

# Addressing inequality in organizations: group model building on harassment in academia

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## Introduction

Grand challenge of inequality in organizations (Benschop, 2021)

Harassment part of 'system of inequality'.

Case: Dutch school of theology that aims to improve equal opportunities

Dean and female staff: harassment barrier to advancement of women, sensitive issue

Participatory modelling sessions with staff and leadership; mixed gender and race composition

Pre-interviews

Reference mode: advancement of female academics

Nominal Group Technique

Identification of variables, Discussion and Validation

Recommendations



## Results

Discussion of examples:

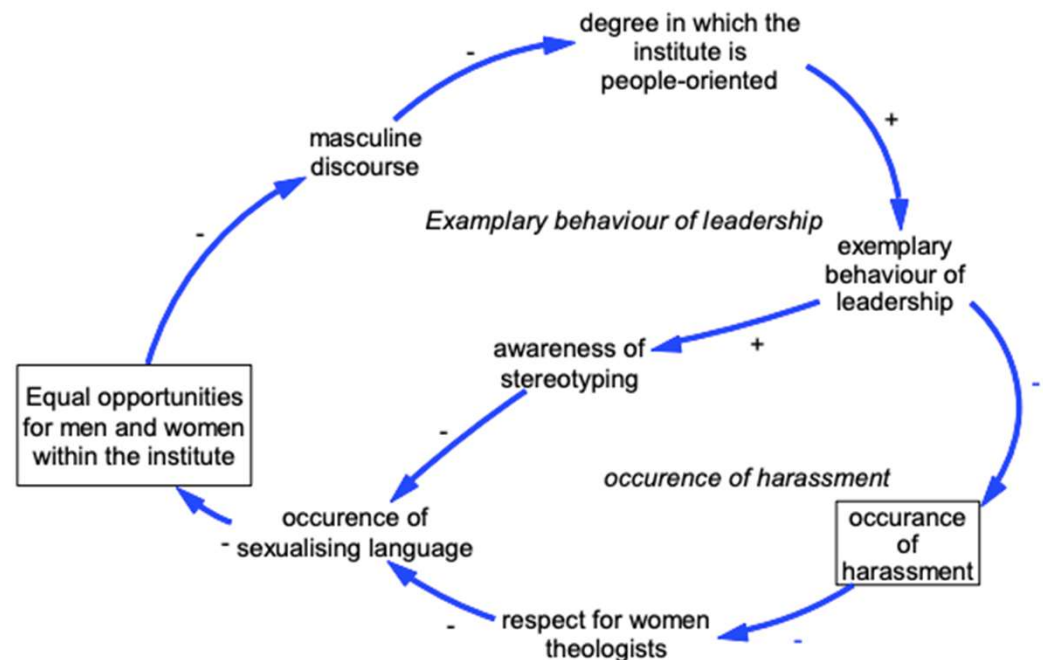
Paternalizing language: 'Darling', 'little girl'.

Management reaction to pregnancy: 'Oh, no, again?'

References about looks of job candidates: 'nice legs.'

Awareness amongst leadership that their behaviour influences (changes in) culture

Awareness amongst participants that harassment relates to masculine discourse in academia and church.



## Discussion

- Insight in systemic aspects of political complex issue
- Participatory element allowed discussing sensitive issues
- Input for leadership decision making

### Challenge:

- Focus on the cognitive aspects
- High demands on facilitator: combining attention for cognitive, emotional and social complexity with facilitating group process.

### Recommendation:

- Make dealing with emotions and vulnerability part of training in participatory modelling.