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## The Concept and the Name of Isolating Gender Violence

Ana Vidu<sup>1</sup>

Lidia Puigvert<sup>2</sup>

Ramon Flecha<sup>2</sup>

Garazi López de Aguilera<sup>3</sup>

1) Deusto University

2) University of Barcelona

3) University of Wisconsin - Madison

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# **The Concept and the Name of Isolating Gender Violence**

Ana Vidu

*Deusto University*

Garazi López de Auileta

*University of Wisconsin-Madison*

Lidia Puigvert

Ramon Flecha

*University of Barcelona*

## **Abstract**

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In December 2020, the Catalan Parliament approved by unanimity the world's first legislation of the concept of Isolating Gender Violence (IGV); in 2021, several parliaments are developing their own legislations. The elaboration of this concept and later this name has been a long and dialogic process among diverse scientists, policymakers, governments, parliaments, victims, survivors, social organizations and citizens. Since 2016, CREA (Community of Research on Excellence for All) has developed a process of elaborating the concept of IGV oriented to obtain the scientific, policy and social impact required to make a key contribution to overcoming gender violence. This process was simultaneous to the elaboration by the same researchers of the criteria of policy and societal impact of the EU's scientific programme of research (Horizon Europe). This paper presents this dialogic research conducted to get the concept and the name IGV and the consequences of this concept along scientific, policy and social impact. The results show that the key for getting the name and the impacts of this scientific robust concept has been three of the main characteristics of the present EU research program Horizon Europe: the priority of social impact, the co-creation of knowledge between scientists and citizens and sustainability.

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**Keywords:** isolating gender violence, dialogic research, social impact, co-creation

# **El Concepto y el Nombre de Violencia de Género Aisladora**

Ana Vidu

*Deusto University*

Garazi López de Aguilera

*University of Wisconsin-Madison*

Lidia Puigvert

Ramon Flecha

*University of Barcelona*

## **Resumen**

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En diciembre de 2020, el parlamento catalán aprobó por unanimidad la primera legislación mundial del concepto de Violencia de Género Aisladora (VGA); en 2021, varios parlamentos están desarrollando sus propias legislaciones. La elaboración de este concepto y posteriormente de este nombre ha sido un proceso largo y dialogado entre diversas personas científicas, responsables políticas, gobiernos, parlamentos, víctimas, supervivientes, organizaciones sociales y ciudadanas. Desde 2016, CREA (Community of Research on Excellence for All) ha desarrollado un proceso de elaboración del concepto VGA orientado al impacto científico, político y social necesario para realizar una contribución clave a superar la VG. Este proceso fue simultáneo a la elaboración por las mismas personas investigadoras de los criterios de impacto político y social del programa de investigación de la UE (Horizon Europe). Este artículo presenta esta investigación dialógica llevada a cabo para obtener el concepto y el nombre VGA y las consecuencias de este concepto en impacto científico, político y social. Los resultados muestran que la clave para obtener el nombre y los impactos de este concepto científico robusto han sido tres de las principales características del actual Horizonte Europa: prioridad del impacto social, cocreación de conocimiento entre personas científicas y ciudadanas y sostenibilidad

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**Palabras clave:** violencia de género aisladora, investigación dialógica, impacto social, cocreación

**G**ender violence is a global problem. There is a great commitment worldwide to find efficient solutions to overcome it. Despite multiple studies that are being conducted and the numerous resources allocated, gender violence does not cease. Recent data from WHO (2021) indicate that about 30% of women all over the world have suffered some kind of physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. The data do not improve, compared to similar statistics in previous years (WHO, 2017).

Such violence might take different forms, as several councils and conventions have gathered. The Istanbul Convention, approved by the Council of Europe (2021), specifies the following types of violence: psychological violence (Art. 33); stalking (Art. 34); physical violence (Art. 35); forced marriages (Art. 37); sexual violence, including rape (Art. 36); female genital mutilation (Art. 38); forced abortion and forced sterilization (Art. 39); sexual harassment (Art. 40); aiding or abetting and attempt (Art. 41); unacceptable justifications for crimes, including crimes committed in the name of so-called honor (Art. 42). Drawing on this, the Council of Europe distinguishes five inter-related types of violence: physical violence; verbal violence (including hate speech); psychological violence; sexual violence; socio-economic violence. Further research and international organisms have incorporated these terms in their own definitions and legislations (Vidu et al., 2021). However, more evidence is needed to better understand why, despite the recognition of the existence of gender violence, many victims remain isolated, without support to face and report such violence.

