

**Digital Technology's Complex Role in  
Facilitating and Responding to  
Gender-Based Violence  
among (Im) migrants:**  
A SCOPING REVIEW

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# Digital Technology's Complex Role in Facilitating and Responding to Gender-Based Violence among (Im)migrants: A SCOPING REVIEW

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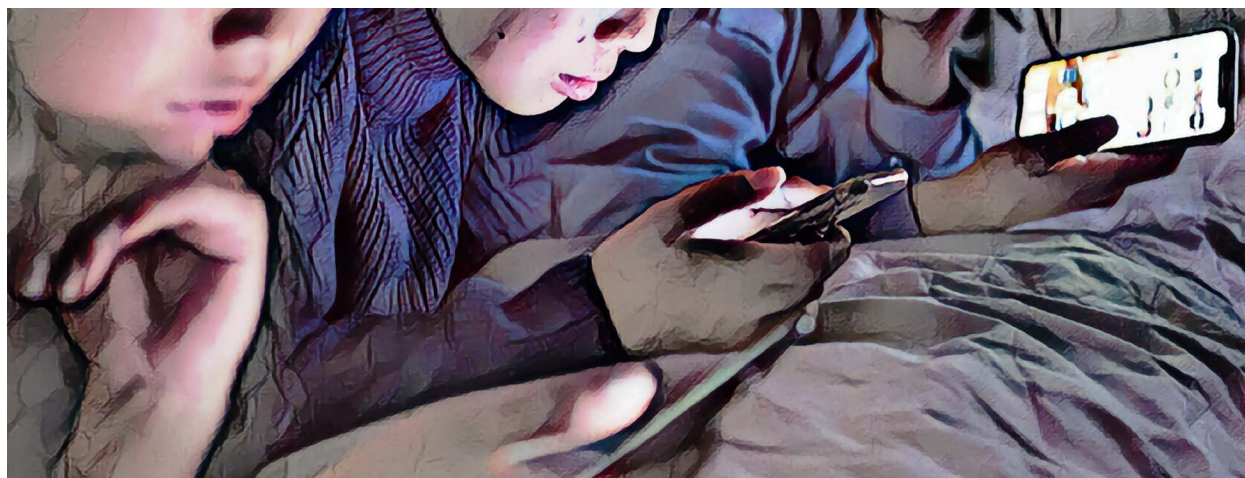


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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## ABOUT THE PROJECT

Digital technologies, such as smartphones, social media, and internet/virtual spaces, have been widely utilized to address gender-based violence (GBV). During the COVID-19 pandemic we also witnessed the development and integration of digital strategies in anti-GBV work led by professionals and peer leaders, in response to the concerning rise in GBV. While digital technologies can assist people experiencing GBV, they may simultaneously facilitate forms of GBV through digital medium. This complexity is especially pronounced within (im)migrant<sup>1</sup> populations, who face intersecting forms of marginalization, such as socioeconomic inequities, linguistic barriers, and discrimination associated with racialization and xenophobia. Leveraging current empirical scholarly findings, **this study aims to deepen our understanding of how digital technology influences the dynamics of addressing or facilitating GBV within racialized (im)migrant populations.**

We consider the reported challenges and factors that can hinder (im)migrants' use of digital technology when responding to GBV and potential increased risks of experiencing digitally-facilitated GBV. Through our critical analysis of the scholarly literature, we pay particular attention to the intersecting effects of systemic and structural inequities that shape the digital experiences of (im)migrants.

## METHODS

To achieve the project goals, we used Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) scoping review framework with enhancements from Levac et al. (2020) to identify relevant scholarly empirical literature that addresses (1) GBV, (2) digital technology, and (3) (im)migrant populations, including those transnationally displaced or forced to migrate. After a search of eight distinct academic databases, we screened 4,765 results, of which **40 were included in our final analysis.**

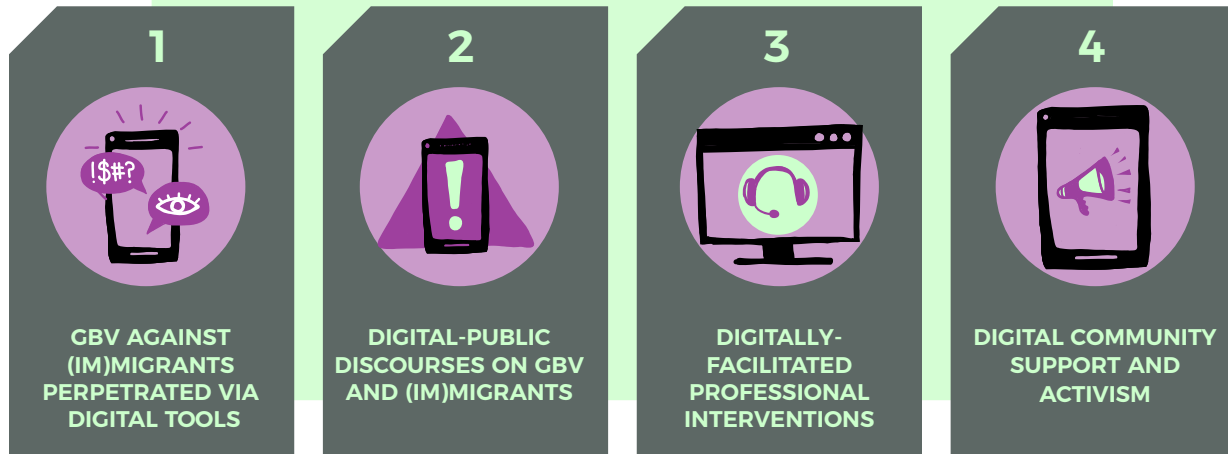
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1. The term "(im)migrant" is employed in migration scholarship to reflect the nuanced nature of human mobility. This terminology underscores the shared experience of people who change countries of residence, while troubling the dichotomy between state authorized permanent residence and temporary or unauthorized forms of mobility.

