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Everyday Grassroots Politics against Gender-Based Violence: Insights from a Longitudinal Study of the Italian Case

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In this article, we look at how gender-based violence (GBV) is made prominent and framed within the Italian trans-feminist agenda, which we understand as a system of knowledge-in-action that emerges when Italian trans-feminist actors discuss issues that concern them during the everyday grassroots initiatives that they organize. Adapting protest event analysis, our study maps 3,879 events promoted on Facebook by 183 trans-feminist actors between 2019 and 2021 and analyzes them through network and frame analysis. Findings show that GBV consistently functions as a master frame: it remains central within the agenda while connecting diverse issues, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the agenda slightly narrows over time, GBV's integrative capacity increases, linking emergent crises to longer-standing concerns and reflections. Longitudinally, diagnostic framing remains stable, while prognostic and motivational frames evolve through processes of consolidation, amplification, and extension. Overall, GBV operates within recent trans-feminist mobilizations as a connective grammar of injustice.

Key words: gender-based violence; trans-feminist movements; Facebook; protest event analysis; network analysis; frame analysis.

Introduction

Carrying on the collective struggle of feminist mobilizations between the 1960s and 1970s, trans-feminist movements have worked since the 2010s to call public attention to the deep roots and manifold forms of gender-based violence (GBV), issuing transnational calls to fight and dismantle it.[1] In 2015,

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the movement *Ni Una Menos* (literally, Not One Less) burst out in Argentina in response to the murder of Chiara Páez, killed by her boyfriend because of her pregnancy (Terzian 2017), and rapidly spilled over to several other countries, fueling other collective efforts such as the Palestinian *Tal'at* movement, triggered by the brutal killing of Israa Ghrayeb in 2019 (Stagni 2024), and the Italian *Non Una di Meno*, which emerged in 2016 after the femicide of Sara Di Pietrantonio at the hands of her former partner (Chironi 2019). From Argentina and Chile to Italy and Spain, this recent wave of mobilization has articulated a "structural understanding of gender-based violence, framing it as a product of patriarchal systems and intersecting forms of oppression that sustain inequality" (Bonu Rosenkranz and Barone 2025, p. 2). Thus, GBV has functioned as a unifying master frame to intersectionally address a range of social struggles, such as—but not limited to—migrant, reproductive, and labor rights (Bonu Rosenkranz and Barone 2025; Gago 2020).

In a context in which collective struggles unfold in hybrid ways across online and offline spaces (pavan and Earl, in press), grassroots fights against GBV have been carried on increasingly also through digital media (Mendes, Keller, and Ringrose 2019). Research has indeed consistently stressed how the use of these tools enriches action repertoires to both raise awareness about and combat all forms of GBV. In this respect, particularly hashtag activism has been seen as enhancing the potential of trans-feminist critique to breach hegemonic narratives, build networks of dissent (Jackson et al. 2020), and foster intersectional solidarities (Kelly-Thompson et al. 2025). By intertwining online and offline actions, trans-feminist mobilizations have thus sought to foster a "multidimensional social change" (pavan 2022, 244) in which GBV is addressed through encompassing actions, practices, and frames.

Although these strands of research speak to the liveliness of trans-feminist activism against GBV, extant studies tend to approach these collective endeavors by starting from where it can be already recognized—typically, during "iconic moments of action" (Fish, King, and Almack 2018) such as March 8 or November 25 which host widely recognized forms of protest (e.g., marches, rallies, strikes, or digital content production) and in which claims are raised with respect to specific concerns such as sexual abuse. While this epistemological orientation reinforces our understanding of the continuities between past and current "struggle(s) to end sexist oppression" (hooks 1984, 24), it also constrains our possibility to understand the manifold ways in which current trans-feminist action configures more broadly as a "struggle to eradicate the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels as well as a commitment to reorganizing society so that the self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion, and material desires" (hooks 1984, 24).

In this article, we seek to move this conversation forward by examining trans-feminist everyday grassroots politics against GBV. Drawing on Fish, King, and Almack (2018), we conceptualize these politics as the variety of actions and

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frames that trans-feminist actors deploy in "the quotidian" to address GBV and that "embody the social change that people want to experience in their lives as they are lived" (Fish, King, and Almack 2018, 1196). To this aim, we focus on a pool of actors active in Italy between 2019 and 2021, a period in which the consolidation of collective grassroots mobilizations against GBV was challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic (Chironi 2025) but also witnessed heightened institutional engagement. Starting from the manifold events organized by these actors, we explore the role of GBV within what we call the *trans-feminist agenda*—that is, the set of issues discussed in these occasions and the connections drawn between them by trans-feminist actors as they struggle against complex systems of intersectional oppression. In this sense, we examine the role of GBV not simply as one item within an abstract list of issues raised during trans-feminist events. Rather, we seek to understand the place that GBV has occupied over time within what we conceptualize as a networked system of knowledge-in-action—a system in which trans-feminist actors' knowledge of the issues they engage with, their critical interpretations of social reality, the problems they identify, and the solutions they propose are continuously constructed, reconfigured, and enacted in and through protest initiatives realized in the space of the everyday.

Empirically, we trace the trans-feminist agenda as a semantic network in which issues are linked when they are jointly addressed during the trans-feminist events we mapped. We derive our inspiration from traditional methodological approaches within social movement studies—in particular, protest event analysis (PEA) (Hutter 2014). At the same time, we take seriously the concerns raised with respect to the usefulness of this method for investigating trans-feminist mobilizations (Bagguley 2010), as well as the invitation to start from the situated knowledges that develop from the grassroots (Haraway 1988). We take advantage of digital media, especially Facebook, to map a variety of events that, irrespective of when they occur and the format they take, are deemed to be "eventful" by trans-feminist activists and groups. Against this backdrop, through a combination of network and frame analysis, we analyze both cross-sectionally and longitudinally the position of GBV and its framing within the trans-feminist agenda.

The rest of the article is organized as follows. In the following section, we sketch the contours of the progressive repoliticization of GBV in Italy and emphasize the crucial role of grassroots trans-feminist mobilization in this respect. After illustrating our research questions, our methods, and data, we comment on the results of network and frame analysis. We conclude by reflecting on the role of GBV within contemporary trans-feminist efforts.

The grassroots politicization of gender-based violence in Italy between the 1970s and the 2020s

According to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (also known as

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the Istanbul Convention), GBV is defined as "any type of harm that is perpetrated against a person or group of people because of their factual or perceived sex, gender, sexual orientation and/or gender identity" (Council of Europe 2025). Thus, GBV is understood as a social phenomenon whose roots lie in the structural asymmetries of power characterizing the patriarchal gender order (Connell 1987) in which the male gender is constructed as privileged. As such, whether it takes the form of domestic violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, economic violence, stalking, or image-based sexual abuse, GBV invariantly affects the lives of all women—both cisgender and trans—as well as gender-nonconforming individuals (Engle Merry 2009), regardless of their class, race and ethnicity, religion, or place of living (Abu-Lughod et al. 2022). Crucially, not only does GBV target individual women and gender-nonconforming people. It also disavows them as unworthy social groups to reproduce male privilege (Krook 2020).