On June 13, 2016, CREA developed a concept to understand this reality: Isolating Gender Violence (IGV), that is, the attacks and retaliation launched against gender violence victims' supporters so that victims remain isolated. Research conducted throughout these five years on the concept of IGV is achieving great impacts that are contributing to the prevention and overcoming of gender violence. Until recently, Second Order of Sexual Harassment (SOSH), named by Billie Dziech and Linda Weiner in 1990, was used provisionally to describe the concept of IGV, in order to recognize their precursor contribution, to build upon the previous works and to open a wide process of dialogue with all the plurality of voices in order to define the best term, which has finally been IGV.

Since the first moment, we saw three limitations that made it necessary to elaborate another name and we decided to do it in open dialogue and transformations. The first and most important limitation was the lack of scientific, policy, and social impacts of this concept and name for 26 years; this was overcome and, in the same 2016, the new concept got key impacts. The second limitation was the need to have a concept for all types of gender violence and not only sexual harassment; we made this change already in the first world legislation approved by unanimity in the parliament of Catalonia with the name of second order violence (in a reform of a law on violence against women). The third limitation was that “second order” does not reflect what is going on; this is violence both against those who help the victims and to the direct victims in order to isolate them and guarantee impunity. The result of a dialogic process among diverse people and organizations to name this concept has resulted in the name IGV, presented for the first time in this paper.

Active citizenship is increasingly asking scientists to advance in bringing real solutions for current problems (Torrás-Gómez et al., 2019). These solutions can only be achieved by prioritizing social impact and through a process of co-creation among scientists, citizens, and their representatives (European Commission, 2018; Habermas, 1987). Along this line, this paper presents further advancements on the dialogic naming of IGV and the scientific, policy, and social impact of this concept developed in 2016 that is contributing to overcoming gender violence.

### **State of the Art**

Scientific research conducted by CREA has presented quantitative data about the reasons why most people do not support victims of sexual violence for the first time ever. The first reason found is the fear of retaliation, as 40% of those not supporting victims answered (Melgar et al., 2021). One of the initial approaches in the scientific literature regarding gender violence focused on advocating for victims to report their cases (Benson & Thomson, 1982), arguing that official organisms and mechanisms have to be created for that purpose (Choate, 2003). However, research noticed that retaliation and re-victimization (Rinehart & Yeater, 2011) suffered by those who break their

silence limits their willingness to complain, creating a silencing effect (Clark & Walker, 2011) as it constitutes one of the worst consequences once someone decides to report (Morley, 2011), even stronger in the case of vulnerable communities (Serrano-Amaya & Ríos-González, 2019). Indeed, there is widespread agreement on the fact that, without support, victims would not be able to go through the reporting process and face the potential negative consequences (Richman et al., 1999) not only of the harassment but also of breaking the silence and of the reporting process (Bybee & Sullivan, 2005). Therefore, supporting survivors, taking their side, and actively intervening against any kind of violence become crucial elements (Katz et al., 2015).

### **Victim Support to Overcome Gender Violence**

Although the international scientific community has widely recognized the importance of support and solidarity with survivors (Ullman et al., 2008; Reilly et al., 1992), support for gender violence victims is still lacking. One of the causes of the lack of supporting victims is the fear of becoming a victim of IGv, as the abovementioned study confirms (Melgar et al., 2021).

Coker and colleagues (2016) evaluated the impact of the outcomes of various university measures and mechanisms that had been implemented over the years to address sexual harassment. Through this first longitudinal empirical evaluation of the 2013 Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (which requires US universities to offer bystander intervention-based training to reduce sexual violence), bystander intervention was found to be the most effective measure to prevent and overcome campus violence. While bystander intervention was born in the context of college campuses, it was soon applied to other contexts, and it has been found to be one of the most effective mechanisms for action against and prevention of gender violence (Banyard et al., 2005). In this regard, the protection of upstanders became one of the most urgent concerns. As social scientists, we must go a step further to address it in depth. To turn the passive role of a bystander into an active bystander, protection becomes necessary.