# FINDING HIGHLIGHTS - MULTI-DIMENSIONAL AND “PARADOXICAL” ROLES OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Our analysis highlights the multi-dimensional and “paradoxical” roles of digital technology (Hislop, 2022) in facilitating or responding to GBV against (im)migrant populations.

We use **four themes** to capture the complex ways through which digital technology intersects with GBV:



## 1 GBV against (im)migrants perpetrated via digital tools:

The current empirical scholarship most frequently examines technology-facilitated domestic violence (DV) or intimate partner violence (IPV) against (im)migrant and refugee women who are in heterosexual intimate/spousal relationships. Common forms of digital DV/IPV reported include intimate partners’ control of survivors’ access to digital devices (e.g., restricting phone use), partners’ digital surveillance (e.g., monitoring or stalking social media accounts), and digitally-facilitated harassment (e.g., constant text messages that contain threats). Beyond digital IPV/DV against women, public digital spaces, such as Twitter, can facilitate online harassment and gendered stereotypes directed at certain (im)migrant communities, such as racialized women and LGBTQ groups who are (im)migrants. Some scholars argue that the circulation of racialized and gendered stereotypes can feed transnational commodification of some groups of

migrant women (e.g., Eastern European and Asian), exposing them to potential exploitation (e.g., trafficking) as a result of economic disparities and unequal global power dynamics.

## 2 Digital-public discourses on GBV and (im)migrants:

The digital environment creates a space for public and community dialogue on topics related to GBV and migration or [im] migrants’ experiences. On the one hand, the digital space, such as online public forums and social media, gives much higher visibility to diverse perspectives and ideological positions, especially those from (im)migrants and groups whose voices are often silenced in the conventional “mainstream” media outlets. For example, one study documented community responses through online posts to a series of domestic homicide incidents that occurred in the Nigerian immigrant community in the United States; the responses vary from victim blaming to critical reflection on the

impact of patriarchy in a transnational context (Kalunta-Crumpton, 2013). On the other hand, the digital space is an extension of the “offline” world and can be impacted by the dominant cultural ideologies and discourses regarding GBV and (im) migrant groups. For instance, within the feminist anti-GBV movement, despite the widespread use of the Internet and social media for local and global organizing, the dominant online narratives and storytelling continue to dismiss the structurally marginalized experiences and voices of migrant and ethnically minoritized/ racialized women.

### **3 Digitally-facilitated professional interventions:**

Current empirical scholarship has paid great attention to the use of digital technologies to facilitate anti-GBV interventions and services among (im)migrant groups, such as anti-GBV education, awareness raising, and mindfulness-based programs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, to connect with people remotely, digital tools were proactively integrated into services that are typically delivered in-person, such as phone-based case management and counseling. Overall, the studies report positive outcomes from the use of digital interventions with racialized (im)migrant groups, such as improved knowledge about IPV, enhanced safety, and empowerment of immigrant women.

In addition, some studies assessed preferred methods of learning about or receiving GBV-related services among diverse (im) migrant communities. With a generally high uptake of digitally facilitated anti-GBV interventions, (im)migrant groups express distinct preferences pertaining to the types of digital technology they are comfortable with using. For instance, one study indicated international students in South Korea highly valued the use of videos and self-directed smartphone-based methods for training that integrates

sexual violence education (Ryoo & Cheung, 2021). Another study in Australia reported that new (im)migrant women had a much higher preference for using community-based news media to gain family violence resources than new refugee women, who preferred the use of ethnic radio programs (Lee et al., 2013).

### **4 Digital community support and activism:**

While digital tools and spaces can perpetuate forms of GBV and coercive control, our review also highlights the transformative use of digital technology by (im)migrant communities to navigate, resist, and raise awareness about GBV. By harnessing the power of digital tools, (im)migrant communities transcend geographical and cultural boundaries, forging connections, and advocating for change. Empirical examples included (im)migrants locating resources online and building digital communities of mutual support to address GBV concerns, organizing anti-GBV digital campaigns and awareness-raising activities, resisting dominant narratives of GBV survivors by digital storytelling, and building transnational solidarity in response to GBV. While almost all studies in this subsample foregrounded the digital experiences and activism of woman-identified (im) migrants and refugees, one study focused on Germany-based refugee men’s digital activism against gender-based violence and the unique challenges (e.g., dominant anti-refugee discourse and systemic xenophobia) they had to navigate (Frazier-Rath, 2021).

## SYSTEMIC OBSTACLES AND COMMUNITY RESISTANCE

Across the studies, we identified several prominent issues and systemic challenges impacting the digital experiences of (im) migrant communities.