In Italy, the construction of GBV as a social problem (Rose 1977) as much as the policy frameworks to combat it have been pushed forward through the constant work of trans-feminist activists since the 1960s (Salvatori 2024). Between the 1970s and 1980s, feminist protests were mobilized, and citizen-initiative bills were proposed to recognize sexual violence as a social problem and to overcome problematic laws that framed it as a crime against morality and allowed the so-called "rehabilitating marriage," which extinguished the crime through the marriage between the rapist and the victim (Pietrobelli et al. 2020). Additionally, between the 1980s and the 1990s, Italian feminist groups organized grassroots women's shelters and health centers (Barone 2026), which eventually took the form of a national network in 1996 (Pietrobelli et al. 2020). This development signaled a broader shift from grassroots mobilization toward cultural and organizational work (Calabrò and Grasso 2004). However, Italian institutions were rather slow in building on these inputs. A national law on sexual violence was adopted only in 1996, followed by provisions addressing domestic violence in 2001, female genital mutilation in 2006, stalking in 2009, while the first national plan against GBV was adopted only in 2010 (Donato 2023).

Between the early 2000s and 2010s, GBV gained even more public attention but mainly for its inclusion in femonationalist narratives issued by media and parties to target migrants and racialized communities—particularly Roma people (Scrinzi 2026; Saccà 2021). This, in turn, facilitated the adoption of law-and-order policies fostering a securitarian and emergency-based approach to GBV (Pietrobelli et al. 2020), such as the 2007 adoption of a security decree allowing the expulsion of EU citizens judged as a threat to public security (Vianello 2012 in Pietrobelli et al. 2020). These measures were highly criticized by Italian trans-feminist groups, which insisted instead on femicide rates as the most evident illustration of the structural nature of GBV. After the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in 2013, the national plan against GBV took a more structural approach but allocated only limited resources to implement the Convention and fund women's shelters (Pietrobelli et al. 2020).

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It is within this framework that, in 2016, a group of Italian feminist activists launched a national demonstration on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, which marked the emergence of the trans-feminist network *Non Una di Meno* (NUDM) (Salvatori 2024). Since then, this movement has repoliticized the problem of GBV (Curti 2024), stressing not only its patriarchal nature but also its multiple entanglements with racism, classism, ageism, and ableism, as well as the multifaceted manifestations of such entanglements on the lives of differently marginalized women and LGBTQIA + individuals (Salvatori 2021). Such repoliticization has unfolded within a heterogeneous stream of collective action encompassing a wide range of practices: conventional protests, such as the trans-feminist strike on March 8 (Rossi 2026) and marches on November 25 (Chironi 2019); confrontational initiatives aimed at resisting anti-gender attacks (Lavizzari, Barone, and Bonu Rosenkranz 2025); advocacy and knowledge-production activities, such as the drafting of a comprehensive plan to combat GBV (Non Una Di Meno 2017); and direct social action alongside grassroots reappropriation of feminist urban spaces, including the opening of self-managed women's and health centers (Barone 2026) and feminist night walks (Belingardi, Castelli, and Olcuire 2019). Importantly, NUDM actions entail an everyday dimension and aim at developing "a common language while cultivating affectionate relationships" (Salvatori 2023, 82) through care, mutualism, and community-building processes beyond institutional spaces (Barone and Bonu Rosenkranz 2025). This overall line of action is well exemplified by the practice of *accompagnamenti* (literally, community accompaniment) to abortion clinics (Facincani 2023) as well as by the creation of informal networks of LGBTQIA + people to exchange information and support each other in facing systemic discrimination (Motterle 2022).

In 2019, the suicide of Tiziana Cantone, a woman victimized for years by the nonconsensual diffusion of her intimate images and videos, triggered the mobilization *Intimità violata* (literally, *Violated Intimacy*), which combined protests in the streets with a systematic use of social media to sensitize and educate on online GBV (Salvatori 2021). In the wake of these events, the Parliament unanimously adopted the so-called "Red Code," addressing domestic violence and the nonconsensual dissemination of intimate images and videos (pavan and Lavorgna 2021). More recently, a series of femicides involving young women and girls have led not only to strong emotional reactions in public opinion but also to an intensification of grassroots protests, particularly during the annual marches organized by NUDM around November 25. All this ferment, however, encountered an ambiguous reaction at the institutional level. While in December 2025 the Parliament adopted a law on femicide, in early 2026 the Senate shelved the legislation approved by the Chamber of Deputies on affirmative and freely given consent in sexual relations and proposed to reinstate an approach centered on the victim's capability to express dissent.

Hence, over time, Italian activists have contributed to narratively and practically repoliticizing GBV from below (Curti 2024) while seeking to shift the

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public "exceptionalist gaze" (Bonu Rosenkranz and Barone 2025, 12) that depicts it as an "episodic" and "individualized" problem (Pietrobelli et al. 2020) and hides its "structural roots and manifestations" (Salvatori 2021, 10). Seen from the trans-feminist perspective, GBV thus functions as an encompassing master frame for advancing broader protest agendas that critically address diverse forms of gender-based oppression across multiple domains, including the labor market, border violence, LGBTQIA + and reproductive rights, and healthcare (Bonu Rosenkranz and Barone 2025).

Importantly, this repoliticization of GBV has also relied on the strategic use of digital media which allowed trans-feminist actors to intertwine "traditional" forms of protest with the daily production of digital contents of protest (pavan and Earl, in press) and, more broadly, expanded the trans-feminist mobilization milieu, creating new spaces of engagement and collective contention (pavan and Earl, in press), but also communities of care and solidarity (Motterle 2022). Ultimately, at the crossroads between physical and digital spaces and forms of action, trans-feminist groups have managed to make GBV part of a broader and encompassing agenda against intersectional oppression, thus enhancing the mobilizing capacity of trans-feminist movements domestically (Bonu Rosenkranz and Barone 2025) while fostering their transnationalization (Chironi 2025).

Investigating the role of GBV within the trans-feminist agenda: research questions, methods, and data

Against this backdrop, our article examines the most recent phase of politicization of GBV, looking at the place it occupied within the agenda pushed forward by Italian trans-feminist actors between 2019 and 2021, as well as whether and how its "master frame" function (Bonu Rosenkranz and Barone 2025) changed over this period. Our analysis is guided by the following research questions:

> RQ1: What is the role of GBV within the agenda of Italian trans-feminist actors, and how does this role change over time?
>
> RQ2: How is GBV framed within the Italian trans-feminist agenda, and what continuities and distinctive features emerge over time?