In the same venue, existing research shows that the increase in the number of complaints of sexual violence is due to the positive response they receive. This happens in different contexts. For instance, a study conducted by Schuck

(2018) finds that a higher number of positive responses to rape incidents in law enforcement is linked to a higher reporting of cases. This is mainly happening because of the commitment shown by these people and the positive response they offer to people explaining their gender violence experiences, which overcome revictimization by showing support for survivors.

### **Protection beyond Direct Victims: Protection of IGV Victims**

While formal mechanisms are needed, informal support is shown to be crucial as victims tend to first disclose their cases to a friend (Banyard et al., 2010). Reactions and responses provided by any ‘friend’ or bystander may determine not only the case process but also survivors' wellbeing and resilience. Dziech and Weiner (1990) named for the first time the kind of attacks, victimization, and negative consequences suffered by supporters of victims of sexual harassment, naming such attacks and retaliation *second order of sexual harassment*. In 2016, 26 years later, we found that this concept has not been incorporated in any legislation in the world, it has not evolved in any policy, nor has it had any social impact; not even scientific articles about it have been published until then.

On June 13, 2016, professors from seven different Catalan universities decided to develop the concept of IGV and to dialogue with all voices in order to agree on the name of this concept that was finally decided on June 13, 2021. During these five years, this work was made simultaneously and by the same process of the elaboration of the criteria of policy and societal impact of all science in the European Research Programme Horizon Europe (Flecha, 2018). Consequently, the concept of IGV was developed in order to assure these characteristics: a) it should generate policy and social impact in order to clearly contribute to the overcoming of all types of gender violence; b) it should include all types of gender violence defined internationally and by any context; it could not be reduced only to sexual harassment; c) it should clarify what the objective of those attacks is, which is clearly to isolate the direct victims of gender violence by attacking their supporters; d) it should be elaborated not only by scientists without the social plurality of voices but dialogically based on an open and continuous dialogue with citizens and their

representatives, providing priority to survivors; e) it should have transferability, replicability, and sustainability.

Four years later, this process has made the most difficult step: the first legislation in the world of what IGV implies has been achieved (Vidu et al., 2021). Participants of the deliberation process wanted, from the very beginning, not to reduce the legislation to sexual harassment but to include all types of violence against women in a single law. As a result, the Catalan Legislation<sup>1</sup> of Law 17/2020, of December 22, modification of Law 5/2008, of the women right to eradicate the violence against women, includes the following types of violence (in addition to the types of violence already included in the Istanbul convention mentioned above): obstetric violence and violation of sexual and reproductive rights; digital violence; second order violence; and vicarious violence.

Being aware of the different types of violence that already exist in the different previous legislations, this article does not intend to define or collect the definitions of the different types of violence, nor what is gender violence, which is historical and contextual, but of what we have called Isolating Gender Violence, already included in Creative Commons<sup>2</sup>. IGV is applied to the definition of what gender violence means in each legislation and context.

### **The Challenge of Bringing IGV to the Legal Field**

Direct sexual harassment is currently visible and being studied from different perspectives within different spheres, with especial consideration to the intimate partner violence and its consequences (Johnson Ross, 2018). The study of sexual harassment and the protection of those who complain and the protection of the later ones emerged in college campuses, from the harassment suffered by women and men students, from male professors or peers, with a strong focus on the support that harassing victims receive. The legal aspects related to the development of the IGV concept also justify the efficiency of supporting supporters.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, see: [https://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2021-464](https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2021-464)

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see: [https://archive.org/details/isolating-gender-violence\\_20210613](https://archive.org/details/isolating-gender-violence_20210613)



Legal policies and programs are designed with the objective of achieving a social and community atmosphere in which uncomfortable situations are not tolerated. The paper by Bishop and Bettinson (2017) advocates along the same line. The 2015 Serious Crime Act criminalizes in a broadly manner coercive behavior as a new offence. They claim a creative prosecution method that goes beyond the direct victim testimony in court.

