what is meant with the infrastructures of complaint. It is a term used to refer to all the procedures and policies that

are in place for dealing with sexual harassment at the EUR. More clarity about the specifics of these infrastructures will follow later on in this study, as this is a part of the data gathering and data analysis. This section will discuss the power of procedures and policies dealing with sexual harassment within institutions and the possible effect they might have on sexual harassment.

Gersen and Suk (2016) describe how universities have gone through a bureaucratic turn in sex regulation. This bureaucratic turn can be partially understood as a shift toward the use of bureaucratic tools in dealing with issues like sexual harassment and as a displacement in the locations dealing with SH, from the federal government to policies and procedures within private and public educational organisations. These policies and procedures are expected “to respond, prevent, research, survey, inform, investigate, adjudicate and train” (Gersen & Suk, 2016, p. 883). Bennett (2011) points out a corollary in the bureaucratic turn, for when institutions and organisations are held liable for any form of sexual harassment occurring under their jurisdiction, their interest is to prove that no form of sexual harassment occurs. Adding to this, she argues how this newfound liability for institutions can pose a threat to the institutions and might also be the catalyst for them to create a climate in which victimisation is unheard of. Liability can thus contradict itself “by making the route towards voicing discrimination or violation so taxing, tortured or inaccessible that no-one takes it” (Bennett, 2011, p. 9). According to Clair (1993), this shift in the usage of bureaucracy for dealing with sexual harassment has an irony to it. She illustrates how bureaucracy promotes a passionless and logical perspective of organising, it “encourages the normalising of lengthy documentation, justifications, rationalisation, hierarchy, and impersonalisation of workforce relations” (Clair, 1993, p. 129). She highlights how bureaucracy is patriarchal, how bureaucratic control is inherently a form of male dominance, for a bureaucracy creates subordination and passive, subservient individuals. This is where the irony lies, as the

original acts of sexual harassment that perpetuate patriarchy are expected to be combatted by bureaucracy, which is also a form of male dominance.

Hoffmann (1986) argues that procedures and policies have the ability to reduce a victim to a cog in a complex bureaucratic machine. When sexual harassment within a university becomes public, universities most often respond with an institutional statement defining and expressing official sanction of the behaviour and the establishment of grievance procedures through which individual victims can seek rectification (Hoffmann, 1986). Institutional responses ensure how bigger issues underlying sexual harassment, such as gender inequality in this specific study, are made invisible and lost to the public. Hoffmann (1986) argues how these responses are able to reduce the phenomenon of sexual harassment to its behavioural manifestations and to bureaucratic grievance procedures detached from broader institutional efforts to attend to the disadvantaged status of women. There is a focus on the elimination of the behaviour in these responses, which enables the loss of the connection between sexual harassment by itself and the broader issues underlying it, such as gender inequality. Procedures and statements act as symptomatic relief, which can be important for those who are in pain. However, as Hoffmann (1986) states “in the absence of broader institutional commitments to changing the nature of the environment in which women and men work and learn, the roots of the disorder are left unchallenged” (p. 117). Essanhaji (2022) shares this view of procedures as symptomatic relief as she uses the metaphor of band aids in her discussion of complaints procedures at universities in the Netherlands. She argues how procedures offer band aids for complaints about the often masculine white, ableist structure within a university. By the offering of band aids, procedures minimise the issue at the basis of a complaint to one that is in need of a temporary remedy and simultaneously obscure this dominant, ableist structure from vision. Clair (1993) argues how procedures and policies to battle sexual harassment in universities often serve the

interests of the organisation, rather than those of the victim, especially when those procedures encourage victims to report their abuse. “Formal reporting often bureaucratizes the abuse, neglects its emotional and psychological effects, commodifies the incident and ends the conversation” (Ford et al., 2021, p. 514).

In Essanhaji’s (2022) discussion she uses the concept of infrastructural inversion in order to show how complaint procedures by themselves are not able to expose those bigger issues underlying sexual harassment, such as the dominant masculine culture in which sexual harassment is able to thrive or gender inequality. She views complaints as attempts to infrastructural inversion, for when someone makes a complaint, they try to make a dominant and ableist structure visible by making themselves visible. But as being a part of the infrastructures of complaint is commonly seen as extra work for the people working in it, these procedures only allow for limited inversions that are quick to undo. This is why an infrastructural inversion is impossible by the hands of the infrastructures of complaint, for the work of complaint is work separated from the business as usual within universities, so it can never change or become the business as usual. Essanhaji (2022) argues that this is how infrastructures of complaint become means for institutional reproduction in which only small, temporary adjustments are made, whilst the structures of the university remain intact.

The issue of making sexual harassment public

This study specifically focuses on how the infrastructures of complaint are able to make sexual harassment public. It was already shortly introduced what can happen when sexual harassment is made public, this section will dive deeper into this.

Making sexual harassment public can mean making complaints, together with the complainer, invisible. Ahmed (2021) explains how her making sexual harassment public had the damaging effect of making the ones who were harassed and complained invisible. When

she informed her new work about inquiries into sexual harassment that had been going on at her previous job, she received a lot of backlash from her former feminist colleagues. She noticed how people who were a part of the previous university she worked at and identified with this university, experienced her coming out and making the sexual harassment that had been happening there public as damaging to them and the university. This point of view adopted by the former colleagues of Ahmed ensured that the people who made the complaints about sexual harassment in the first place were made invisible. For the traumatising situation these people had been in, the harassment itself disappeared from view, the emphasis was relayed on the way in which it was made public by Ahmed. So, her coming out to the public with the sexual harassment inquiries that had been going on caused a lot of backlash by former colleagues and it was this backlash which shifted the conversation from the issue of sexual harassment to how damaging it was to the previous university that Ahmed made the inquiries public. This shift by the backlash has made the issue of sexual harassment invisible together with the ones who made a complaint.

An institution can have policies that seem to address issues, like sexual harassment, which make institutions appear changed, however, ultimately issues within the institutions remain untreated (Gardiner & Finn, 2022). Ahmed (2021) showcases this, how policies and procedures for dealing with institutional issues, such as sexual harassment, can serve as evidence for universities to have dealt with the issue at hand. She argues how institutions respond to complaints about harassment becoming public by pointing to their own policies and procedures they have in place. By doing this, they view merely having a policy as evidence of how the same issue is not happening within their own institutions. This is another way of making sexual harassment public, but at the same time making invisible the actual harm that is going on within universities. With institutions publicly appearing to address the issue of sexual harassment only in order to reduce the discussion about sexual harassment to

merely policies, thus making sexual harassment within institutions invisible and shifting the conversation again.