- The intersecting systems of marginalization, including precarious immigration status, financial instability, linguistic exclusion, lack of digital literacy education, and social isolation, can jointly contribute to (im)migrants' vulnerability to gendered violence perpetrated facilitated by digital tools.
- Limited access to affordable digital services and technology devices, coupled with inadequate digital literacy education, often hinders (im)migrants' ability to seek community support online and digital services for GBV. Their digital experiences may be compromised further by abusers' digital control or surveillance, the patriarchal practice of gendered ownership of digital devices (e.g., cell phone), and exposures to online harassment and misinformation.
- The digital-discursive space, as an extension of many "offline" communicative spaces, is not immune to the impact of misinformation and systemic oppression, such as racism, homo/transphobia, and xenophobia, and classism. Digital technology can facilitate a discursive space that enables the circulation of gendered and racist stereotypes about (im)migrant groups and misrepresentations of GBV/GBV survivors, all of which arguably contribute to public (mis)beliefs and epistemic violence against communities impacted by GBV.

- Despite these challenges posed by these intersecting systemic issues and digitally facilitated GBV, it is imperative to highlight that (im)migrant communities exhibit active and innovative use of digital technology to navigate and resist such violence. Their digital efforts and collective activism against GBV and structural forms of oppression have been well documented in this review.



## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

**A** To enhance community support and resistance against GBV, policymakers and service providers should **prioritize digital literacy education and expand equitable digital access for marginalized groups**. This will enable increased innovation and access to both professional and non-professionalized anti-GBV digital advocacy and support. When addressing digital inequity, we must recognize that digital inequity is deeply intertwined with, and impacted by, other intersecting systems of marginalization faced by (im)migrants.

**B** Furthermore, policymakers and advocacy and social service organizations focused on combating GBV should also **address how the circulation of racial and gender stereotypes through the Internet and social media can normalize misrepresentations of communities with lived experiences, abusive behaviors, harassment, and discrimination against racialized (im)migrants**.

**C** Finally, additional inclusive **research** is needed to understand the digital experiences of GBV among diverse (im)migrant groups and **how their diverse intersecting identities and experiences of privileges and oppression may influence their digital encounters with GBV**.

## LIMITATIONS

The search strategy was designed to strike a balance between feasibility, breadth, and comprehensiveness. As a result, the sampling strategy focused on an extensive key word search of titles and abstracts. This approach, however, may have missed studies that delved into related topics in the full text but did not include the key words in the abstract. Our focus on English-

language publications, with the majority of studies authored by researchers who are based in western academic institutions, may also introduce geographic and linguistic bias. Finally, the majority of research in our sample addressed GBV against cis-gender (im)migrant or refugee women, limiting the scope of our analysis in exploring the highly diverse experiences of GBV among gender- and sexual-diverse individuals.



# FINAL REPORT



## INTRODUCTION

The concerning rise in gender-based violence (GBV) during the COVID-19 pandemic, aptly termed the “shadow pandemic” (Khanlou et al., 2021), brought attention to the role of digital technologies, including platforms like Facebook, Twitter, virtual safe spaces, and chatbots, to reach and support those experiencing GBV while facing physical isolation (Baird et al., 2021). Simultaneously, digital tools played a vital role in fostering social activism and resistance against GBV. However, the widespread adoption of digital technologies in these interventions is complicated by their prevalence in facilitating various forms of GBV (Afouz, 2021), causing survivors to approach digital platforms with hesitancy (Afrouz, 2021; Grimani et al., 2022; Tseng et al., 2021; Voth Schrag et al., 2022). Racialized (im)migrants who also face higher rates of poverty and socioeconomic inequality may experience further barriers when accessing digital technologies, due to digital illiteracy, language barriers, and experiences of sexist, racist and homophobic violence in digital spaces.

**This project seeks to shed light on the role of digital technologies in perpetuating and addressing GBV within (im)migrant populations, taking into account the intersecting structural oppressions and**

**inequities they encounter.** By conducting a scoping review of current empirical research, we **aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding digital technologies and GBV within this structurally marginalized group.** This knowledge will contribute to the development of more effective and inclusive interventions, ultimately working towards creating safer digital spaces for survivors of GBV among racialized immigrants.

## BACKGROUND

**GBV refers to violence that is committed “because of their gender, gender expression, gender identity or perceived gender”** (Women and Gender Equality Canada, n.d.). While GBV occurs across racial, ethnic, class, and gendered groups, feminist activists and scholars have shed light on the compound effects of GBV for groups who face intersecting forms of oppression including racialized immigrant populations. (Im)migration, broadly defined as the movement of people across a national border to reside permanently in a new state, irrespective of their immigration status, is tightly interdependent with social-political processes of racialization vis a vie the imagined national community (Walia, 2021).

## CONTEXT

The increase in GBV during the COVID-19 pandemic led anti-GBV services to rely heavily on digital technologies (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, virtual safe spaces, chatbots), to reach people experiencing GBV who are physically isolated (Baird et al., 2021) while promoting social activism and resistance to GBV. Canada's first National Action Plan for addressing GBV (2021) similarly identified virtual services as a key recommendation to support communities that face challenges in attending in-person services and improving digital infrastructures and accessibilities for GBV survivors (Dale et al., 2021). Given the continued growth in migrants entering Canada with a precarious or temporary immigration status, the use of virtual services to address GBV, must take into consideration the digital experiences of racialized migrants who may encounter barriers to accessing virtual support for GBV while also contending with potential risks for abuse through and in digital platforms.