From the need to integrate the legal and gender disciplines in terms of highlighting their relevance to solving social inequality, Hall (1959) emphasized the remarkable current demand to understand and improve legal institutions. The subjective sense of law (von Ihering, 2003: 1878) embodies the interest of society in making laws possible for justice and for what he calls 'social peace'. In this line, from the socio legal perspective, legislations respond to people's demands while at the same time attempting to serve people.

### **Methodology**

The research methodology has been developed between 2016 and 2021 following two of the main characteristics of the Horizon Europe scientific programme: co-creation and social impact. The term IGV has been co-created in an open and continuous dialogue with scientists from different disciplines, policymakers, parliaments, governments, organizations, and citizens. The gender, race, and other dimensions of diversity have been rigorously followed, including academic and non-academic white and Roma women (among other genders and cultures) with priority for victims and survivors, from all ideological and political options. This dialogue has been oriented to get real policy and social impact, that is, to develop policies that obtain the overcoming of gender violence. In order to get those impacts, developing a process that at the same time included this open dialogue and some initial real transformations was required. More than 100 interviews, 21 discussion groups, and several conferences were conducted with the already referred diversity of actors. Instead of creating a new name before getting some relevant steps of this process, they decided to use in this first stage the already existing name. The new name was elaborated during this dialogic and transformative process and launched when the first transformations were already real.

## **Results**

### **All Types of Gender Violence**

The first clear point that got the support and consensus of this diversity of voices was the need to broaden the name of the concept to all dimensions of gender violence and not only to sexual harassment. In fact, the first legislation in the world, the one by the Catalan Parliament, already accepted this idea and, instead of including in the law the name of second order sexual harassment, it was included as second order violence. The same point was raised in the first debates in other parliaments like the one from Brazil, among others. Let us write down just some quotations of one of the discussion groups:

Discussion group A:

- Participant 1: The international reports and the national and regional legislations contemplate the diversity of forms of gender violence and not only sexual harassment. The concept to protect the ones who protect the direct victims should be referred to all those types of violence.
- Participant 2: So, we should clarify in the concept the list of types of gender violence related to the concept.
- Participant 3: No, IGV refers to the types of gender violence listed by international organisms and the ones of each country. The definition of IGV should not include this list, which is contextual and historic.
- Participant 4: Why not all forms of violence instead of only forms of gender violence?
- Participant 3: The concept of IGV is for kinds of gender violence related to the legislation of gender violence. Maybe a similar concept should be created for some other kinds of violence or for all of them, but this is another issue that should be developed with other kinds of research.

### Isolating Direct Victims as the Main Objective of IGV

Taking as a starting point the Catalan legislation and the scientific publications of those professors, other regions in Spain and other countries in Europe and Latin America have begun similar processes to introduce the concept in their own legislations about gender violence, which do not only include sexual harassment. Another important aspect already debated in the discussion groups, conferences, and interviews arises in the public debate: ‘second order’ could be confused with similar words already used in legislation for very different concepts, such as *secondary victimization*, which refers to new violence against the same direct victims, not the ones that help them. It could also generate confusion with other concepts from already existing legislations such as the *indirect violence* produced towards other victims, not because of their actions but due to being linked with the direct victims, such as being family members. Besides, those two words do not provide any clarification to the objective of this violence. For those and other reasons, the open and diverse dialogue concluded by launching the name of IGV on June 13, 2021, just five years after the greater offensive against those who support the victims, which happened on June 13th, 2016. The concrete formulation of the concept is the following:

[https://archive.org/details/isolating-gender-violence\\_20210613](https://archive.org/details/isolating-gender-violence_20210613)

*Isolating Gender Violence (IGV) is any kind of violence against those who advocate for gender violence victims. The objective of such violence is to isolate gender violence victims and discourage reporting or receiving support, in order to maintain the impunity of gender violence. The IGV concept is linked to what science and legislations establish as gender violence.*

The following quotations from another discussion group show one of the debates on this issue:

Discussion group B:

- Participant 1: The objections made to the words second order by the last researchers and lawyers are very conclusive, they introduce

confusion with other concepts already present in several international and national legislations.