Essanhaji (2022) also shows how making a complaint about sexual harassment can be to make sexual harassment invisible. She argues how complaints are about dominant structures made visible by complaints, rather than isolated incidents. When complaints make these structures visible, complaints are being heard as incidents and about incidents in order to ensure making the visible structures invisible. This produces a distinction between merely incidents, which are the complaints, and the common usual routine structures of a university. This distinction guarantees that the work of complaint is separate from the core tasks of a university and, thus, will never be able to change the university from within (Essanhaji, 2022). She, again, showcases how institutional structures facilitating sexual harassment are made invisible by making cases of sexual harassment public. Based on the literature reviewed in this section it is expected that infrastructures of complaint are able to make sexual harassment public, whilst at the same time making sexual harassment invisible.

Method

Study design

In order to answer the research question this study made use of a qualitative design. The objective of qualitative research is to provide rich descriptive accounts of the phenomenon under investigation, unlike quantitative research, which concerns itself with counting occurrences and volumes (Gelo et al., 2008). A qualitative approach was the most appropriate choice for doing this study, as its aim is to create a better understanding of the infrastructures that are in place concerning sexual harassment and how these infrastructures are able to make sexual harassment public. Thus, an understanding of occurrences and

volumes is not adequate to answer the research question, rather rich descriptive accounts are needed in order to create this understanding.

A qualitative design is also the best option for the study of infrastructures. As shown before, infrastructures are inherently invisible, even when they are explicitly made to be visible, there are always parts that remain unseen (Karasti & Blomberg, 2018). This invisibility poses a problem to the empirical study of infrastructures, for how does one investigate something that is invisible? The best way of studying infrastructures are multiple ethnographic approaches, for they make use of a range of methods and make sure to examine the phenomenon of interest from multiple perspectives (Karasti & Blomberg, 2018). This is exactly how this study was designed, using both interviews and document analysis in order to make aspects of infrastructures that are invisible to some actors or difficult to see more visible or perceptible.

Data collection

Participants

To create qualitative data, three semi-structured interviews with confidential advisers and one with the ombudsperson at the EUR were conducted. The main purpose of these interviews was for the researcher to gain a better understanding from the experts themselves about the infrastructures of complaint in order to help with the analysing of the documents and to add a “real life” perspective to the documents. To reach this understanding, expert sampling was used. This purposive sampling method was most suitable as the participants needed for this study had to have specific qualities in order to help answer the research question, in this case they needed to be a part of the infrastructures of complaint at EUR (Etikan et al., 2016). A possible complication for this sampling method is bias, for the

participants are not randomly chosen. The intention of the researcher was to interview more people who were a part of the infrastructures of complaint, however due to accessibility issues and time constraints this was not possible. It was a deliberate choice to not interview victims of sexual harassment who have made use of the infrastructures of complaint, for it can pose a substantial threat to the participants health, as it can be an intrusion into their private sphere and an exploration into deeply personal experiences (Muasya & Gatumu, 2013). The choice for semi-structured interviews was made because this research is methodologically in uncharted territory, as stated under study design, and this kind of interview is helpful to interviewers with spotting useful leads and pursuing them (Newcomer et al., 2015).

Interview procedure

Participants were contacted via email. This mail included all the information surrounding the nature of the research and the process of interviewing. Confidentiality and anonymity were highlighted. Once participants indicated they were willing to take part in the study, a date was planned for the interview. Participants were able to choose either to have the interview online or in person. Of the four interviews that were held, two were online and the other two in person. Before the start of an interview participants were informed that the interview was recorded, it was emphasised that the recordings were kept in a safe space and anonymised. Making recordings is necessary, as they allow the interviewer to be more actively engaged in the conversation, as well as to think about the best next question instead of having to concentrate on writing down the answers (Newcomer et al., 2015).

During the interviews, a topic list (see appendix II) was used in order to guide the interviews and to offer a common thread. The topics were based on the literature used in this study and the documents that had been analysed. For example, the topic of annual reports was

based on documents already analysed. Interviews started by asking for a description of the participants' work, after this the specific infrastructure the participant was a part of was discussed more thoroughly and, finally, the publication of sexual harassment was discussed.

Document analysis

This study also made use of document analysis to understand how the infrastructures of complaint at the EUR make sexual harassment public. Some advantages of document analysis are its efficiency, high availability of documents, cost-effectiveness and lack of obtrusiveness and reactivity (Bowen, 2009). Selecting documents was done by checking for authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning, but also applicability to the aim of this study was kept in mind (Morgan, 2022). All the documents used (see appendix I) were publicly available on the website of the EUR or Erasmus Magazine. The majority of documents were found through internet searches of “EUR sexual harassment” or “EUR procedures sexual harassment” or through more specific searches, such as “confidential advisers EUR” or “ombudsperson EUR”. Document analysis was used in combination with semi-structured interviews as a means of triangulation. Multiple sources of data collection can be helpful to seek convergence and corroboration, for example, data collected from documents were able to contextualise data collected from interviews (Bowen, 2009). This study carried out the document analysis and the interviews at the same time. The interviews were used to find documents and documents were used to form interview questions (Bowen, 2009).

Ethical considerations

It is evident that the topic of sexual harassment is of a very sensitive nature, so it is important to explore all possible ethical issues that might occur. The interviews were on a

voluntary basis. This was made clear to the participants from the onset of the recruitment. Before interviews started, participants were informed they had the ability to shift the conversation at any time during the interview. Participants were also made aware of the possibility to revoke their participation if desired, this was also possible after the interview had already taken place. Informed consent forms were filled in by the participants before the interviews, all of the information mentioned above was repeated on this form. The names of the participants were anonymised and everything participants said during the interview that might refer to their identity was also anonymised. The data that followed from the interviews was kept in a secure place, not shared with third parties, and will be automatically deleted after the completion of this thesis.

The WHO (2007) provides eight safety and ethical recommendations when researching sexual violence, such as sexual harassment. Not all recommendations are fitting to this study, as this study deliberately chose not to interview victims of sexual violence, the most appropriate recommendations will be discussed here. The first being how the benefits of documenting sexual violence to participants and communities must outweigh the risks. This is ensured by not interviewing individuals who have come into contact with the infrastructures of complaint as the complainer, and by doing this hoping to create helpful knowledge in battling sexual harassment within the EUR. The second recommendation states how “the confidentiality of individuals who provide information about sexual violence must be protected at all times” (WHO, 2007, p. 9). In this study confidentiality and anonymity is guaranteed, the researcher was the only one who had access to the data produced, and any personal information of participants was anonymised. Lastly, the WHO (2007) states how, before the data gathering activity, any person giving information about sexual violence must provide informed consent. This recommendation was complied with by having participants fill in an informed consent form before the start of an interview.