## THE USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN ADDRESSING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Digital technologies that play a significant role in addressing GBV include virtual support tools, website-based resources, and smartphone interventions designed to aid intimate partner violence (IPV) survivors. Safety screenings and service interventions were also conducted remotely by leveraging the popularity of videoconferencing platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic. Al-Alosi (2020) identified that information and communication technologies (ICTs), increased support to IPV survivors by:

- a) accessing professional resources
- b) reducing isolation
- c) enhancing safety
- d) collecting evidence
- e) empowering survivors

Moreover, digital technologies have significantly influenced anti-GBV community activism. Social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook are extensively used by activists for public education, community support, and policy advocacy (Brimacombe et al., 2018; Brown et al., 2017; Linabary et al., 2019; Storer & Rodriguez, 2020; Wood et al., 2019). Hashtag activism, exemplified by #SayHerName, has been instrumental in raising awareness of violence against Black women and amplifying the voices of Black transgender women, who have historically been underrepresented in mainstream media (Brown et al., 2017).

## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE FACILITATED BY DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

**Digital technologies have provided new opportunities to address gender-based violence (GBV). However, research shows that these same tools and social media sites can be used to perpetuate GBV in various ways.** For example, a recent scoping review identified four primary ways that digital technologies are used to facilitate DV, including 1) using tracking applications to control someone, 2) harassing and stalking through text messages and calls, 3) monitoring survivors' social media or online accounts, and 4) threatening to share of intimate or sexually explicit photos or videos of survivors (Afouz, 2021).

Digital technology can facilitate gender-based violence in intimate relationships, among friends, and family members, as well as among strangers online (Backe et al., 2018; Jatmiko et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Darias & Aguilera-Ávila, 2018). Studies have also found that digitally facilitated GBV can occur with, or even increase exposure to other forms of violence offline, such as physical or sexual abuse (Cavezza & McEwan, 2014; Gilchrist et al., 2017; Woodlock, 2017). Digital stalking and digital

surveillance by domestic partners can cause safety concerns for survivors who may fear using digital tools to find out about or access services for support (Afrouz, 2021; Grimani et al., 2022; Tseng et al., 2021; Voth Schrag et al., 2022).

## DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES, GBV, AND THE INTERSECTIONAL BURDENS ON RACIALIZED (IM)MIGRANTS

**Racialized and (im)migrant communities are disproportionately impacted by GBV** (Gill, 2018; Khanlou et al., 2021; Shalabi et al., 2015), **including digitally facilitated GBV** (Afrouz, 2021). This is due to a combination of interconnected issues like racism, precarious immigration status, poverty, involvement in precarious work, and unemployment (Khanlou et al., 2021). Research also shows a correlation between online harassment driven by racism, sexism, homo/transphobia, and other types of oppression and GBV (Francisco & Felmler, 2022; Matamoros-Fernández & Farkas, 2021), particularly for community members engaged in anti-GBV work online (Peterson-Salahuddin, 2022; Rovira-Sancho, 2021; Veletsianos et al., 2018).

While digital technologies help reduce barriers to physically accessing social and health services, racialized (im)migrants face unique challenges when using digital tools for support (Eruchalu et al., 2021; Mitchell et al., 2019; Sanders & Scanlon, 2021), especially related to GBV (Sabri et al., 2020). For instance, (im)migrant survivors who are not proficient in English or French (Canada's official languages) may not effectively benefit from online GBV support information and intervention tools presented only in English (Henry et al., 2022; Sabri et al., 2020; Woodlock et al., 2020). Some (im)migrant survivors, facing linguistic marginalization, might rely on specific digital tools to communicate with friends and family; however, studies have reported that

perpetrators may restrict digital access to deliberately create social isolation (Woodlock et al., 2020). Furthermore, socioeconomic marginalization and limited digital literacy can hinder one's capacity to use digital technologies for support and services (Adams et al., 2021; Zaidi et al., 2015).

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Towards promoting racialized (im)migrants' rights for safe and equitable digital access to health, support, and services, this scoping review explored:

- the roles of digital technology that are represented and studied in GBV among racialized (im)migrants, as well as main empirical findings in each role identified;
- the empirically reported issues and factors that challenge (im)migrants' use of digital technology in addressing GBV; and
- the extent to which the current research acknowledges and addresses systemic and structural conditions and inequities that compromise racialized (im)migrants' digital experiences related to GBV.

The findings of the knowledge synthesis seek to inform health and social service workers and program developers in creating and providing digital support and resources that are inclusive of the complex needs and social conditions of racialized (im)migrants experiencing GBV.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We use an **intersectional and structural lens** to understand the complex ways through which racialized (im)migrants experience technology-facilitated GBV and how they turn to digital technologies when seeking support for GBV. Although GBV is often identified by its interpersonal forms of perpetration (e.g., physical, sexual, and verbal), structural inequitable conditions, such as unemployment, precarious immigration status, racial inequity, and sexual minoritization, legitimize and perpetuate the occurrence and prevalence of GBV (Bhuyan & Pintín-Perez, in press). For instance, racialized (im)migrant individuals may face barriers in accessing healthcare services or justice systems due to language barriers, discriminatory practices, and limited cultural competence among service providers. They might also experience employment discrimination and wage gaps, which contribute to economic vulnerabilities and make them more susceptible to GBV. Wolfson et al. (2017) proposed a critical theory of digital inequity, which emphasizes that the challenges and struggles experienced by marginalized groups in digital access and utilization are shaped by their lived realities within oppressive social and political power structures. In the context of GBV, these power structures can extend to the digital space, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and cultural norms that condone violence against specific racialized and marginalized communities.