- Participant 2: Second order means nothing related to the concept, we need to clarify in the name which are the objectives of this violence and who are the victims, maybe something like Victims of Violence Against Advocates who Help Victims of Gender Violence.
- Participant 3: That is not a name, but an encyclopedia. We need just one word to add to Gender Violence, just Isolating Gender Violence, this word clarifies that the objective is to isolate the victim in order to maintain impunity.
- Participant 4: But Isolating Gender Violence does not clarify that those suffering it are also victims, just the ones we want to be recognized as such by this kind of new legislation.
- Participant 5: In linguistics, we have very clear what are the contributions of social psychologist Herbert Mead to interaction: language needs the interactive attribution of meanings to words. Ten years ago the words *me too* had a different meaning to the one they have today after the fantastic movement “Me too” has attributed a new meaning to them. In a very short time, Isolating Gender Violence will have the very strong and transformative meaning we have developed for years to this programme of research and its policy and social impact.
- Participant 6: Do you mean that any word is indifferent to the interactive attribution of the desired meaning?
- Participant 5: Almost like this, do you know the origin of “Okay”?
- Participant 7: No
- Participant 5: In 1839, the *Boston Morning Post* made a joke writing “all correct” in this way: “Oll Korrekt”. Since then, the use of O.K. for saying “all correct” was extended and now it already has this meaning.
- Participant 3: Okay, Okay, but Isolating is not just one word, it is the best one for the meaning of the concept. We have discussed this option with many and very diverse researchers, politicians, citizens and no one has found a better word for this concept.

- Participant 7: Isolating reminds me to electrical isolation, not to human relationships.
- Participant 3: It is used with more meanings in literature, feminism or mental health for instance. For example, in her UN speech, Emma Watson said: “Apparently I am among the ranks of women whose expressions are seen as too strong, too aggressive, isolating, anti-men and, unattractive”. There are studies for instance about the mental health problems of what are called “isolating students”.
- Participant 7: I cannot see what the translation to other languages will be, for instance, in Spanish “aisladora” is used for electricity “cinta aislante”.
- Participant 3: But also for other meanings, for instance in linguistics: “bajo un punto de vista morfológico, las lenguas se dividen en monosilábicas o aisladoras” [under a morphological point of view, languages are divided in monosyllabic or isolating]. And many of the translations and subtitles of isolating to Spanish in the Emma Watson speech translated it as “aisladora”, and to Portuguese as “isoladora”. The name “Violencia de Género Aisladora” is very clear in Spanish. Diverse colleagues from Brazil and Portugal have told me that the name “Violência de Género Isoladora” is also very clear in Portuguese.
- Participant 8: But in doing so, it is not clear that the victims are the supporters of the victims of gender violence.
- Participant 3: Because the victims of IGV are both, the supporters of course, but also the direct victims because the isolation revictimizes them again. This is one of the points I like most about the concept: both are the victims.
- Participant 8: So, the isolation refers to the direct victims, but not their supporters.
- Participant 3: It refers to both. This violence not only isolates direct victims but also their advocates.
- Participant 9: I think this expression is excellent in Spanish (Violencia de Género Aisladora) and Portuguese (Violência de Género Isoladora). But isolating in English is a verb, not an adjective:

Isolating GV can be read as if what is isolated is the GV and not their victims.

- Participant 3: Yes, but in English, as I have read in the Cambridge dictionary, “many past and present participles can be used as adjectives” and this is the case of isolating. Soon after the publication of the name linked to the concept everybody will read it as an adjective in IGv.

### **Legal Steps towards Recognizing and Protecting Victims of IGv**

Undertaking the conceptualization of IGv in a dialogue that includes such a diversity of voices has led to advancing its policy impact. In the first-ever conference on how to protect gender violence victims’ supporters, politicians of all the different options of the Catalan political parties were invited to engage in a dialogue that exposed the need to include such reality in legislation. The dialogues between researchers and politicians describing this reality experienced by people of diverse ideologies opened the door to begin developing mechanisms at the policy level to prevent it:

When we organized the first conference in the world to discuss the problem of the attacks and reprisals received by gender violence victims’ advocates, we organized a round table with politicians from very different political options (considering all parties of the parliament). It was really exciting to see how people who have such different ideologies and priorities, all agreed about the importance of giving legal protection to victims’ supporters, they kept saying that we need to work together to legislate this, as it is a reality that we all know we already got (Inés, researcher, and co-founder of the Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence in Universities)