Data analysis

Once the interviews were carried out, the recordings were transcribed. These transcriptions were coded in Atlas.ti. The analysis was data-driven, so the coding took place in three different rounds, first open coding, then axial coding and eventually selective coding. The document analysis was modelled to an article by Bowen (2009) in which he uses his own experience to describe how to carry out document analysis. Firstly, content analysis was used to organise relevant information into categories related to the research question. This type of analysis is meant as a first-pass document review through which meaningful and relevant passages of text or other data can be identified (Bowen, 2009). So, relevant information is separated from irrelevant information. After this analysis had taken place, a thematic analysis was conducted. In this type of analysis the recognition of patterns is central. The selected relevant data from the content analysis was more carefully re-examined and coding took place in order to uncover themes. No predetermined codes were used, so the researcher was able to uncover unexpected meanings instead of summarising the data based on the codes (Morgan, 2022). In thematic analysis researcher subjectivity is viewed as a resource, rather than a problem, as long as the researcher is reflexive by considering how their own views and feelings might have influenced their findings. For both these types of analysis credibility is under threat, as they both consist of the interpretation of the data by the researcher. In order to enhance credibility, triangulation was used by using two methods of data gathering, both interviews and document analysis (Cope, 2013).

Results

From the analysis of the documents and the interview transcripts, two main themes (see appendix III) arose in line with the research question, these will both be discussed in this section. As the document analysis and the interviews were concurrently executed, this will

also be reflected back in the results, for there will be no distinction in the presentation of the results between document analysis and interviews. The interviews were used as a way of interpreting the documents and giving more of a “real life” perspective on the findings from the document analysis. In turn, the documents were used to create interview questions and an understanding for the researcher when going into the interviews. The interviews were all conducted in Dutch, so the quotes used in this section by participants are a direct translation made by the researcher. No quotes were used from the interview with the ombudsperson, as this participant cannot be anonymised.

Complaining vs. reporting

From the onset of the data gathering period it became clear how not only complaint was a part of the infrastructures at EUR trying to battle sexual harassment, but also reporting. All the participants emphasised the difference between reporting and complaining. Reporting sexual harassment is the first step and often the only step undertaken by people who have experienced this kind of unwanted behaviour. The primary entity within the EUR dealing with the reports of sexual harassment is the confidential adviser network. This is also reflected back in its annual report (EUR, 2021c) in which there is a usage of the word reports and not complaints, reporters and not complainants. All of the confidential advisers that were interviewed also stressed how they only deal with reports and not complaints. One participant said:

Well, the role of a confidential adviser, and this counts for everyone in the network, is not only hearing individual reports. We always talk of reports by the way, it only becomes a complaint if a reporter, together with the confidential adviser, decides to follow through. So, confidential advisers listen to reports, give advice, and try to

navigate the legal framework of the EUR, which sometimes is challenging, also for us. (P-02)

Whilst the confidential adviser network is put in place by the EUR as the main reporting entity for sexual harassment, it is not the only entity dealing with reports of sexual harassment. As is stated in their annual report:

In the faculties, notifications are sometimes handled internally, often by HR staff or managers. Students can also approach study advisers, student deans, and psychologists. As there is no central reporting on this, the extent of the problem is not clear. (EUR, 2021c, p. 3)

The only entity within the EUR dealing with complaints is the Committee on Undesirable Behaviour. This committee follows the “EUR complaints-procedure inappropriate behaviour” (EUR, 2020a). In this procedure students or staff with a complaint are referred to as complainants, the words report or reporter are not mentioned in this procedure. This is similar to the annual report of the committee (EUR, 2021d), which speaks of complaints.

The ombudsperson at EUR mainly deals with reports but can also handle complaints. The position of ombudsperson at the EUR started out as a pilot, the available annual reports are also from the period in which the position was still a pilot (EUR, 2020b; EUR, 2021a). In these annual reports the search for how to structure the position of ombudsperson is very much reflected, for example, dealing with reports and complaints are used simultaneously as responsibilities of the ombudsperson. The documents pertaining to the ombudsperson reflect a learning curve in which the difference of complaining and reporting is illuminated. The regulation for the ombudsperson (EUR, 2018) names people coming to the ombudsperson complainants, not reporters. This document also does not mention the word report in connection with a person that might come to the ombudsperson for help. In the first annual

report (EUR, 2020b) there is not one designated name for when a person comes to the ombudsperson for help. This document uses the words complaint, reports, requests, and cases. The most recent annual report (EUR, 2021a) does explicitly state the choice for one designated name, it states that: “This annual report no longer distinguishes between complaints and reports. Everything is referred to as a report.”. (p. 13). There is no explanation as to why the choice was made for the word report, it is only recognised that there is indeed a difference between reporting and complaints when the report describes regulations surrounding ombudspersons at other universities: “Some regulations are more complaints-oriented, while other regulations focus more on reports and place less of an emphasis on the complaints.” (EUR, 2021a, p. 4). This most recent report also emphasises how the role of the ombudsperson as complaint handler is not appropriate for the position:

The OP believes the role of complaints handler also causes confusion because this task is difficult to distinguish from a formal investigation process as described in the regulations. The recommendation is to remove this role from the regulations. As far as is known, complaints are handled almost entirely internally by committees. (EUR, 2021a, p. 13)

It becomes clear from analysing the documents regarding the ombudsperson that there has been a development over the years in the description of their role. From the onset it was presumed that an ombudsperson would be able to deal with both reports and complaints, in practice this seemed to not be the case. For both dealing with reports and complaints was perceived by the previous ombudsperson to be confusing (EUR, 2021a).

Reporting and complaining are two very different and key factors to differentiate when dealing with sexual harassment. The distinction between these two concepts becomes clear when closely examining the infrastructures the EUR has in place for dealing with sexual harassment. The confidential adviser facilitates a collection of reports from people who have

experienced any type of unwanted behaviour, such as sexual harassment. The Committee on Undesirable Behaviour is the only official route for a complainant to take, thus facilitating a way of collecting complaints. And the ombudsperson at EUR mainly deals with reports, thus, also facilitating a way of collecting reports.

What stands out when looking at these findings is the choice of words in the documents by the three routes for reporting or complaining about sexual harassment. The documents contained a specific way of referring to staff or students who had experienced any type of unwanted behaviour, such as sexual harassment, namely as reporters or complainants, and reports or complaints. A translation happens within these documents, from victim to a reporter, complainant, report, or complaint. We see this translation quite literally happening in the annual report of the confidential adviser network:

The number of students reporting inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour decreased from 48 in 2020 to 40 in 2021. In 2021, most notifications from students concerned negative discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment. Despite the lower number of notifications, the number of sexual harassment notifications increased. Some notifications related to multiple problem areas. (EUR, 2021c, pp. 4-5)

This small fragment of text starts off with the wording “students reporting”, so at this point we are still talking about people as being actively engaged with the reports they made. Then we already lose something of the students when this wording is turned around “notifications from students”, notifications become the centre point in this phrasing, it becomes active as the students are turned passive. Finally, the word students disappears, we are only talking of “notifications” from now on, the persons behind the notifications have vanished.