## METHODS

We conducted a scoping review (Levac et al., 2010) to identify relevant scholarly empirical literature that addresses (1) GBV, (2) digital technology, and (3) (im)migrant populations. A member of the team who is a social sciences librarian experienced in scoping review search methods (JL) designed a search strategy in Medline in consultation with the rest of the team by using a combination of textwords and

Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) related to the three aspects of our inclusion criteria. Following Levac et al.'s (2020) advice, our search balanced feasibility, breadth, and comprehensiveness and was peer reviewed by an independent librarian using the Peer Review of Electronic Search Strategies (PRESS) framework (McGowan et al, 2015). Once their feedback was incorporated, we translated the syntax and subject headings of the search to Sociological Abstracts, Social Services Abstracts, APA PsycInfo, and Web of Science Core Collection which includes eight distinct indexes. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global was also searched. Textwords were consistent across all databases. No filters or limits were applied. The search strategy performed in Medline; the complete search strategy is available upon request. It retrieved 6,158 results which were uploaded to Covidence. 1,393 duplicates were removed before screening began.

We conducted two levels of screening to identify eligible studies. A screening protocol was developed to assist the screening process. Two members of the team (RH and JJ) conducted an abstract screening of the 4,765 results independently; disagreements were discussed and resolved as a team together with a third member (RB). The abstract screening excluded 4,671 irrelevant studies. We then conducted a full-text screening of the remaining 92 studies using the same independent screening and conflict resolution approach. A total 52 results do not meet our criteria. **Our final sample consists of 40 studies.**

## SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

The sample (n=40) includes 35 peer-reviewed articles, four doctoral dissertations, and one book chapter. Over half of the lead authors are affiliated with an institution in the United States (n=22, 55%); the remaining countries include Australia (n=6), Canada (n=3), United Kingdom (n=3), Germany (n=1), Norway (n=1), Netherlands (n=1), Poland (n=1), Slovenia (n=1), and South Korea (n=1). The earliest year of publication is 2000, with the majority being published after 2010 (n=36, 90%) and over half after 2020 (n=22, 55%). Data analytical strategies include qualitative (n=25, 62.5%), mixed methods (n=10, 25%), and quantitative analysis (n=5, 12.5%). In 29 studies (72.5%), (im)migrants' experiences and/or perspectives are empirically inquired: 16 studies sampled (im)migrants only, and 13 studies included (im)migrants as subsamples. Three studies explored the perspectives of non-(im)migrant stakeholders, such as social service practitioners or non-profit organization workers. The remaining eight primarily analyzed Internet-based or social media data (e.g., blog posts, website texts).

Although our search was designed to encompass all populations affected by GBV, most studies included in the sample addressed GBV against (im)migrant or refugee women, with only one study focused on violence against LGBTQ adults with migration experiences. The most common type of GBV studied was violence against women in heterosexual intimate/spousal relationships. About two-thirds of the studies (n=26, 65%) concerned (im)migrant populations living in Western countries (e.g., the United States, Canada, and Australia). Some studies looked at GBV against migrants in non-western countries (e.g., Uganda, South Korea, Thailand). The sampled studies reported the use of a wide range of forms of digital technology, including social media/social networking sites, blogs and websites, mobile technologies, portable digital devices

(e.g., tablets), and digital service design or learning platforms.

## FINDINGS: MULTI-DIMENSIONAL AND “PARADOXICAL” ROLES OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Considering the multi-dimensional roles of digital technology in facilitating or responding to GBV against (im)migrant populations, we organized our findings to focus on **four primary themes**:



Although the categories above have distinct qualities, they often appeared intertwined. This interconnectedness adds to the complexity of GBV among (im)migrants.

**The analysis presented below, thus, will include an overview of key findings under each theme along with a synthesis of common issues that were reported across themes, to consider their impact on digital use and experiences of (im)migrant populations.**