Continuing such dialogues throughout these years has boosted the policy impact of the concept of IGv. In the Fall of 2020, some researchers and social organizations participated closely in the elaboration of the Catalan *Law 17/2020 of December 22, of modification of the Law 5/2008 of the right of*

women to eradicate sexist violence,<sup>3</sup> in which IGV was for the first time in the world included in one law, with the term second order violence. The result of such dialogues was not only the introduction of the concept of IGV in the legislation, but importantly, the fact that such legislation was passed in unanimity of all political parties:

When we were contacted by Catalan policymakers to talk about this problem and potentially introduce it in the legislation about sexist violence, we started having many dialogues with politicians from all parties, providing them with the scientific evidence that we already had. All of them clearly understood that this was a very important problem that needed to be included in the legislation regarding violence against women, and in the end, all of them approved it, with no doubts (Nuria, policy maker)

Moreover, rather than remaining in the Catalan context, this process has boosted other parliaments to undertake the task of including IGV in their own legislations. At the Spanish regional level, the governments and different political parties involved in autonomous communities such as the Basque Country, Cantabria, Asturias, Valencia and Extremadura are currently establishing dialogues with the professors who have initiated the research on this issue in order to best capture IGV in each of their contexts' legislations. Moreover, the policy impact of this dialogic process has reached overseas, Brazil being the last country to engage in such a process, counting with more than 200 million inhabitants.

Considering the success of the Catalan legislation, we got in contact with several politicians from the Basque Country in order to introduce IGV here as well. To prepare the meeting with the politicians we also contacted other researchers and social organizations who are doing the same process in other places, such as Cantabria, Asturias, Valencia, Extremadura, and Brazil, to share the experiences of how

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<sup>3</sup> For more information, see: [https://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2021-464](https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2021-464)

these processes were being developed in different contexts (Julen, researcher)

A criterion of current scientific international programs of research is not only to obtain policy and social impact, but the transferability, replicability and sustainability of those impacts. In the case of the policy impact here described, these mentioned criteria have been quickly developed when those professors have published the elaborations made since 2016 and when they have started to publish the elements of the definitive name, for instance including all types of gender violence and not only sexual harassment.

### **Achieving Social Improvements as a Result of Conceptualizing IGV**

Most importantly, the dialogic elaboration of this scientific concept has led to promoting social impact, to make steps towards the overcoming of all forms of gender violence. Indeed, as several interviewees state, it was the prioritizing of social impact that led to conceptualizing IGV. Prioritizing social impact and engaging in dialogic processes of co-creation towards it has made IGV be recognized and undertaken by a wide range of civil organizations and associations. Among those, scientific associations such as the Catalan Sociological Association (ACS) introduced the concept in its code of ethics in order to ensure that no one in the association nor attending its annual conference would be attacked due to defending victims of gender violence:

The ACS has been the first scientific association to explicitly include the protection of supporters of victims of gender violence in its code of ethics. This has posed a major example for other scientific associations not only in Spain but in Europe and worldwide, to see that as communities of scientists, we cannot allow someone who has defended gender violence victims to be attacked (Irene, researcher)

Not only is the social impact of IGV reaching scientific organizations; it has also been supported by representatives of religious organizations, among others. One of the interviewees explained the way in which the president of the Center for Child Protection, through Twitter, gave importance and



disseminated an article from *Cristianismo y Justicia* talking about the concept and its approval at the Catalan parliament. This public stance is promoting more people to support victims:

Thanks to the dialogic way in which the conceptualization of this reality has been carried out, by including very diverse individuals and civil organizations, its impact has even arrived at the Vatican. The president of the Centre for Child Protection (Pontifical Gregorian University), appointed by Pope Francis to serve as head of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, recently tweeted about the need for victims' supporters to be protected in order for victims to become survivors. This has been a major step in the international recognition of IGV victims, showing not only Catholic communities but the entire society, that we can no longer look the other side and that we need to protect victims' supporters to overcome gender violence (Lucía, researcher)