This translation is inherently a result of bureaucracy. Bureaucracy promotes a logical and passionless perspective of organising, and constraints emotionality (Clair, 1993). This is

exactly what is happening within the documents of the infrastructures at EUR dealing with sexual harassment. There is a need in these documents to organise the people reporting or complaining, but these people together with the issues they complained or reported about do not have a place in the annual reports as they are inherently filled with emotionality. This is how the people behind the complaints and reports are displaced by the complaints and reports they make, they are being organised.

Making sexual harassment public

The only mandatory and official way in which sexual harassment is made public by the infrastructures of complaint at EUR is through annual reports. These annual reports contain tables with the reports or complaints of sexual harassment, depending on the nature of the entity reporting (EUR, 2021a; EUR, 2021c; EUR, 2021d). Instead of providing a textual explanation on the contents of the tables, this section will include the tables of the most recent annual reports for the three different entities dealing with reports or complaints. For it is argued that the usage of tables by the EUR as a standard method in annual reports carries significance, considering annual reports only contain information that is deemed important to be known by the public, as it is the only way of making this information public. This was reflected back in an interview in which it was stated how annual reports are made in such a way to make it as safe as possible for the victim and the accused. Very sensitive information is being shared in these annual reports and it seems, for now, the EUR perceives tables to be the best method to disclose this information. By including these tables in this section, the researcher hopes to invite you, the reader, to “see what is being said” (Lynch, 1988, p. 203).

It is only fitting to start with the first stop within the EUR for someone who has experienced sexual harassment, the confidential adviser network. In this report (EUR, 2021c)

there is a distinction made between reports by students and by staff. The reports are presented in a similar fashion by using tables, student reports are mentioned first. In Table I (EUR, 2021c, p. 5) the reports by students are catalogued. We see how it is divided up in three parts, with the first counting the amount of notifiers in the last few years, differentiating for gender. The second part showcases the accused, differentiating for multiple factors and the third part shows the nature of the reports. Table II (EUR, 2021c, p. 6) has the same set-up, but shows the reports by employees. Although the tables are similar, they differ in multiple categories, for example, in the third part online sexual harassment and wellbeing are added for students, for employees, labour disputes, integrity and the misuse of power are added. These tables are followed with a conclusion and possible explanations for notable observations.

Table 1

Reports by students to the confidential adviser network

Notifiers (students):	2021	2020	2019	2018
Male	7	8	6	7
Female	33	40	36	19
Total	40	48	42	26

Accused	2021	2020	2019	2018
Male (students)	21	20	21	17
Female (students)	6	9	6	3
Faculty/Staff	9	10	10	5
Other (well-being/perpetrator/unknown)	4	5	5	1
Total	40	48	42	26

Nature of the notification:	2021	2020	2019	2018
Negative discrimination/harassment	17	20	12	3
Bullying	9	9	2	2
Sexual harassment (including digital)	23	20	20	13
Aggression	3	3	5	3
Discrimination	6	9	5	7
Well-being	1	2	1	4
Stalking (physical/digital)	5	7	3	0

Note. From “Annual report 2021 Confidential Adviser Network for staff and students”, by EUR, 2021, p. 5. In the public domain.

Table II*Reports by employees to the confidential adviser network*

Notifiers (staff)	2021	2020	2019	2018
Male	13	19	15	10
Female	25	27	30	30
Total	38	46	45	40

Accused	2021	2020	2019	2018
Male	20	29	26	25
Female	12	16	15	15
Organisation	3	1	4	0
Unknown	3	1	0	0
Total	38	47	45	40

Nature of the notification	2021	2020	2019	2018
Negative discrimination/harassment	15	22	34	23
Bullying	8	5	8	9
Sexual harassment	7	6	6	4
Aggression	3	3	4	4
Discrimination	5	4	3	3
Labour conflict	6	8	16	5
Integrity	4	1	0	1
Stalking (digital/physical)	2	4	2	0
Abuse of authority	2	4	4	0

Note. From “Annual report 2021 Confidential Adviser Network for staff and students”, by EUR, 2021, p. 6. In the public domain.

A second stop for someone who has experienced sexual harassment is to file a complaint at the Committee on Undesirable Behaviour. In this annual report (EUR, 2021d) there is no distinction made between students and employees, as can be seen in Table III. The table used to make complaints public by this committee is very cryptic, we do not see the same differentiations as in the tables for the confidential adviser network (EUR, 2021c, pp. 5-6). We only see how many complaints there were received and the results of the complaints. What we also see is that the term sexual harassment does not occur in the table, although it is stated in the annual report (EUR, 2021d) that the Committee on Undesirable Behaviour provides a possibility to make a complaint about sexual harassment, amongst other unwanted

behaviour. Next to this table, the EUR itself also publicises sexual harassment in their annual report by writing down very briefly the amount of complaints handled by the Committee on Undesirable Behaviour, in combination with two other committees (EUR, 2021b).

Table III

Results of complaints submitted to the Committee on Undesirable Behaviour

	2021	2020	2019	2018
Total complaints received	9	3	5	0
(Partially) Well founded	0	0	1	0
(Partially) Unfounded	4	1	2	0
Withdrawn	2	1	0	0
Referred to AKB	1	0	1	0
Handling discontinued*	2	2	0	0
In progress after 31 December	0			

Note. From “Annual report Legal Protection EUR 2021”, by Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2021, p. 14. In the public domain.