While limited and already far by a handful of years, the chosen time frame provides a useful entry point to reflect on the role of GBV at the crossroads between the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which challenged grassroots mobilizations against GBV while fostering trans-feminist solidarity with marginalized groups (Chironi 2025), and heightened institutional engagement with GBV despite governmental instability.[2]

We leverage Facebook as a privileged data source to first identify trans-feminist activists and groups, and then to collect information on the events they organized or promoted both online and offline. Facebook is indeed employed by

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movement actors not only to disseminate information on their activities and claims (Mercea 2013), but also to conduct advocacy work (Mazid 2020) and to foster solidarity (Perego 2023). Hence, although Facebook is only one of the platforms used by Italian trans-feminist activists and groups, it provides an important gateway to approach how GBV has been discussed during various types of initiatives they have organized or advertised. On this basis, we mapped and analyzed yearly trans-feminist agendas to explore the evolving role and framing of GBV.

Actors' identification

Our first step consisted of drafting a catalog of trans-feminist individuals and organizations active between 2019 and 2021. Building on studies that show that the Italian trans-feminist field comprises both formal organizations and informal networks of activists (Semia 2023), as well as racialized and disabled feminists using social media to raise awareness about intersectional discrimination (Brizio and Paolino 2026; Fabbri 2022), we compiled a catalogue of sixty-one individuals and organizations self-identifying as feminist or trans-feminist on their public Facebook account, which we considered as a proxy for their public engagement in trans-feminist politics. We then performed a digital snowball sampling to enlarge this list and correct possible internal biases. Borrowing from conventional snowball sampling techniques (Patton 2015), we collected all posts published by these actors and considered any act of post-sharing from other profiles as an indication of possible other relevant contacts. We manually inspected all the accounts whose posts were shared to include in our sample new activists and/or organizations. This procedure led to the identification of 183 individual and organizational trans-feminist actors. Albeit not exhaustive of the whole trans-feminist scenario in Italy, this list constitutes a valuable starting point to investigate the role and the framing of GBV in the observation period.

Digital protest event analysis via Facebook event pages

We collected events to map the role and the framing of GBV within the trans-feminist agenda via a computational adaptation of PEA. PEA is a type of quantitative content analysis that aims at identifying the main features of collective protest for how it develops in different contexts, moments, and with respect to different issues (Hutter 2014). PEA often leans on various data sources ranging from police files, official reports, and newspaper articles. These latter have been extensively employed to map protest events and their characteristics, although their selection and representational biases are widely recognized (Earl et al. 2004, 69–73).

Recent applications of PEA attempted to address these criticalities by employing digital media as data sources (Andretta and pavan 2017). However, whether performed manually or computationally, PEA starts from a specific conceptualization of what counts (or not) as a protest event worth examining.

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The canonical definition of a protest event revolves around three main characteristics: the event's collective and public nature, and the presence of claims addressing the system (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004, 267). Focusing on events' publicity and claim-making nature inevitably drives attention towards distinct forms of protest, which often develop according to specific (Western) action and target mainly governmental actors and institutions (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004, 267). In turn, the crystallization of these criteria ended up invisibilizing cultural and discursive tactics of dissent as well as everyday activism practices, thereby excluding them from the pools of instruments to produce social change (Taylor and Van Dyke 2004, 267). Furthermore, the need for an operative definition to guide the identification of "worthy" events feeds a circular process for which protest exists exclusively where the observer recognizes it (Olzak 1989).

These limitations are particularly consequential for the study of trans-feminist protests. On the one hand, media preference for covering events that host only certain protest forms prioritizes "masculine forms of behaviors" while leaving at the margins all those occurrences where "nonviolent tactics and unobtrusive repertoires" are adopted (Bagguley 2010, 617). On the other hand, even when trans-feminist protest is more consistent with canonical definitions, the predominance of male journalists and their situated gaze exacerbate its underrepresentation. Moreover, the very concept of protest that guides PEA operates as an oppressive device insofar as it treats trans-feminist mobilizations as mere "objects of knowledge [whose] subjectivity and specificity are reduced to interchangeable, observable variables" (Code 1993, 25) crystallized within more or less encompassing definitions of protest.

To overcome these limitations, we reoriented the canon of PEA to properly value trans-feminist struggles. We did so by following Haraway's invitation to recognize the situated and embodied nature of knowledge and to "return agency to observed actors and entities" (Haraway 1988, 582–83). Thus, we let the trans-feminist actors in our sample define what counts as an event worthy of attention. After collecting via CrowdTangle (2020) all posts published by our pool of selected actors, we retained for our analysis only those carrying a link to a Facebook event page. We indeed considered the inclusion of such links as an indicator of a situated judgment of worthiness, as it entails a work of curation that goes beyond the "simpler" mention of an event within a post.

Although the events we collected in this way hardly constitute *all* trans-feminist events that occurred between 2019 and 2021, considering initiatives that trans-feminist actors took the trouble to create, share, and/or publicize online nonetheless provides valuable analytical leverage. Epistemologically, it grounds our analysis in insights that are actively generated *from within* trans-feminist mobilizations and not, as happens more often, recognized top-down as *having to do with it*. Methodologically, it makes it possible to overcome selection and representational biases that have so far constrained our understanding of trans-feminist struggles because it extends the same granular and longitudinal analysis typically applied to conventional protest events to the manifold forms

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of everyday activism that sustain these collective endeavors. This, in turn, provides systematic insights that enable us to reason about everyday grassroots politics against GBV "at scale" and to complement the rich understandings generated through ethnographic and micromobilization approaches, which have been, by necessity, the predominant approaches to studying these forms of activism (Yates 2015).

We extracted a total of 3,879 events: 1,802 in 2019, 1,006 in 2020, and 1,071 in 2021. We considered textual descriptions of each event to manually code its type and issues addressed in it according to a codebook we derived by updating existing ones while accounting for empirical investigations on collective actors' use of social media, in particular Facebook (Mazid 2020; Mercea 2013). As shown in figure 1, most events consisted of social and cultural events, such as festive gatherings, memory days, music festivals, and, more in general, occasions to sensitize public opinion on gender-related issues. Additionally, a large share of events aimed at raising awareness, providing information, and protesting the status quo, ranging from conferences, seminars, and book presentations, to public assemblies, marches, rallies, and demonstrations. Trans-feminist actors also took a chance to present themselves to the public and illustrate their initiatives to channel counter-narrations not only with respect to gender-related issues but also human rights, migrants' rights, and several other topics marked by structural injustices.