Exposing the reality suffered by IGV victims has also led organizations working to defend gender violence victims to take a stance in favor of IGV victims. Such is the case of the Unitarian Platform Against Gender violence, which is formed by 121 diverse entities working towards the same objective. The public stance of the platform defending the researchers who had suffered great retaliation on June 13 due to reporting sexual harassment at the university was decisive in supporting them:

The Platform has been supporting gender violence victims and victims' defenders from the very beginning. especially in 2016, when we received the generalized attacks on June 13th, the Platform stood by our side and publicly showed support towards those of us who were being attacked due to being the first ones in breaking the silence of sexual harassment at the university. the Platform's support has been essential not only to us, IGV victims but to gender violence victims as well, as it shows society that victims will no longer be alone (Sofía, researcher)

Following this line of making this form of violence visible, the most relevant media in Spain pledged in favor of IGV victims making an important dissemination of the concept. For instance, reporters of TVE (the national Spanish TV channel) made a documentary film including the concept IGV and the voices of the victims. This documentary obtained the Golden Globe of the World Media Festival, held in Hamburg (2018) and its part on IGV is already a world model of what communication should do in order to protect the protectors (Pulido et al., 2021)

A group of reporters from the national Spanish TV were making a documentary film about sexual harassment. They contacted us as researchers with great impact on the issue, but during the dialogues we had with them, in which we explained the reality of IGV, they clearly saw the need to include it in the film (Olivia, researcher, and co-founder of the Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence in Universities)

### **Providing Society with Scientific Evidence on IGV**

In addition to the policy and social impact of the concept of IGV, interviewees highlighted the scientific impact it has had. Indeed, whereas the previous concept of SOSH has not had a scientific impact in over 26 years, the concept of IGV has already generated seven scientific articles in JCR-indexed journals about this reality, as one of the researchers interviewed explains:

When in 2016 we received the attacks, we searched for scientific evidence about what had happened to us, about being attacked due to supporting gender violence victims. We found a book by Dziech and Weiner that talked about second order sexual harassment, but that was all that we found, no scientific articles had been produced. We began conducting research about this reality and now, five years later, we have already published seven scientific articles in top-ranked journals and have several more underway (Martina, researcher)

Importantly, along this line of prioritizing social impact and engaging in co-creation with citizens, the research behind these articles has always been conducted through engaging in dialogues with survivors, their supporters, social organizations, and other citizens, as one of the interviewees' highlights:

We have always conducted our research following the communicative orientation, that is, engaging in an egalitarian dialogue with diverse citizens and organizations. This is crucial for producing scientific knowledge that will achieve social impact, and it is even more important when we are talking to victims and survivors of gender violence and IGV in order to respect and protect their privacy and avoid revictimization. Moreover, we have published all articles in open access, because what we want is for other scientists to continue studying this reality and for citizens to have this scientific evidence at their disposal, as it is their right to know and participate in scientific advancements (Paula, researcher)

Some interviewees have also pointed out the diversity of the disciplines, perspectives, and methodologies through which the different studies on IGV have been and are being conducted:

Because we are in constant dialogue with researchers from different disciplines, with diverse entities and representatives of different sectors of society, and, most importantly, with victims, we are able to provide scientific evidence from very different perspectives and tackling different dimensions of IGV. For instance, we have recently studied the consequences in health of being a victim of IGV, as well as the health consequences of gender violence victims due to the IGV suffered by their supporters. We have also studied this reality from the legal perspective, analyzing the legal implications of recognizing IGV victims. And we are conducting both qualitative and quantitative research, showing important data about the implications and consequences of IGV (Daniela, researcher)

## Discussion and Conclusion

Gender violence and all its expressions are topics that have been worked on in different fields for a long time. Much of the research conducted on sexual harassment until recently focused on overcoming revictimization (Reilly et al., 1992) and providing support to survivors (Choate, 2003), enhancing measures based on the bystander intervention principle (Banyart et al., 2005). However, victim reports did not increase even if bystander training and mechanisms were implemented. Inquiring into the possible causes of this aspect, a type of harassment towards people who support the victims was found as a reason to obstruct support. This reality was given the term *second order of sexual harassment* but, in spite of the concept being named, it was not put into practice; for 26 years, the concept was abandoned.