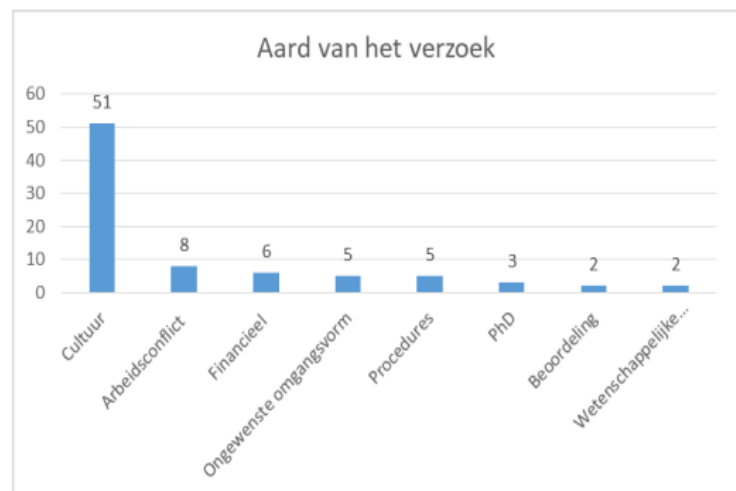
A third and often final stop for someone who has experienced sexual harassment is the ombudsperson. In this annual report (EUR, 2021a) both tables and bar graphs are being used in order to report on requests submitted to the ombudsperson. The first thing we can take notice on is the fact that the term sexual harassment is not explicitly stated in neither the table or the bar graph (see Table IV and Table V), instead it has been located in the umbrella term “inappropriate behaviour”. The distinction between students and employees also reoccurs, just like in the annual report for the confidential adviser network (EUR, 2021c). However, in the annual report of the confidential adviser network (EUR, 2021c) the reports

by students are disclosed in front of the reports by employees. In the annual report of the ombudsperson (EUR, 2021a) this is reversed, so firstly reports by employees are disclosed and thereafter the reports by students. This difference in the order of disclosing reports might be an indication of who the infrastructures tend to the most, with the confidential adviser network tending more to students and the ombudsperson more to employees. This is also reflected back in the amount of reports disclosed in the tables.

Table IV

Nature of request by staff filed at the ombudsperson

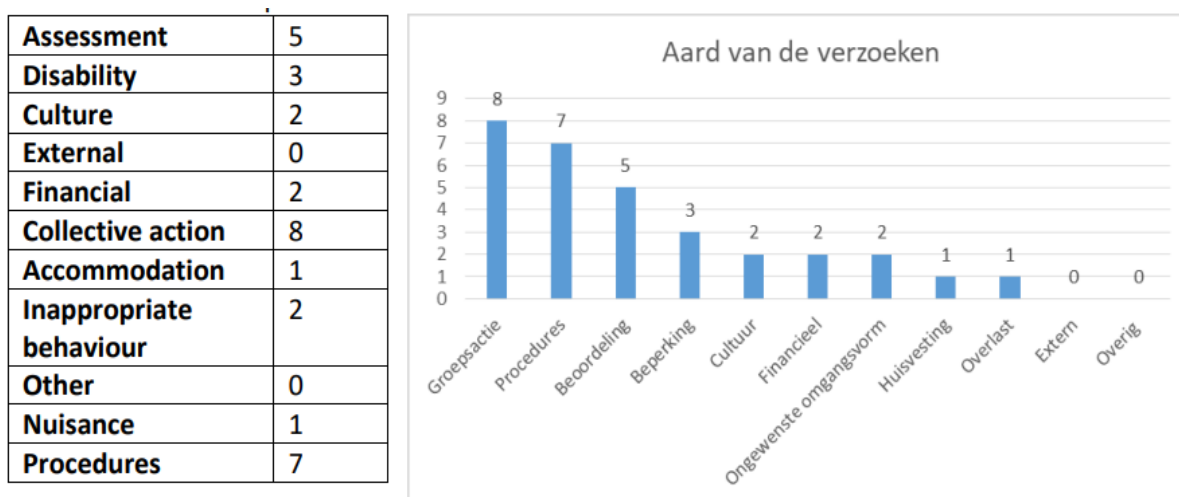
Labour dispute	8
Assessment	2
Culture	51
Financial	6
Inappropriate behaviour	5
PhD	3
Procedures	5
Academic integrity	2



Note. From “2020-2021 Report Ombudsperson Erasmus University Rotterdam”, by EUR, 2021, p. 19. In the public domain.

Table V

Nature of request by students filed at the ombudsperson



Note. From “2020-2021 Report Ombudsperson Erasmus University Rotterdam”, by EUR, 2021, p. 23. In the public domain.

All three of the official infrastructures set up by the EUR to deal with complaints and reports about sexual harassment publicise sexual harassment in the same manner, with the use of tables, the one being more elaborate than the other. This is also noteworthy, how the same method of tables is used to make sexual harassment public, but the tables and the contents of the tables differ considerably from each other. For example, in Table I and Table II of the confidential adviser network, there is more information given about the reporter and the accused compared to the other tables by the Committee on Undesirable Behaviour (see Table III) and the ombudsperson (see Table IV and Table V). Also, as shown before, staff is not included in the table by the Committee on Undesirable behaviour (see Table III) but is included in the tables of the confidential adviser network (see Table II) and the ombudsperson (see Table IV). The term “sexual harassment” is also only included explicitly in Table I and Table II by the confidential adviser network. It becomes clear how the same method of tables can still very distinctly report on a similar occurrence. The usage of tables in

order to report on such a loaded experience might not cover the severity of the issue at hand. Latour (1986) argues how figures have a way of extracting something from the data they report on with the example of laboratory research. He discusses how scientists have an obsession with abstracts, diagrams, archives or curves on graph papers and no matter what scientists talk about, they start talking confidently and being believed by colleagues when they make use of geometrised two-dimensional shapes. Because of this, the objects scientists talk about are discarded, the bleeding and screaming rats in the laboratory are gone and just a tiny set of figures remains from them. This is what tables do, they extract, they are simplification procedures, they allow for harder facts to be produced by simplification, at the cost of something (Latour, 1986). This is what the discussed tables also do, they extract the issue of sexual harassment by reducing it to numbers and occurrences.

Another unofficial way how sexual harassment at EUR is made public by the infrastructures of complaint is by Erasmus Magazine. This platform at the EUR can be used as a way of promoting the infrastructures dealing with sexual harassment, as has been done by the confidential adviser network (Ficheroux, 2019). But, recently Erasmus Magazine acted as a manner of making sexual harassment public by the Committee on Undesirable Behaviour (Ficheroux, 2023). In this article it is emphasised how the committee normally operates behind closed doors in order to safeguard privacy. However, two members of the committee agreed to an interview with Erasmus Magazine because of the disturbing findings resulting from a study done by Erasmus Magazine about sexual harassment at the EUR (also mentioned in the introduction of this study). In this article the committee members make sexual harassment public by speaking of a few individual cases they have dealt with, still quite cryptically. This seems as more of an involuntary way of making sexual harassment public, as normally complaints are very numerically publicised by the Committee on Undesirable Behaviour in their annual report (EUR, 2021d).

