

EHSREC No:2024\_10\_12\_EHS

**Participant Information Sheet**

**Exploring experiences of disclosing and reporting sexual violence and harassment to higher education institutions**

**What is the project about?**

The aim of the study is to explore and document experiences related to the survivor journey from disclosure to outcome of formally investigated cases of sexual violence and harassment, including the full range of experiences from no disclosure to formal investigation.

**What will I have to do?**

You will be invited to partake in a one-to-one interview lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. The location in which the interview will take place will be according to your choice. Prior to taking part in the interview, you will be asked to sign a consent form. The interview will be audio recorded and may also be video recorded if it occurs online via MS Teams.

**What are the benefits?**

The potential benefits of the study are to give voice to victims of sexual violence and harassment as a result of their studying or working within a Higher Educational Institution in Ireland. There is a potential opportunity to inform policy that will afford protection to students and staff in the future.

What are the risks?

The potential risks associated with this study relate to the potential for distress from revisiting trauma. Given this, additional measures will be taken to support participants including interviews being carried out in a location of preference for the participant, providing participants with interview questions in advance of the interview, and an opportunity to review the interview transcript and make any changes or withdraw if you so wish to do so. After this point, transcripts will be de-identified and pseudonymised, and no key will be kept to identify participants therefore, withdrawal will no longer be possible.

**What if I do not want to take part?**

Participation is completely voluntary. You can stop taking part in the research study at any time, up until data is de-identified and pseudonymised (after transcript review). At that stage, it will not be possible to distinguish your data from that of other participants. Should you feel at any stage that you want to stop taking part in the study, then this is dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner.

What happens to the information?

Following the interview, a transcript will be prepared. Once the transcript has been finalised, we will remove identifying information as much as possible including all names, names of institutions, and places. We will return your transcript to you and you will have the opportunity to make amendments or remove details that you do not wish to be included, within 7 days of receipt. The transcripts will be considered deidentified from this point onwards. We cannot guarantee that your data will be fully anonymous, as with all qualitative research, there is a very small chance that people might recognise you from the way you speak, phrases you use or stories that you tell. The information gathered from the study will be handled in complete confidence.

Results of the interviews as well as their confidentiality are the first priority of the researchers carrying out the study. The study will be audio recorded with all recordings stored safely, securely and confidentially and deleted after transcripts have been confirmed. If your interview takes place over Microsoft Teams with the camera on, then it will also be video recorded as there is no way of only recording audio. Only the PI and interviewing researcher in the study will have access to the audio/video recordings. When the study is finished, information will be kept on Prof Patricia Mannix McNamara UL GDPR compliant One-Drive cloud server.

**Who else is taking part?**

We are seeking to document the experiences of 15-20 individuals. Participants will include:

* Staff and students of higher education institutions that have experienced sexual violence and harassment since joining their institutions and in the past 4 years.
* Contractors, visiting researchers, visiting lecturers and visiting students that have experienced sexual violence and harassment in the Irish institutions and in the past 4 years.
* Former staff and alumni of an institution may also be considered who experienced sexual violence and harassment in the past 4 years.

What happens at the end of the study?

At the end of the study the information will be used to present results including a report, peer-reviewed journal articles, conference presentations and generating accessible and creative survivor stories/ outputs based on the research data, to be communicated widely. The main research outputs will also be on our website www.borg.ie. All findings shared will be fully deidentified.

**What if I have more questions or do not understand something**.

If you do not understand any aspect of the research, please contact any of the researchers and discuss any questions that you might have. It is important that you feel completely at ease during the research.

**What if I change my mind during the study?**

Should you feel at any stage that you want to stop being a participant in the research, you are free to stop and take no further part. After data de-identification, it will be impossible to withdraw your data as it will not be possible to distinguish it from the data of other participants. For this reason, it will not be possible to remove your interview data once we have finalised the de-identified transcript,.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

**Project Investigator Contact Details:**

Principal Investigator

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***This research study has received Ethics approval from the Education and Health***

***Sciences Research Ethics Committee EHS REC numbers – 2024\_10\_12\_EHS***

***If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent you may contact:***

***Chair Education and Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee***

***EHS Faculty Office***

***University of Limerick***

***Tel (061) 234101***