Importantly, figure 2 indicates that GBV consistently ranked among the most discussed issues throughout the observation period. From 2020 onward, its

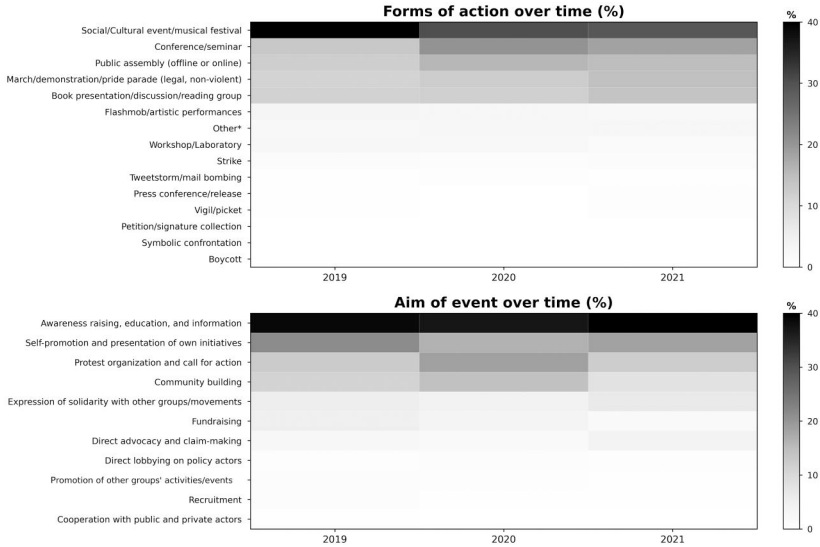

Figure 1. Type and aim of events 2019–2021.

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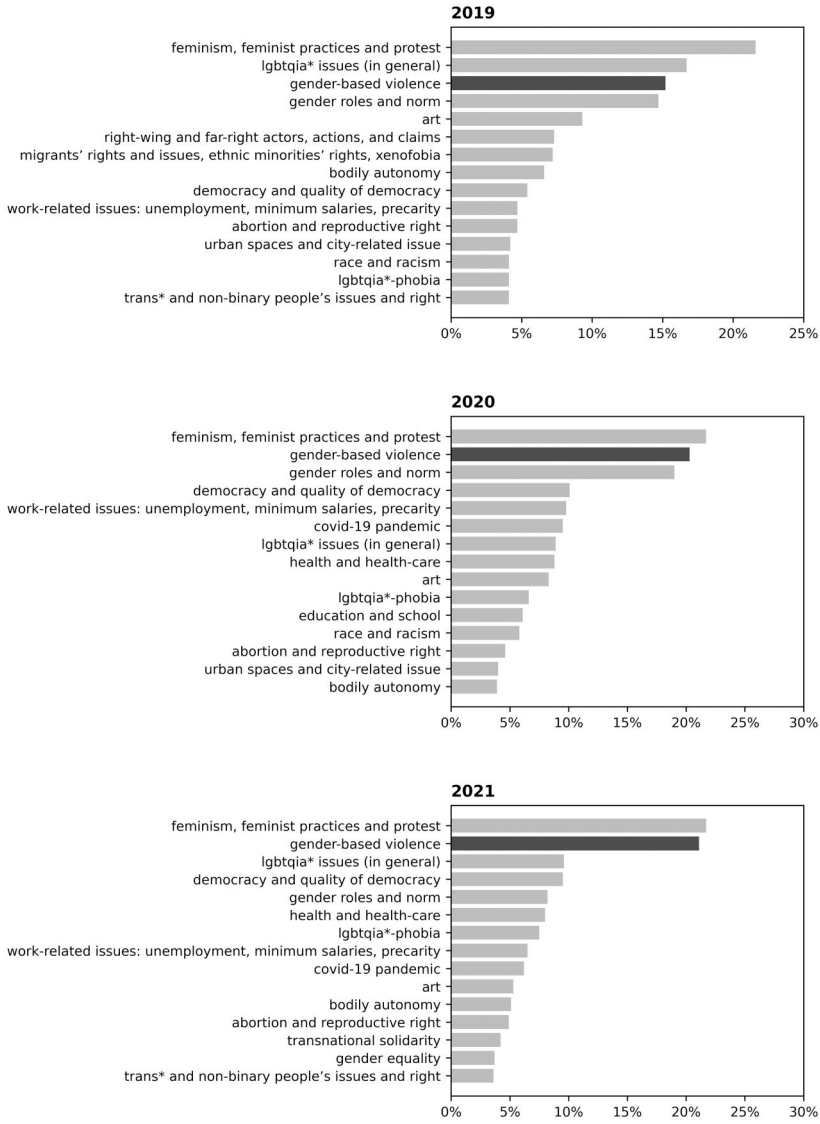

Figure 2. Frequency of issues discussed during events 2019–2021 (top 15).

salience further increased, as it appeared in nearly one-fourth of the mapped events, reaching levels comparable to broader matters such as feminist politics and feminist practices and protest.

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Analyzing the Italian trans-feminist agenda

To answer our first RQ on the role of GBV within the trans-feminist agenda over time, we performed a two-step analysis. First, we mapped the agenda on a yearly basis as a semantic network—that is, by linking any two issues every time they were discussed together in the same event. For every year and across time, we examined the richness, internal cohesion, and scope of the agenda to achieve a general overview of the context in which GBV was discussed. To do so, we employed a set of key measures of social network analysis, which we interpreted in the following way:

- We approximated the aspect of richness by looking at the *number of nodes* in the issue networks—that is, the number of issues discussed every year either in conjunction or on their own;
- We assessed levels of cohesion by leaning on network *density*—that is, the proportion of existing connections amongst nodes over all possible connections (Borgatti, Everett, and Johnson 2013). With respect to the trans-feminist agenda, network density provides an indication of the extent to which different issues have been discussed together in the events we mapped. We read density scores in conjunction with the *number of isolates* in our networks—that is, the number of issues that, every year, have been discussed on their own;
- We evaluated the scope of the trans-feminist agenda by considering the *diameter* of our issue networks—that is, the highest number of associations between two unconnected nodes (Borgatti, Everett, and Johnson 2013). Network diameter represents the highest number of associations between two issues that have never been discussed together in trans-feminist events we mapped for each year. Read across time, this parameter allows us to assess whether trans-feminist agendas have extended or, rather, remained similar in scope.

Against this background, we examined the role of GBV by exploring its prominence—that is, how crucial this issue was in each year's agenda and across time. We thus understand GBV prominence at a crossroads between how often it is discussed with other issues, which we measured through *node degree* (Freeman 1979), and how often it serves as a bridge between issues that have not been discussed together at a certain point in time—which we measured through *node betweenness* (Freeman 1979). Taken together, these two elements indicate of the extent to and the modes in which GBV has functioned as a master-frame for the Italian trans-feminist mobilization. Additionally, we examined more closely the part of the agenda revolving around GBV. To this aim, we extracted from larger semantic networks the ego-networks pivoting around GBV—that is, the portion of the network composed of GBV, all the issues with which it has been discussed in conjunction with, and ties amongst them. We

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paid particular attention to the *reach* and the *density* of GBV-centered ego-networks over time—that is, the extent to which GBV was discussed in connection to larger or smaller portions of the trans-feminist agenda and was embedded within a more or less articulated discourse sustained also by direct associations between other issues.