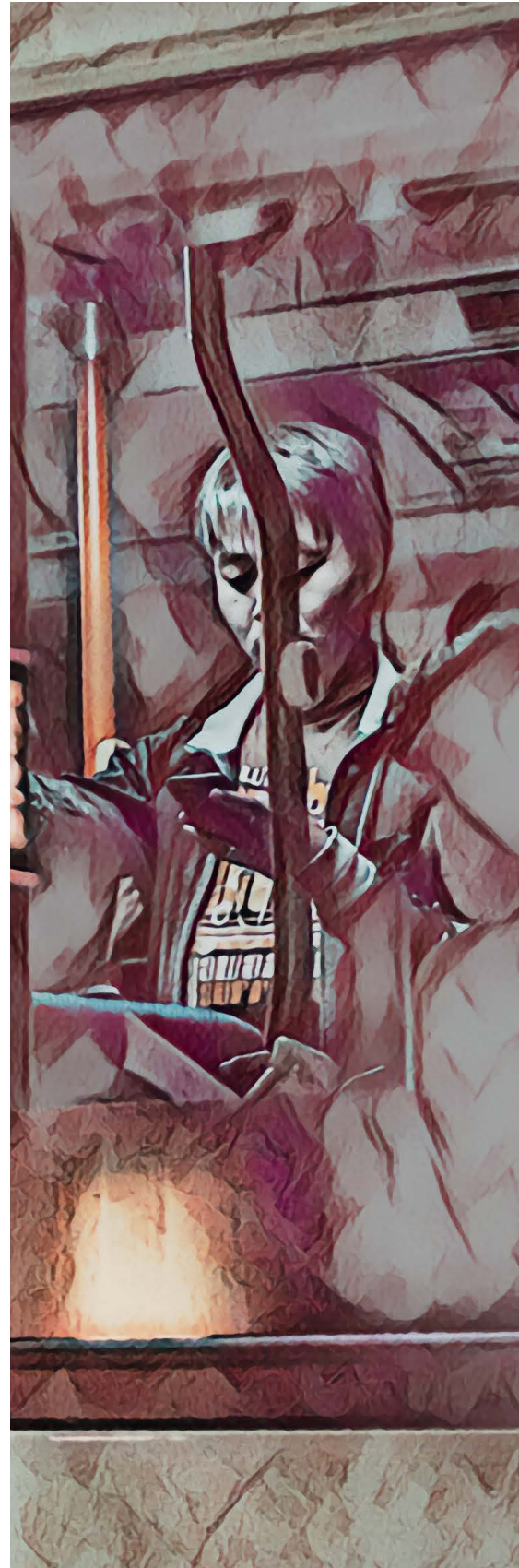
## 1

## GBV AGAINST (IM)MIGRANTS PERPETRATED VIA DIGITAL TOOLS



The selected sample of studies documents ways through which digital technology amplifies or perpetuates GBV. The most frequently discussed type of GBV is technology-facilitated DV or IPV. Logie et al (2019) analyzed survey data quantitatively with refugee and displaced women and girls in urban Uganda and reported that mobile phone ownership was significantly associated with having experienced IPV polyvictimization but was not associated with having experienced a single type of IPV. Other studies analyzed qualitative data, which documented specific ways through which digital IPV may be perpetrated, including partners' control of digital access, digital surveillance, and digitally-facilitated harassment (e.g., Henry et al., 2022; Louie, 2021; Zaidi et al., 2015).

**Intimate partners' control of survivors' access to digital devices**, such as cell phones and the Internet, is commonly reported. In Zaidi et al.'s (2015) study, a survivor of IPV in Canada explained how her husband refused to purchase a cell phone when she came to Canada and that she was without a phone for 10 years. Another survivor said her partner "controlled the telephone" purposefully to isolate her from her family, "because he thought [the survivor's] family or mom would convince [her] to leave" (Zaidi et al., 2015, p.95). The social service providers interviewed in Henry et al.'s (2022) study reported similar abuser's controlling behavior: Women's phones were "punitively taken away or just removed" (p. NP12646), and abusers deleted survivors' family contact information to further isolate the women from crucial support networks. Some Indian immigrant women survivors in Grewal's (2004) study (US-based) reported that their abusers did not allow them



to access movies or television programs and restricted their phone contact with family members back in India, all of which intensified their social isolation.

**Partner's digital surveillance** is another form of digital GBV, which can be perpetrated in myriad of ways, such as location tracking via phone-based applications, social media/digital stalking, and the monitored phone use. For instance, many social service practitioners interviewed in Louie's (2021) study (Australia-based) shared cases where (im)migrant women had partners who tracked their physical locations through smartphone-based applications (e.g., "Find my iPhone"), and survivors sometimes are not aware of tracking applications being installed on their phone or their locations being tracked via their children's devices. One practitioner shared a situation when a woman who newly migrated to Australia went to get a phone service, and her husband signed up for the phone contact on her behalf and hence had access to all her records, such as phone calls made (Louie, 2021). Service providers in Henry et al.'s (2022) study reported that abusers sometimes stole survivors' social media or phone account information to impersonate and gaslight survivors, such as sharing intimate or sexually explicit images without survivors' consent.

**Digitally-facilitated harassment** is another commonly reported violence perpetrated by intimate partners, which may continue to happen even after survivors have left the relationship (Henry et al., 2022; Louie, 2021). For example, survivors might receive text messages that were aggressive and abusive or that contained threats, such as to distribute sexually explicit photos publicly. Survivors might be hesitant to block the abuser on the phone or on social media, as they feared that this might put them in an even more unsafe situation being revenged (Louie, 2021).