Discussion

This study set out to create a better understanding of the infrastructures of complaint at the EUR. Specifically, this study wanted to investigate how these infrastructures make sexual harassment public. From the analysis of the data it became clear how infrastructures of complaint is a lacking term for describing the infrastructures that deal with sexual harassment at the EUR, for complaint is only a small, yet serious, part of these infrastructures. Reporting is the main method for dealing with sexual harassment at the EUR, as the university has multiple locations for victims to report sexual harassment and only one official entity for dealing with complaints, the Committee on Undesirable Behaviour. There are two official entities dealing with reports of sexual harassment, the confidential adviser network, and the ombudsperson. Reports of sexual harassment can also be received by HR-employees, executives, study advisors, student deans and student psychologists. However, this is an unofficial way of reporting sexual harassment, thus these reports are not centrally made public and reported on. Choosing procedures that encourage reporting as the main method for dealing with sexual harassment often does not constitute the best answer to sexual harassment. Clair (1993) argues how these procedures encouraging reporting often serve the interests of the organisation, rather than the interests of the victim. Formal reporting can bureaucratise the abuse, neglect its emotional and psychological effects, commodify the incident and finally end the conversation (Ford et al., 2021). For the EUR to see reporting as the main method in dealing with sexual harassment can thus be problematic, as it can cover up the effects of sexual harassment and end the conversation. Noticeably, complaining is only a small part of the infrastructures dealing with sexual harassment at the EUR. That is why from now on the term “infrastructures of complaint” will not be used anymore to refer to the infrastructures dealing with sexual harassment at the EUR, instead reporting will be added

before complaining as it is the main method of fighting sexual harassment at the EUR, so it will be “infrastructures of reporting and complaining” from this point on.

The infrastructures of reporting and complaining make sexual harassment public through tables in their annual reports. Using this very bureaucratic method of annual reports to make something public can dehumanise the people behind a report or complaint. In the annual reports there was a translation found from students and staff to reporter, complainant, report, or complaint. This translation originates with bureaucracy. Clair (1993) argues how bureaucracy is a logical and passionless perspective on organising. Using those specific words to refer to students and staff is a way of organising them into a system of bureaucracy which is inherently not designed for them, for bureaucracy promotes impersonalisation and constraints emotionality (Clair, 1993). Hoffmann (1986) underlines this by arguing that procedures and policies have the ability to reduce a victim of sexual harassment to a cog in a complex bureaucratic machine. The people behind the complaint or report are made invisible by converting them into the complaint or report. This is the work of bureaucracy, for it is in need of a way in which humanity with its emotions is cancelled out and the most logical and rational approach thrives so it can organise. These annual reports that make sexual harassment public simultaneously make the people behind a complaint or report invisible by turning them into a complaint or report.

The usage of tables in order to make sexual harassment public can also invisibilise. Latour (1986) argues how figures have the ability to extract something from the data they report on. This is what the tables in the annual reports of the infrastructures of reporting and complaining do. By reducing people to numbers in tables, the issue of sexual harassment and the people behind the numbers are extracted, the focus is relayed on the numbers. The tables allow for harder facts to be produced at the cost of something (Latour, 1986). The tables used by the infrastructures of reporting and complaining are a simplification that has to happen in

order to organise the victims of sexual harassment into a system of bureaucracy. These tables are a simplification of the harassment itself, a simplification of the effects it had on the victim, a simplification of the trauma resulting from the sexual harassment, a simplification of much more processes that happen when the act of sexual harassment is committed. All of this is forgotten, made invisible by the infrastructures of reporting and complaining and their current way of making sexual harassment public.

This study argued that the infrastructures of reporting and complaining are invisible, as they are a part of the background of other kinds of work (Star, 2002). They allow the university to run smoothly by handling all disputes that happen about sexual harassment. But how can something invisible make something public? This study wants to call attention to this contradiction. What is made public in the shape of a table by the infrastructures of reporting and complaining is the end result of many processes. As shown before, these processes leading up to the table are made invisible because of a simplification that has to happen with the usage of tables. The infrastructures of reporting and complaining are made invisible within these processes that are made invisible by the tables used to make sexual harassment public, as these infrastructures are a part of the processes that are made invisible. So, the infrastructures of reporting and complaining remain invisible, they do not change and when they do not change their output will remain the same. Essanhaji (2022) argues that procedures are a means for institutional reproduction in which only small, temporary adjustments can be made, whilst the structures of the university remain intact. This happens when the infrastructures of reporting and complaining at the EUR remain invisible, nothing will change whilst they remain the same. Their way of making sexual harassment public will remain the same, the tables will still invisibilise the people and the actual issue of sexual harassment behind a report or complaint.

Limitations and recommendations

This study has some limitations. Firstly, it was the intention to interview more participants, however, as it is a thesis project there was a limited amount of time to conduct the research and the participants were not available in this timeframe. It is recommended for future research that possibly is less time constrained to include more participants in order to get more information and perspective on the topic at hand. Further, this study used coding in order to organise the data. As coding is a very interpretive process, and no precautions were taken in this study to deal with this, dissimilar results might have emerged if another researcher did the coding. Following research might make use of investigator triangulation, because having multiple researchers interpreting the data can allow for more robust findings. Finally, the focus on complaints was also a limitation to this study. The results showed how reporting sexual harassment is the main method for dealing with sexual harassment, rather than complaining. For future research it would be interesting to already see this focus on reporting, as well as on complaining, from the onset of the study. The focus on both documents as well as interviews with participants who were a part of the infrastructures of reporting and complaining is a strength in this study. The interviews allowed the researcher to already have an understanding of these infrastructures before starting the document analysis and the documents allowed questions to be formed based on important themes that were recognised.

Conclusion

This study endeavoured to expand our knowledge regarding the infrastructures of reporting and complaining at the EUR by asking: “How do the infrastructures of complaint at the EUR make sexual harassment public?.” It was found that these infrastructures make sexual harassment public through their annual reports by means of tables. This way of

making sexual harassment public entails a loss. It invisibilises the processes that resulted in the table by simplifying these processes into the shape of a table. It also makes the people behind a report or complaint invisible by replacing them with the report or complaint in order to fit them into the bureaucratic framework of the annual reports. The infrastructures of reporting and complaining also remain invisible by their own way of publicising sexual harassment with tables. Their remaining invisibility ensures how the structures of the university will remain intact and the publication of sexual harassment will remain the same, invisibilising the issue of sexual harassment and the people behind it.

It becomes clear how the way in which sexual harassment is made public currently at the EUR by the infrastructures of reporting and complaining is flawed. Another way is needed which conveys sexual harassment in such a way that the issue of sexual harassment and the victims are not forgotten. Further research is needed in order to find this better way of making sexual harassment public. Until this new way is found, the EUR will remain to invisibilise the issue of sexual harassment together with the victims through the infrastructures of reporting and complaining.