In 2016, this changed when researchers who had suffered attacks due to defending gender violence victims undertook a concept not only for the academic context but also for areas such as political parties, the press, the judicial context, and social organizations. Representatives of all these spheres could from that moment name this reality. Yet in this very process of diverse individuals and organizations engaging in dialogues about this reality and how to advance on its overcoming, the need for a broader concept emerged, different stakeholders arguing that it should not be limited to sexual harassment but, rather, it should include all forms of gender violence. It is in these dialogues that this concept is given a new term: Isolating Gender Violence. If bystanders are not protected victims will tend not to break their silence. With the aim of protecting the victims and empowering them (Sainio et al., 2011), this article presents for the first time in the world the name of IGV, which represents a broader manner of describing how the attacks towards victims' supporters pretend to isolate them. In the existing research on intimate partner violence, Brownridge and colleagues (2020) refer to perpetrators' socially isolating behaviors and describe it as an isolating experience for children exposed to it (Noble-Carr et al., 2020; Vermeire, 2020). On the other hand, the article describes the process of creating the concept of Isolating Gender Violence.

For some years now, the IGV concept has been generating scientific, social, and political impacts. On the scientific side, different studies have been

carried out, which give legitimacy to the concept, from different perspectives. Both qualitative studies including voices of people who have been victims for daring to support a direct victim, and quantitative studies showing for the first time that 40% of people who did not dare to intervene did not do so out of fear have been published. In all, there are a total of seven scientific publications generated so far.

On the legal side, everything that has been worked on during this time has led to a unique and difficult achievement: the unanimous agreement of all political groups in a parliament to convert the protection of those who suffer for supporting a victim into law. This first legislation, on which there is already a scientific publication, is leading to other legislations in other parliaments in different parts of the world; so much so that soon, there will no longer be any doubt about the need to solve this problem, also including in the laws the duty of relief for victims of IGv.

At the social level, discussions with different social organizations have led different associations and organizations to include IGv in their ethical codes, something that had not been contemplated until now. All these advances are evincing the need for society to defend supporters of gender violence victims as an essential step towards overcoming gender violence.

Defining a concrete reality is key to its identification; it is also crucial so that it can be analyzed, legislated, so that there can be complaints against it, as well as to create a collective awareness of protection. In this line, giving the concept of IGv this name contributes to other scholars providing legal consciousness in the path of building broader protection for everyone (Gill & Creutzfeldt, 2018). Addressing this issue also implies approaching gender violence from a broader perspective. Indeed, including the political, social, and scientific impact constitutes a great opportunity for both proving gender research studies useful for a greater egalitarian society and contributing to empowering survivors in the path of overcoming gender violence and the crucial consequences that it socially involves.

### **Further challenges**

Scientific research has pending issues that still need to be contemplated. Here are some of them. On the one hand, the “causality challenge”, meaning

that in order for someone to be considered a victim of IGv, it is necessary to be aware of the gender violence situation suffered by the direct victim and the voluntary intervention of another individual with the deliberate purpose of supporting or helping the victim. Thus, more knowledge and practice need to be conducted in order to develop tools to be able to legally demonstrate this causality.

Another challenge is the civil vs penal law perspective. To apply for *civil remedy*, the victim has to prove the legal assumptions, which in the case of IGv would be: the damage bystanders may suffer; the action/omission that caused the damage; the causal link between the action/omission and damage; and the fault (in this case, the decision to act voluntarily against those who support victims). In the future, it is necessary to overcome the questioning that is made to these victims for having acted despite the potentially harmful consequences.

In this sense, to criminalize the omission of assistance, an already legislated concept as the duty to rescue, also in cases of child sexual abuse is a future challenge as well. In this article, we are mainly referring to adults, under the IGv expression, as the ones who may decide to intervene and support victims. Adults are understood according to the civil law of each own legal system.

In this line, and considering previous work conducted on the issue, the fact motivating a crime also constitutes a challenge. A pending debate is whether future potential legislation should include ways to punish who harms, offends, those who support the victims or not. Further legislation should avoid isolating the victim and avoiding it is also crucial as a way to prevent gender violence from occurring.

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**Ana Vidu** professor at Deusto University, Spain..

**Contact Address:** ana.vidu@deusto.es