In the context of technology-facilitated IPV against women, a number of intersecting challenges were highlighted. **Precarious immigration status** is "frequently used as a form of 'leverage'" (Henry et al., 2022, p.NP12643) to control women, and digital tools can make this type of controlling and threat much more prevalent and easier to implement (e.g., via texting). For example, abusers can now easily send a text message of threats of deportation or canceling spousal visa sponsorship (Henry et al, 2022; Louie, 2021). Some scholars stressed that precarious immigration status can intersect with many other social-economic-cultural conditions and structural inequalities faced by women survivors post-migration, such as **financial precariousness, linguistic marginalization, lack of digital literacy, and social isolation** (Henry et al., 2022; Louie, 2021, Zaidi et al, 2015). For instance, women with temporary immigration status may have limited access to social security and healthcare and financially rely on their partners who are often their visa sponsors (Henry et al., 2022). As most online resources and digital applications are developed in English only, language barrier may prevent many from accessing these resources (Henry et al., 2022; Louie, 2021). For instance, Henry et al. (2022) explained that some immigrant and refugee women had difficulties changing privacy settings on their phone or requesting the removal of personal sensitive information posted by abusers from a website, when these tools and sites were operated in English only. Financial dependence on abusive partners may further limit survivors' ability to access digital tools freely (Sabri et al., 2023). Finally, **reporting and proving digitally-facilitated partner violence can be challenging** for (im)migrant women. Digital partner violence is not always explicitly defined in laws on domestic or IPV and is often perceived by police not as serious as physical violence (Henry et al., 2022). Further, those living with financial precariousness may not be

able to afford the costly forensic assessment of the digital devices that facilitated the digital harassment they have experienced (Henry et al., 2022).

Beyond digitally facilitated partner violence, another set of studies attended to how digital technology, such as the Internet or social media, may facilitate **GBV through online harassment or gendered stereotypes directed at certain (im)migrant communities**. Francisco and Felmler (2022) analyzed Twitter data to identify online discrimination and harassment, such as aggressive messages, against Black and Latinx women. The findings show the “intersectional aggression” (p.10) targeting women’s racialized, gendered, and class-based marginalization and promoting stereotypes. For aggressive messaging against Latinx women, for instance, a common thematic content of tweets identified is both racist and xenophobic (e.g., “building the wall” between the United States and Mexico, or being involved in human or drug smuggling from Mexico to the United States). The online harassment against Latinx (im)migrant women reproduces and reinforces the ongoing persistent xenophobia directed to migrants of Mexican descent in the United States. Online harassment was also reported by participants in a study focusing on the use of digital technology among LGBTQ+ emerging adults, who are (im)migrants in the United States (Alessi et al., 2022). The findings highlighted the positive and crucial role of the Internet and different social media tools in facilitating identity development and many aspects of participants’ pre- and post-migration lives; meanwhile, some participants pointed out the drawbacks of potential exposure to online harassment, such as comments that are homophobic, transphobic, or racist by nature, which can impact their mental well-being (Alessi et al., 2022). Kopytowska (2021) analyzed online comments in response to online articles and YouTube videos pertaining to refugee crisis in 2015.

The study demonstrated how anti-refugee xenophobia, misogyny, and rape culture are intersectionally manifested through anonymous comments online, which contain aggressive attacks directly against refugees and women politicians (i.e., Angela Merkel and Ewa Kopacz) who publicly promote refugee rights and pro-refugee policies (Kopytowska, 2021).

Finally, two other studies concerned the perpetuation of gender-based violence through online advertising of transnational and cross-racial marriage arrangement, which was found to reinforce racialized and sexualized stereotypes of “foreign women” from Eastern Europe and Asia to western countries (Hughes, 2004) or of Filipino or Asian descents in Australia (Cunneen & Stubbs, 2000). Specifically, Hughes (2004) analyzed 219 websites that facilitate the arrangement of transnational marriage and sex services; the authors argued that the advertising of women mainly from eastern Europe and central Asia markets women in “sexualized and sexist ways to Western men,” which may subject women and children to “violent men or sex offenders,” and trafficking for sexual exploitation. Through analyzing website information on advertising specific to searching for “foreign women” for sex and marriage, Cunneen and Stubbs (2000) argued how racialized and sexualized stereotypical representations of Filipino and Asian women (e.g., represented as tradable and exploitable commodities) through these online advertisements reinforces their vulnerability to DV and spousal homicide in cross-racial heterosexual partnerships as migrants in Australia.

## 2

### DIGITAL-PUBLIC DISCOURSES ON GBV AND (IM)MIGRANTS



A small set of studies explore the digital environment as a space where public dialogue on GBV is generated (Kalunta-Crumpton, 2013; Pajnik & Renault, 2014; Sandu & Fernández, 2021). Kalunta-Crumpton (2013) examined commentary posted on Nigerian online forums, following the murders of Nigerian nurses living in the United States by their husbands. The authors noted that “common cultural and ideological frameworks” that were used to understand these incidents of femicide reflected the context of shifting gender roles among Nigerians in addition to prevailing patriarchal attitudes within the Nigerian immigrant community in the United States. Each of the murdered women were all registered nurses in the United States who were often the main financial providers for the family; some commentators critically reflected how patriarchy contributes to DV against women in the Nigerian immigrant community, while others reproduced comments that mainly blamed the victims. Sandu and Fernández (2021) also studied how migrant and ethnic minority women are represented online in the larger context of the feminist movement against gender inequality and gender-based violence in Spain. The movement has been critiqued for lacking an equitable representation of migrant and minority women in the feminist political engagement. For instance, the feminist organizing, such as the development of the Manifesto 8M in Spain in 2018 has centered the voices of middle-class White cisgender women while excluding migrant and ethnic minoritized women’s GBV concerns and their experiences of structural racism. The silencing, othering, and exclusion of migrant and ethically minoritized women



are (re)produced through the online (social media, online campaigns, and national media) feminist discourse related to gender inequality and gendered violence against women (Sandu & Fernández, 2021).