To answer our second RQ on how GBV was framed, we focused on stronger associations between GBV and other issues, meaning connections whose strength is higher than average in the ego-network (Table 1). We considered the posts containing these issues and created a subsample that we analyzed through frame semantic grammar to identify diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing tasks (Perego and Vicari 2024). Furthermore, we considered the longitudinal evolution of these framing tasks to examine frame alignment processes, understood as the linkages between different interpretative frameworks (Snow et al. 1986). All texts were analyzed through MAXQDA Analytics Pro 24 (VERBI Software 2024).

Results

Gender-based violence in the Italian trans-feminist agenda

As shown in Table 2, the Italian trans-feminist agenda appears relatively rich and stable over time, with the number of issues discussed each year ranging between seventy-seven and eighty-six. Each year, only a limited number of issues were addressed in isolation from the rest of the agenda. Topics such as *fat-phobia*, *volunteering*, or *women in sport* were occasionally raised during events and were mainly deepened as stand-alone issues. More often, instead, trans-feminist

Table 1. Average tie strength and selected associations 2019–2021.

	2019	2020	2021
Average tie strength	5.8	5.4	5.9
Selected associations	GBV–feminism, GBV–gender norms, GBV–bodily autonomy, GBV–work	GBV–gender norms, GBV–work, GBV–feminism	GBV–feminism, GBV–gender norms, GBV–transnational solidarity, GBV–democracy, GBV–bodily autonomy, GBV–work
Number of selected posts	31	21	30

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Table 2. Features of the trans-feminist agenda 2019–2021.

	2019	2020	2021
Number of nodes	86	78	77
Isolates	7	6	7
Number of ties	483	348	350
Density	0.16	0.14	0.14
Diameter	4	4	5

events fostered the discussion of multiple issues. However, the density parameter (ranging between 0.14 and 0.16 on a 0–1 scale) indicates that the overall agenda remained structured around a circumscribed set of associations. Not all issues were discussed in connection with all others, and some remained relatively distant from one another—as suggested by the length of the network diameter, which hints at the presence of specific nodes acting as bridges between issues that were not directly articulated together.

Despite its overall stability, between 2019 and 2020 the Italian trans-feminist agenda appears to have undergone a process of simplification: fewer issues were discussed during events, and fewer connections were established among them in 2020, with a similar pattern in 2021. On the one hand, this finding adds to existing accounts about the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on collective actors and protest, showing that it not only fostered changes in organizational modes and protest repertoires (Chironi 2025) but also shifts in collective discourses. On the other hand, cast against the longitudinal transfer of issues from a year to the following one (fig. 3), this overall simplification seems to correspond more to a process of internal reorganization than a dramatic change of agenda. Indeed, a constant core of fifty-nine issues was addressed throughout the entire observation period, encompassing various domains, from feminist politics and practices, GBV and gender norms, to human rights, education, environmental issues, and capitalism.

In this sense, our results suggest that, across our observation period, the trans-feminist agenda underwent a process of internal reconfiguration around strategic claims (Daphi, Flesher Fominaya, and Romanos 2024) to preserve mobilization efficacy in moments of limited resources. Indeed, the 2021 discussion agenda can be read as a recomposition of the previous ones: although issues such as *addiction*, *organized crime*, and *science* and *technology* receded in the transition from 2019 to 2020 to accommodate the multiple implications of the pandemic, the 2021 agenda did not introduce any new topics, but rather rearticulated those already present in earlier years.

Not only did GBV remain one of the most frequently addressed issues together with *gender roles and norms*, *feminism and feminist practices*, and *LGBTQIA+ issues* (see fig. 2). It also stood constantly at the core of the trans-

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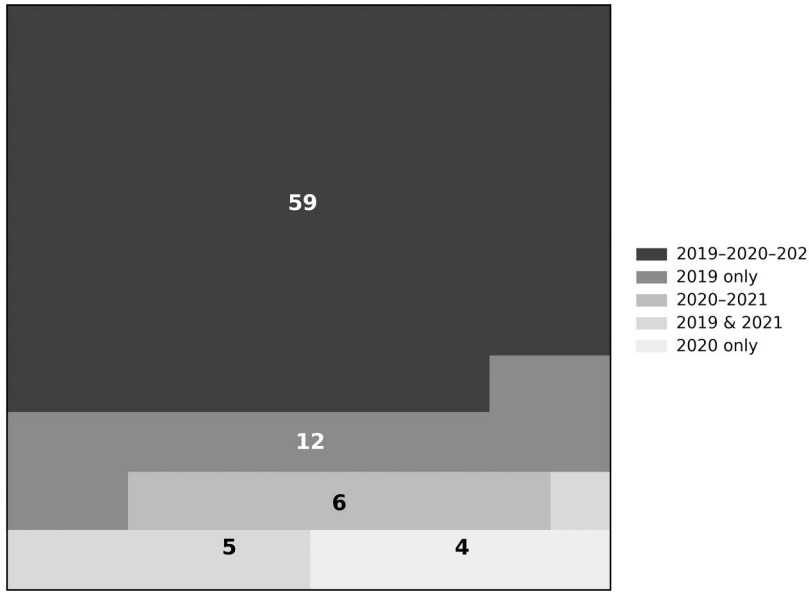

Figure 3. Common, shared, and exclusive issues across yearly agendas.

Table 3. GBV degree and betweenness scores 2019–2021.