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Appendix I

Overview of documents

Title	Author/Organisation	Year
2019-2020 Report Ombudsperson Erasmus University Rotterdam	E. Weijnen, EUR	2020
2020-2021 Report Ombudsperson Erasmus University Rotterdam	E. Weijnen, EUR	2021
2021 Annual Report	EUR	2021
Annual report 2021 Confidential Adviser Network for staff and students	M. Blok, EUR	2021
Annual report Legal Protection EUR 2021	Legal Protection	2021
EUR Complaints regulations Undesirable Behaviour 2020	EUR	2020
Regulations Ombudsperson, 2018	EUR	2018
Meer klachten seksueel grensoverschrijdend gedrag: 'Missers moeten kunnen, daar leer je je grenzen van kennen'	T. Ficheroux	2023
Vertrouwenspersonen: 'Meld ongewenst gedrag'	T. Ficheroux	2019

Appendix II

Topic List

General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work/activities as a confidant/ombudsperson? • How long? Why?
Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedure when receiving complaint <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SH specifically • Dealing with complaints • Privacy • More locations dealing with SH? • Support by the university <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Responsibility EUR • Possible challenges
Public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is SH made public? • Annual report • Awareness students and staff
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additions by participant?

Appendix III

Codebook

Reporting vs. complaining
Reporting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidential advisers for reporting • Ombudsperson mainly for reporting
Filing complaints <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CoG for complaining • Ombudsperson sometimes handles complaint
Difference reporting and complaining
Confusion reporting and complaining for op
Other locations reporting
Translations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usage of reporter • Usage of complainant • Usage of report • Usage of complaint
Making sexual harassment public
Annual report confidential advisers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table with SH students (ca) • Table with SH staff (ca) • Textual publication of SH (ca) • Textual elaboration of tables (ca)
Annual report ombudsperson <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table with SH students (op) • Table with SH staff (op) • Textual publication of SH (op) • Textual elaboration of tables (op)
Annual report EUR legal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table with SH no distinction (CoG) • No SH stated

Erasmus Magazine

- Promoting confidential advisers
- Forced reaction CoG
 - Individual cases SH

Difference tables for ca, op & CoG

Appendix IV

Ethics and privacy checklist with informed consent



CHECKLIST ETHICAL AND PRIVACY ASPECTS OF RESEARCH

INSTRUCTION

This checklist should be completed for every research study that is conducted at the Department of Public Administration and Sociology (DPAS). This checklist should be completed *before* commencing with data collection or approaching participants. Students can complete this checklist with help of their supervisor.

This checklist is a mandatory part of the empirical master's thesis and has to be uploaded along with the research proposal.

The guideline for ethical aspects of research of the Dutch Sociological Association (NSV) can be found on their website (http://www.nsv-sociologie.nl/?page_id=17). If you have doubts about ethical or privacy aspects of your research study, discuss and resolve the matter with your EUR supervisor. If needed and if advised to do so by your supervisor, you can also consult Dr. Bonnie French, coordinator of the Sociology Master's Thesis program.

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Project title: Master's thesis on the infrastructures of complaint at the EUR, and how they are able to make sexual harassment public

Name, email of student: Sanne Blom, 484532sb@eur.nl

Name, email of supervisor: Willem Schinkel, schinkel@essb.eur.nl

Start date and duration: Starting on 06-04-2023, ending on 25-06-2023

Is the research study conducted within DPAS YES

If 'NO': at or for what institute or organization will the study be conducted?
(e.g. internship organization)

PART II: HUMAN SUBJECTS

1. Does your research involve human participants. YES

If 'NO': skip to part V.

If 'YES': does the study involve medical or physical research? NO
Research that falls under the Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act (WMO) must first be submitted to [an accredited medical research ethics committee](#) or the Central Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (CCMO).

2. Does your research involve field observations without manipulations that will not involve identification of participants. NO

If 'YES': skip to part IV.

3. Research involving completely anonymous data files (secondary data that has been anonymized by someone else). NO

If 'YES': skip to part IV.

PART III: PARTICIPANTS

1. Will information about the nature of the study and about what participants can expect during the study be withheld from them? NO
2. Will any of the participants not be asked for verbal or written 'informed consent,' whereby they agree to participate in the study? NO
3. Will information about the possibility to discontinue the participation at any time be withheld from participants? NO
4. Will the study involve actively deceiving the participants? NO
Note: almost all research studies involve some kind of deception of participants. Try to think about what types of deception are ethical or non-ethical (e.g. purpose of the study is not told, coercion is exerted on participants, giving participants the feeling that they harm other people by making certain decisions, etc.).
5. Does the study involve the risk of causing psychological stress or negative emotions beyond those normally encountered by participants? NO
6. Will information be collected about special categories of data, as defined by the GDPR (e.g. racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a person, data concerning mental or physical health, data concerning a person's sex life or sexual orientation)? NO
7. Will the study involve the participation of minors (<18 years old) or other groups that cannot give consent? NO
8. Is the health and/or safety of participants at risk during the study? NO
9. Can participants be identified by the study results or can the confidentiality of the participants' identity not be ensured? NO
10. Are there any other possible ethical issues with regard to this study? NO

If you have answered 'YES' to any of the previous questions, please indicate below why this issue is unavoidable in this study.

What safeguards are taken to relieve possible adverse consequences of these issues (e.g., informing participants about the study afterwards, extra safety regulations, etc.).

Are there any unintended circumstances in the study that can cause harm or have negative (emotional) consequences to the participants? Indicate what possible circumstances this could be.

In no way are the intentions of this study to cause harm to anyone, that is why it is a very deliberate choice to interview people who are a part of the complaints infrastructures, rather than people who have been or are the ones making a complaint in order to safeguard any negative consequences which might emerge from including them in the research. However, in this research it can possibly happen that a participant might have come into contact themselves with sexual harassment. This happening cannot be completely ruled out. Participants will be made aware of the nature of the study beforehand and the interviews are on a voluntary basis, these measures are aimed at safeguarding the participants and preventing this scenario from happening.

Continue to part IV.

PART IV: SAMPLE

Where will you collect or obtain your data?

Data will be gathered through online or offline interviews, this depends on the preferences of the participants. For both of these methods the voice recorder software of my personal phone will be used, this is an app by the name "Voice memos". Complementary data will be collected from documents that are readily available to the public.

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

The anticipated size of my sample is 10-15 participants, who will all be interviewed separately.

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the size of the population from which you will sample?

The population from which I am going to sample are the confidants of the EUR. There are 23 confidants currently at the EUR, so the population size is 23.

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

Continue to part V.

Part V: Data storage and backup

Where and when will you store your data in the short term, after acquisition?

All of the interview recordings will be uploaded to my EUR OneDrive account. Within OneDrive a secure folder will be made in which the recordings will be kept, only I will be able to access this secure folder with a password only known to me.