	2019	2020	2021
GBV degree (normalized)	0.58	0.58	0.54
GBV betweenness (normalized)	0.13	0.16	0.13
Network degree (normalized minimum/maximum)	0.01/0.60	0.01/0.59	0.01/0.55
Network betweenness (normalized minimum/maximum)	0/0.18	0/0.22	0/0.16

Note: Scores are calculated on the network main component excluding isolates.

feminist agenda as one of its most prominent topics. As illustrated in Table 3, GBV degree and betweenness centrality scores remain high and stable over time, differently from other core issues (fig. 4). This indicates that GBV did not lose relevance over time insofar as it continued to be discussed together with many others and its pivotal role in trans-feminist agendas adapted to changing conditions. Although the trans-feminist agenda became narrower with the spread of the pandemic, GBV retained its capacity to be associated with a variety of issues as well as to hold together several topics. Importantly, higher

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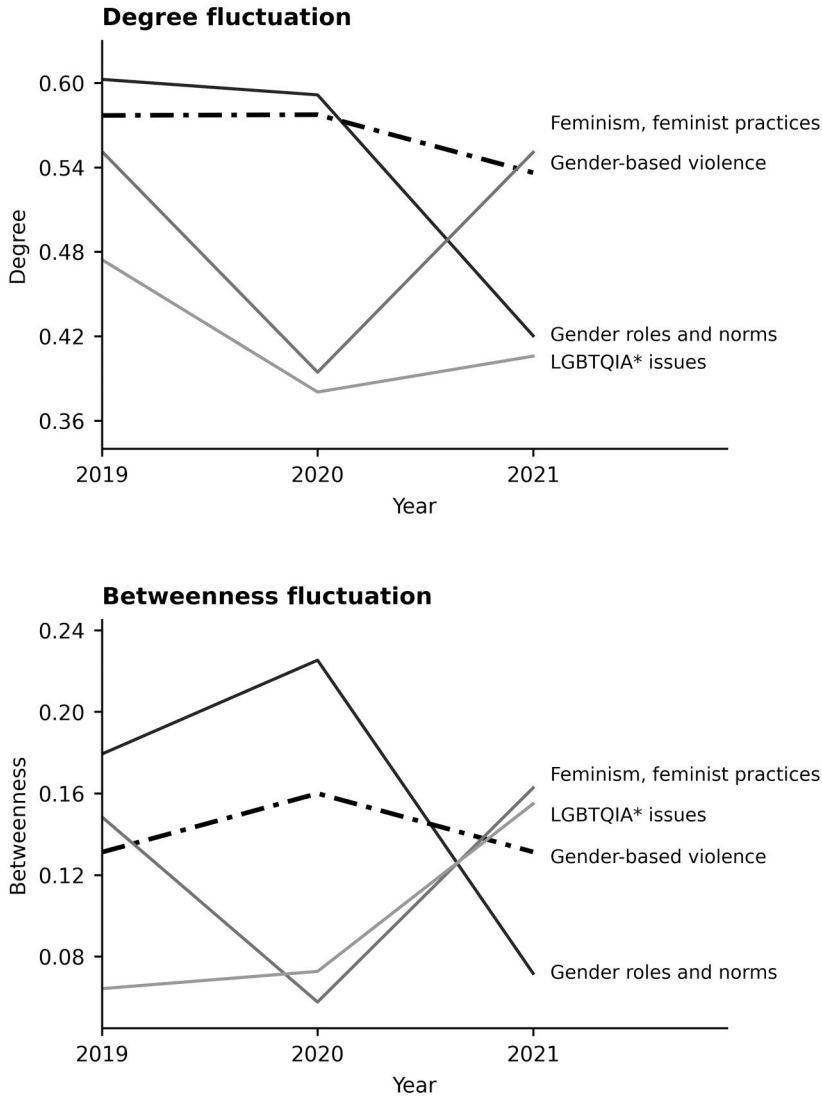

Figure 4. Degree and betweenness fluctuation of core issues in the trans-feminist agenda 2019–2021.

betweenness centrality observed in 2020 in combination with lower overall density values shown in Table 2 suggest that this integrative function became particularly salient in moments of crisis, when GBV operated as a key bridging issue, enabling the coherence and consolidation of the trans-feminist agenda around a widely shared and resonant master frame.

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Table 4. GBV-centered egonetwork features.

	2019	2020	2021
Size	45	41	37
Reach of GBV	52.33%	52.56%	48.05%
Density	30%	26%	28%

This insight is further confirmed by the analysis of the portion of the trans-feminist agenda revolving around GBV. Table 4 shows that, over time, the GBV-centered ego-network decreases in size and density. While the decreasing number of issues associated with GBV is consistent with the progressive narrowing of the agenda, these issues still account for almost half of all topics raised during trans-feminist events. Importantly, in the passage between 2019 and 2020, GBV's capacity to function as a master frame grew. While the density of its ego-network declines, its reach remains virtually unchanged, indicating that GBV continued to involve a large share of the overall agenda while providing a symbolic terrain for exploring unexperimented connections between other issues. As the pandemic turned towards its end in 2021, this potential slightly diminished; however, GBV's capacity to function as a master frame higher than in 2019.

Longitudinal framing of GBV within the trans-feminist agenda

Adding to network-based results about the constant prominence of GBV in the trans-feminist agenda, our frame analysis results also hint at a remarkable longitudinal stability in the diagnostic framing of GBV, combined, however, with contextual shifts in prognostic and motivational framing. Over the observation period, indeed, GBV was consistently articulated as a structural phenomenon with intersectional roots. Nonetheless, the solutions proposed to address this phenomenon and motivations provided to strengthen collective mobilization against it changed with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the lens of framing theory (Snow et al. 1986), we interpret these dynamics as instances of a process unfolding throughout three stages: consolidation, amplification, and extension.

2019: frame consolidation of GBV as a structural problem. In 2019, GBV was framed as a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing various forms of violence and embedded in patriarchal, capitalist, racist, ableist, and heteronormative systems:

> Femicide. Rape. Insults and harassment in the streets and in workplaces. Domestic violence. Discrimination and violence against women with disabilities. Residence permits made conditional on marriage. Endless obstacles to accessing abortion. Violent medical and psychiatric practices imposed on our bodies and our lives. Precarity that turns into a double

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> burden of work and halved wages. A now almost non-existent welfare system that shifts responsibility onto unpaid and exploited care work amid widespread impoverishment. Against this structural violence, which denies our freedom, we strike! (IT_Post_2019_2558, Pos. 27)[3]

This diagnostic frame amplifies the structural dimension of violence: activists not only explicitly rejected episodic or individualized explanations but also emphasized the pervasive roots and consequences of GBV, as well as its specific racialized, classist, and ableist dimensions. The consolidation of this framing mirrors the high degree of GBV in 2019, reflecting its centrality within the Italian trans-feminist agenda.

The quotation above also reveals that prognostic framing in 2019 centered on collective mobilization, particularly the transnational feminist strike, constructed not as a punctual event but as an ongoing political process rooted in everyday actions and strategies. This dimension becomes even more evident in the following passage:

> [W]e reiterate it: the strike is a process that, starting from its transnational dimension, can trigger expansive movements of subjectivation, weaving the feminist and trans-feminist network across territories and allowing us to refuse violence, exploitation and oppression every day. (IT_Post_2019_300, Pos. 16)

Crucially, within the framework of the trans-feminist strike, resistance is normalized as everyday refusal: violence is not only fought on iconic protest days but through continuous action and practices that blur the boundary between protest and daily life (Fish, King, and Almack 2018), as much as across different subjectivities and territories. These actions, practices, and framing constitute what we referred to above as the "everyday grassroots activism" against GBV, which was accompanied by a motivational framing that emphasized self-determination and social transformation:

> Against the patriarchal and racist violence of neoliberal society, the feminist strike is the answer. We strike to invent a new time. (IT_Post_2019_770, Pos. 42)

Within these processes, the structural problem of GBV, both embedded in and reproduced by patriarchal, racist, and neoliberal structures of oppression, was addressed by constructing the trans-feminist strike as a form of everyday grassroots politics aimed at dismantling hegemonic norms to create a society based on care and collective intersectional liberation.

2020: frame amplification of GBV in moments of crisis. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic reshaped activism, challenging activists to strategically pivot their claims around more resonant frames (Daphi, Flesher Fominaya, and Romanos 2024). Against this backdrop, our frame analysis shows evidence of a

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process of frame amplification—that is, "the clarification and invigoration of an interpretive frame that bears on a particular issue, problem or set of events" (Snow et al. 1986, 469). In this context, connections between GBV and other issues such as feminism, work, and gender norms served as a symbolic terrain to frame both the pandemic and its governance not as an external shock but, rather, as a magnifier of preexisting inequalities, in particular racialized labor exploitation, intensified labor precarity and precarization, and gender inequalities in the workplace and in the household:

> The pandemic and its management are two sides of the same coin precisely because women's bodies and ecosystems have shared—and continue to share—the same fate: they are treated as free and inexhaustible resources, available for appropriation and exploitation in order to sustain a violent model of society and development that shows no respect for our lives. This violence is now reaching a point of no return; the health emergency is only one of its warning signs. (IT_Post_2020_171, Pos. 59)

In turn, the pandemic and the multifaceted crisis it triggered were strategically used as an opportunity to further clarify and illustrate the structural roots and consequences of GBV and its intersectional intertwining with multiple inequality structures. On the one hand, activists discussed how various forms of GBV heightened since the lockdown and social confinement. Additionally, they built on this to deconstruct normative understandings of home and family as safe places, reminding the broader public that GBV is based and reproduced through a system of power relations that originates in cis-heterosexual traditional families (Bandelli 2017). On the other hand, activists shed light on the gendered, racialized, and class-based power dynamics that were reinforced by an unequal governance of the pandemic, which exploited women, racialized individuals, and working-class communities. Violence was hence linked more explicitly to racism, precarity, migrant exploitation, and the gendered distribution of care work. This moment illustrates the dynamics of frame amplification: activists broadened the boundaries of the GBV frame to integrate emergent vulnerabilities without abandoning its structural core.

Against this backdrop, solutions proposed to the structural crisis triggered by the pandemic concerned direct social actions, understood as actions that "focus upon directly transforming some specific aspects of society by means of the very action itself" (Bosi and Zamponi 2015, 369), to strengthen communities and build political solidarities:

> Despite social distancing, we know that we are not alone, but part of a struggle that, all over the world, opposes male and gender-based violence, racism, and exploitation at home and at work. The Coronavirus epidemic has not forced us into silence. Women and gender-dissident subjects, migrant and racialized people have continued—and continue—to strike and to rebel against the violence that seeks to silence us, to put us back in our

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> place, to anchor us to the roles imposed on us and that we refuse. (IT_Post_2020_111, Pos. 19)

In this process of frame amplification, prognostic framing shifted toward mutual aid, community building, and solidarity networks. While the trans-feminist strike was still proposed as a counteraction strategy, it was complemented by grassroots infrastructures of care capable of responding to immediate needs in the everyday (Rossi 2026). Motivationally, the agenda foregrounded refusal of imposed roles and self-determination. The language of voice versus silence became central, reinforcing the idea that speaking and organizing under conditions of isolation constitute political acts.

Notably, this framing amplification corresponds to the increase in GBV's betweenness centrality observed in 2020 and, therefore, of its integrative function. Against the overall contraction of the discussion agenda slightly, GBV became a discursive pivot connecting the pandemic crisis with everyday trans-feminist politics not only against the phenomenon itself but, more broadly, against all its intersectional entanglements.

2021: frame extension of GBV to transform society. The 2021 trans-feminist agenda was characterized by its extensive attention towards the quality of democracy, threatened by anti-gender and anti-LGBTQIA+ politics and attempts to undermine the Istanbul Convention in defense of "traditional values." This fostered an extension of "the boundaries of primary framework to encompass interests or points of view that are incidental to its primary objectives but of considerable salience to potential adherent" (Snow et al. 1986, 472). Indeed, broader attacks on gender equality and LGBTQIA+ rights were explicitly reinterpreted as forms of GBV due to their attempts to reinforce the patriarchal gender order (Connell 1987). Within this framework, violence against women and violence against LGBTQIA+ subjectivities were increasingly discussed as instances of the same structural social phenomenon, and particular attention was channeled towards emphasizing the intersection between femicides and transcides:

> By women, we mean all of us: cis women and trans women. These numbers are joined, in fact, by the numbers of the many trans people killed worldwide—96% of whom are trans women, more than half of whom are migrants, and more than half sex workers. Violence has many forms: femicides and trans*cides are only the tip of a pyramid whose base is made up of many forms of violence, often less visible, yet all interconnected within a single oppressive system. (IT_Post_2021_211, Pos. 12–14)

The more explicit recognition of transphobia as a form of GBV extended the intersectional scope of the GBV master frame and deepened solidarities between feminist and LGBTQIA+ struggles, without diluting the structural diagnosis consolidated and amplified between 2019 and 2020.

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Against this backdrop, prognostic framing explicitly interpreted legal provisions as ineffective solutions to structural GBV:

> We believe that a law is not the solution to our protection. We believe that putting people in prison for more years is not the way to resolve a structural problem embedded in the society we live in. (IT_Post_2021_321, Pos. 14)

On the contrary, building on the actions and practices developed during the COVID-19 pandemic, activists argued that an everyday grassroots politics encompassing trans-feminist collective action, care, and transnational solidarity actions is the solution to combat GBV and to transform current societies:

> One year after the outbreak of the health emergency, the pandemic has swept through everything—including our movement and our struggle—making them even more necessary and urgent. On last March 8, we found ourselves at the very beginning of the first lockdown and chose not to take to the streets in the tens of thousands as in previous years, for the health and safety of all. It is from the awareness and imagination we have developed during these months of pandemic—in which we began to rethink our practices of struggle in light of the need for collective care—that we feel the need to build, for the next March 8, a new feminist and trans-feminist strike: a strike of production, of social reproduction, of and from consumption, of genders and against gender. (IT_Post_2021_194, Pos. 22)

The trans-feminist strike was hence rearticulated as an expansive process that "crosses the boundaries between workplaces and society, enters homes, and invades every space" (IT_Post_2021_164, Pos. 60) where violence is reproduced, thereby reinforcing the everyday dimension of trans-feminist politics. Importantly, this everyday grassroots politics was increasingly marked by fierce expressions of embodied collective anger, but also of a desire for transformation (Salvatori 2021):