Note: indicate for separate data sources, for instance for paper-and pencil test data, and for digital data files.

Who is responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from your research?

I (the researcher) am responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from my research. (Information details of researcher on page 1 of this checklist).

How (frequently) will you back-up your research data for short-term data security?

A back-up folder will be made in the same OneDrive account after the upload of the first folder, this folder will again be password protected and this password will only be known to me.

In case of collecting personal data how will you anonymize the data?

All data relating to the participants and coming from the participants is anonymised by using code in the transcription phase. For example, a participants name will be replaced by a code which has no relation to them whatsoever. When a participant mentions any personal names, locations, work, etc., anything that might be able to reveal their identity, will be replaced with code, for example, when a certain location is mentioned it will be replaced with [Location].

Note: It is advisable to keep directly identifying personal details separated from the rest of the data. Personal details are then replaced by a key/ code. Only the code is part of the database with data and the list of respondents/research subjects is kept separate.

PART VI: SIGNATURE

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the ethical guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing information to participants about the study and ensuring confidentiality in storage and use of personal data. Treat participants respectfully, be on time at appointments, call participants when they have signed up for your study and fulfil promises made to participants.

Furthermore, it is your responsibility that data are authentic, of high quality and properly stored. The principle is always that the supervisor (or strictly speaking the Erasmus University Rotterdam) remains owner of the data, and that the student should therefore hand over all data to the supervisor.

Hereby I declare that the study will be conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Public Administration and Sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I have answered the questions truthfully.

Name student: Sanne Blom
Schinkel

Name (EUR) supervisor: Willem

Date: 26-03-2023

Date: 26-03-2023

Informed Consent Form (if applicable)**Information and consent form**

EUR procedures concerning sexual harassment

Introduction

I am Sanne Blom and I am currently doing research for the Erasmus University Rotterdam as a masters student. I am conducting research on the policies and procedures concerning how the EUR deals with complaints about sexual harassment.

I will explain the study below. If you have any questions, please ask me. While reading, you can mark parts of the text that are unclear to you.

If you want to participate in the study, you can indicate this at the end of this form.

Why this research?

The purpose of this research is to paint a better picture of the workings within the EUR in dealing with complaints about sexual harassment. With this better understanding the EUR and other universities are able to use this information in order to (re)create their own policies and procedures of handling sexual harassment within the university.

Why am I asking you to participate?

I ask you to participate in this study because you are knowledgeable about the policies the EUR has in place for dealing with sexual harassment. This knowledge would help me to understand how these policies work.

What can you expect?

This research exists out of interviews. If you participate in this study you will take part in an interview. This interview will take no longer than 30 minutes. In this interview you will be asked about the workings of the policies and procedures that are in place to handle sexual harassment at EUR. If you do not want to answer a question during the interview, you are not required to do so. I will make an audio recording of the conversation. At the end of the interview/discussion, you will have the opportunity to comment on your answers. If you disagree with my notes or if I misunderstood you, you can ask to have parts of them amended or deleted. After your participation I might do a follow-up if any unclarities arise during the data analysis, however, this is not likely.

You decide whether to participate

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can stop at any time and would not need to provide any explanation. There is also the option to withdraw your participation after the interview has already taken place.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?

The subject of the study is one of a very sensitive nature. It was a deliberate decision to not include victims of sexual harassment in this study. If by any chance you have dealt with sexual harassment please do not participate in this study. Further, I do not anticipate any risks or discomforts while participating in this study.

What data will I ask you to provide?

I will store your data so that I can be in contact with you. For the study, I will also need other data from you. During the interview, the following personal data will be collected from you: Name, audio recording, occupation, opinions about the policies of dealing with complaint at EUR. I also need your email address to send the results of the study to you by email if you indicate you want to receive the results.

At Erasmus University, we conduct scientific research. We do this to learn, help people, and contribute to society. Since we are an academic institution conducting scientific research, we process your personal data exclusively for research on the basis of public interest.

Who can see your data?

- I store all your data securely.
- Only the researcher of this study can see the data.
- Recordings are transcribed. Your name is replaced with a number/made-up name.
- Data such as your name, occupation and recordings (direct personal data) will be stored separately from the transcription.
- I may use your specific answers in the article. If your answer can be traced to you or we would like to mention your name, we will ask your permission first.

How long will your personal data be stored?

Your data will be retained for a minimum of 10 years. We retain the data so that other researchers have the opportunity to verify that the research was conducted correctly.

Using your data for new research

(Part of) the data I collect may be useful in anonymized form, for example for educational purposes and future research, including in very different research areas. I will make the data publicly available after proper anonymization. I ensure that the data cannot be traced back to you/I do not disclose anything that identifies you.

In addition, your personal data, excluding name, mail address and recordings, may be used for follow-up or other scientific research. The data shared are pseudonymized. You have the right to object to further use.

What happens with the results of the study?

You may indicate if you would like to receive the results. I will ask this at the end of the interview. If you want to receive the results you will get a summary of the results by email. This email will be sent on the 26th of June.

Do you have questions about the study?

If you have any questions about the study or your privacy rights, such as accessing, changing, deleting, or updating your data, please contact me.

Name: Sanne Blom

Phone number: +31 643 190 412

Email: 484532sb@eur.nl

Do you have a complaint or concerns about your privacy? Please email the Data Protection Officer (fg@eur.nl) or visit www.autoriteitpersoonsgegevens.nl. (T: 088 - 1805250)

Do you regret your participation?

You may regret your participation. Please indicate this by contacting me. Deleting your data is no longer possible if the data has been anonymized, making it impossible to trace which data came from you. Anonymizing the data is done immediately after the data was collected.

Ethics approval

This research has been reviewed and approved by an internal review committee of Erasmus University Rotterdam. This committee ensures that research participants are protected. If you would like to know more about this RERC/IRB, please contact [add contact information or website].

Declaration of Consent

I have read the information letter. I understand what the study is about and what data will be collected from me. I was able to ask questions as well. My questions were adequately answered. I know that I am allowed to stop at any time.

I understand that my data will be anonymized for publication, and further use for teaching and research; and

I understand that my data may be used in pseudonymized form for other scientific research.

Check the boxes below if you consent to this.

Required for research participation,

Data about procedures at EUR concerning sexual harassment.

I consent to the researcher's collection, use and retention of the following data:
Information about the EUR dealing with sexual harassment.

Audio recording

I consent to the interview being audio recorded.

My answers in the article

I give permission for my answers to be used in papers, such as an article in a journal or book.
My name will not be included.

New research

I give permission to be contacted again for new research.

Name of participant:

Participant's signature:

Date:

You will receive a copy of the complete information and consent form.