> We bring our bodies, our voices, and our anger back to the streets to create the "fuchsia zone"—a space in which to fight against gender-based violence and violence against gender-diverse people; a space in which to shout the names of all the women who, once again this month, have been killed by their partners, ex-partners, or family members, to reaffirm that we want to live and to be free; to say all together, loudly: "Sister, we believe you!" (IT_Post_2021_88, Pos. 13-14)

Such a shared trans-feminist anger provides the "sentiment pool" (Snow et al. 1986, 467) through which structural GBV was extended to link intersecting lines of oppression through a common interpretative framework: anti-gender and

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anti-abortion politics, institutionalized anti-LGBTQIA+ sentiment, a global health crisis, and a crisis of care, structural racism and ableism, work precarization and exploitation, and environmental destruction. By fostering this interpretative framework, trans-feminist anger also provided a broader motivation to mobilize everyday politics that aims to systematically address the deep causes and widespread consequences of intersectional violence, and to transform current societies through collective awareness and imagination.

Conclusion

In this article, we explored the role of GBV within the Italian trans-feminist agenda. Starting from acknowledging the centrality of GBV as a contentious issue that has oriented trans-feminist activism for a long time, we investigated how it was made prominent and framed on an everyday basis, well beyond widely recognized protest events in this domain such as marches and demonstrations on March 8 and November 25. To do so, we adapted PEA to account for all events organized between 2019 and 2021 by a pool of trans-feminist actors to pursue their collective fight to achieve intersectional social justice. We employed Facebook as an entry point to map both online and offline events organized or sponsored by these actors, and traced the trans-feminist agenda emerging from everyday grassroots politics against GBV. Through a combined use of network analysis and frame analysis, we explored the prominence of GBV and how it has been framed both individually and in connection with other issues.

Our findings widely echo recent accounts that underline how GBV functions as a unifying master frame (Bonu Rosenkranz and Barone 2025). More than a merely recurrent issue, GBV is simultaneously integrated within the durable backbone of the Italian trans-feminist agenda, and integrative of newly emerging or disconnected issues. This dual character became visible as we consider trans-feminist agendas not as static lists of claims but as relational configurations in which issues acquire meaning through their associations. Within these systems of knowledge-in-action, in which trans-feminist visions, critical readings and proposed alternatives coalesce and create collective programs of action, GBV persistently occupies a structurally strategic position as it is both frequently addressed and constantly provides a symbolic terrain to create connections between issues that are deemed relevant but have not been connected (yet) in a broader fight against structural intersectional oppression. This strategic role became particularly evident in the transition between 2019 and 2020: with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, GBV's potential to operate as a master frame connecting otherwise unrelated issues increased and, although it slightly contracted in the aftermath of the pandemic, it remained higher than in the pre-pandemic period.

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This structural positioning resonates with the longitudinal framing dynamics we observed. Across 2019–2021, the diagnostic construction of GBV as a structural and intersectional phenomenon remained remarkably stable, echoing long-standing trans-feminist efforts to shift the public gaze from individualized and episodic interpretations of violence to systemic ones. At the same time, prognostic and motivational articulations were dynamically tuned in response to changing political and social conditions. Thus, the pandemic did not displace GBV from the agenda. Rather, it provided an occasion to further clarify the structural roots and consequences of GBV, while GBV itself became a lens through which the crisis was interpreted and connected to preexisting inequalities. Similarly, in 2021, attacks on LGBTQIA+ rights and democratic backsliding were not treated as separate concerns but reinterpreted as expressions of the same patriarchal order that sustains GBV. Across the whole observation period, GBV's function as an interpretive hub was not static but dynamically enacted through processes of frame consolidation, amplification, and extension.

Importantly, while working as a central pivot for the Italian trans-feminist agenda, the issue of GBV also performed another important function: it enabled the construction of a bridge between iconic moments of protest, particularly the trans-feminist strike on March 8, and the variety of activism efforts scattered throughout time and spaces. Insisting on the structural and intersectional nature of GBV not only provides an entry point to recognize the need to carry on trans-feminist struggles in the space of the everyday but also blurred the boundary between iconic and everyday actions, constructing a necessary and continuous flow of resistance that unfolds seamlessly in between moments and is nurtured by a variety of protest tactics—some more typical, many others quieter, of a cultural nature, smaller-scale, but nonetheless crucial to dismantle GBV as a peak manifestation of intersectional oppression.

Ultimately, our study shows that GBV does not simply persist across trans-feminist protest waves. Rather, it provides a flexible yet structured terrain through which trans-feminist actors reorganize their knowledge practices, channel their energies, and rearticulate solidarities across domains, engaging constantly and relentlessly in the effort of politicizing GBV from the grassroots. Frequently mobilized and connected to many other issues during a wide variety of events, not always spectacular but surely contentious in nature, GBV connects dispersed experiences of oppression into a broader interpretive framework. Thus, GBV's enduring relevance lies less in its status as a long-standing movement issue than in its capacity to operate as a connective grammar of injustice—an interpretive hub through which trans-feminist actors render structural violence intelligible and contestable across time and changing conditions.

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Notes

1. In this article, we employ the hyphenated labels trans-feminism/trans-feminist to signal a convergence of collective aims despite a non-necessary overlap between feminist and trans-feminist movements. We understand feminist movements as "a struggle to end sexist oppression" (ooks 1984, 24). While cisgender women have long been considered the subject of feminist organizing, trans-feminist activism grows its roots in a field of feminist practices and struggles informed by trans* politics (Arfini 2020) and interrogates the category of "woman" both as a social construct and as the main subject of feminism (Gil 2011). This form of feminism centers on trans epistemologies in which the prefix "trans" "signals a paradigmatic shift, which places emphasis on social justice and transformation" (Baldo 2019, 67). Whenever we refer to collective actors that self-define as feminist or trans-feminist, or we quote actors that distinguish between the two, we use separate labels.
2. In the 2019–2021 period, three governments of different orientations led the country. The first, led by Giuseppe Conte, leaned on a coalition between the populist Five Stars Movement and the right-wing Lega and steered the country up to September 2019. The second, still under the leadership of Conte, a coalitional effort between the Five Stars Movement and the Democratic Party led the country through the COVID-19 pandemic and until February 2021. Finally, from February 2021, a "national unity government" led by Mario Draghi patched together all major right- and left-wing parties to drive the country towards the post-pandemic stage.
3. Extracts were translated by the authors from Italian into English.

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Conflicts of interest

None declared.

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are kept in the University of Trento Data Repository under closed access due to ethical reasons and privacy requirements. Data will be available after the end of the CCINDLE project (October 2026) upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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