Grounded in their critique of the dichotomy that considers trafficking and sex work as two discrete issues, Pajnik and Renault (2014) argued that these two concepts, along with migration, should instead be considered “a continuum with overlapping dimensions” (p.464). This study explored the extent to which online narratives confront the dominant dichotomy and how migration or migrants are included in the online representation. Their analyses of 351 websites suggests a reinforcement of the polarization of the positions on sex work and trafficking in the online environment; migrants or the topic of migration were more likely to be addressed in trafficking narratives produced by government and large international non-profits, whereas sex work topics tended to appear in the websites of grassroots groups that also discursively include sex workers, clients, and LGBTQ communities.

These studies collectively emphasize the power of the digital environment in shaping public discourse around GBV in the context of migration, while also highlighting the challenges of equitable representation, intersectionality, and the need for more inclusive and nuanced conversations.

### 3

## DIGITALLY-FACILITATED PROFESSIONAL INTERVENTIONS



We begin with a discussion of technology-facilitated professional interventions, which, in this review, we refer to as any forms of anti-GBV social programs and services that are provided by professional service organizations or institutions. **Types of professional anti-GBV interventions that appear in our sample include: (a) Interventions delivered only through digital platforms (e.g., phone-based IPV counseling), (b) Immigrants' needs and uptake of digitally-facilitated services, and (c) How digital technology is used to deliver services that were originally designed for in-person delivery (e.g., during COVID-19).**

Several studies discussed interventions that were tailored to meet the unique needs and strategies to support communities who experience GBV. Seven studies discussed digital interventions for improving IPV awareness among people who are pregnant (including, but not limited to [im]migrants), GBV related safety alerts for migrant groups, anti-IPV educational tools for faith leaders who serve an ethnic minority and immigrant community, and mindfulness-based anti-GBV programs (Choi et al., 2017; Choi et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2023; Sabri et al., 2021; Vroegindewey & Sabri, 2022; Walter et al., 2021; Yankah et al., 2020). Walter et al. (2021) reported on participants' experiences with a Tablet-based anti-IPV intervention, which primarily integrates film-based learning in Norway. The intervention was part of a larger Safe Pregnancy Study. While the film was not developed specifically for immigrants, it was culturally adapted and designed to promote safety and IPV awareness. In particular, the authors explained that women from Norway, Pakistan, and Somalia were involved in

the short film (which lasted 7 minutes) development process. Participants who had a migration background emphasized how the film was very helpful in improving immigrant women's knowledge on IPV in the Norwegian context and helping them to "become integrated into Norwegian society" (p.6). Yankah et al. (2020) described a mobile phone-based intervention for Syrian girls and women in Turkey that did not require access to the internet. The intervention delivers GBV-related safety alerts and educational information via direct text messages.

Three related studies by Choi et al. (2017, 2019 and 2023) reported on the development of online educational modules to improve IPV awareness among Korean immigrant community in the United States. Two of the studies (Choi et al., 2017, 2019) were focused on the use of didactic online educational models geared towards faith leaders, such as pastors, in the Korean immigrant community to promote culturally effective and sensitive anti-IPV training. Choi et al. (2023) detailed a digital simulation approach for these faith leaders; the simulation appears to be more interactive than didactic. For example, different narrative-based simulated IPV scenarios about Korean immigrant women experiencing IPV were used to help faith leaders to recognize the impact of cultural and gendered norms that prevent Korean immigrant women from seeking support for IPV.

The study by Sabri et al. (2021) described and evaluated a phone and computer-facilitated intervention (Being Safe, Health, and Positively Empowered; [BSHAPE]) for immigrants with life exposures to multiple forms of violence, such as family abuse, sexual assault, and IPV. The intervention integrates mindfulness-based activities and a set of comprehensive psycho-educational components, including topics on sexual health, healthy relationship, HIV/STDs, and immigration. The qualitative study by Vroegindewey & Sabri (2022) explored the

experiences with the BSHAPE program among Black immigrant women with IPV exposure. Both the quantitative and qualitative evaluative studies documented positive outcomes of the program.

In five studies, (im)migrants' needs and uptake of using services via digital platforms were explored and assessed. Elbelassy et al. (2022) sought the recommendations from Arab (im)migrant women in the Netherlands an eHealth anti-IPV intervention: Participants noted two prominent challenges facing Arab (im)migrant women in the Netherlands, including the lack of knowledge of IPV/DV-related laws and gendered stereotypes of women in Arabic culture. They recommended developing a digital safety guide and online resource directory, which includes both social and legal resources, and providing online chat support from counselors (Elbelassy et al., 2022). Li et al. (2023) interviewed US-based Chinese (im)migrant women survivors of IPV, the majority of whom were in temporary immigration status. Participants shared their perspectives on online/web-based support for IPV. Many believe online support is crucial, such as educational information on IPV (e.g., signs of aggression/control/violence), social resources and services online, and online peer support groups. Since almost all Chinese immigrants use WeChat (a phone-based messaging app), some believed it would be convenient to build out support apps that can be integrated into WeChat. Sabri et al. (2023) interviewed US-based service providers and (im)migrant IPV survivors originally from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, or Latin America. Participants highlighted the importance of adopting a trauma-informed approach, such as giving content warnings and emphasizing survivors' control over their own situations. In addition, the safety and confidentiality of service users need to be prioritized, especially given the possibility of abusers' digital monitoring. Finally, international students' needs for safety

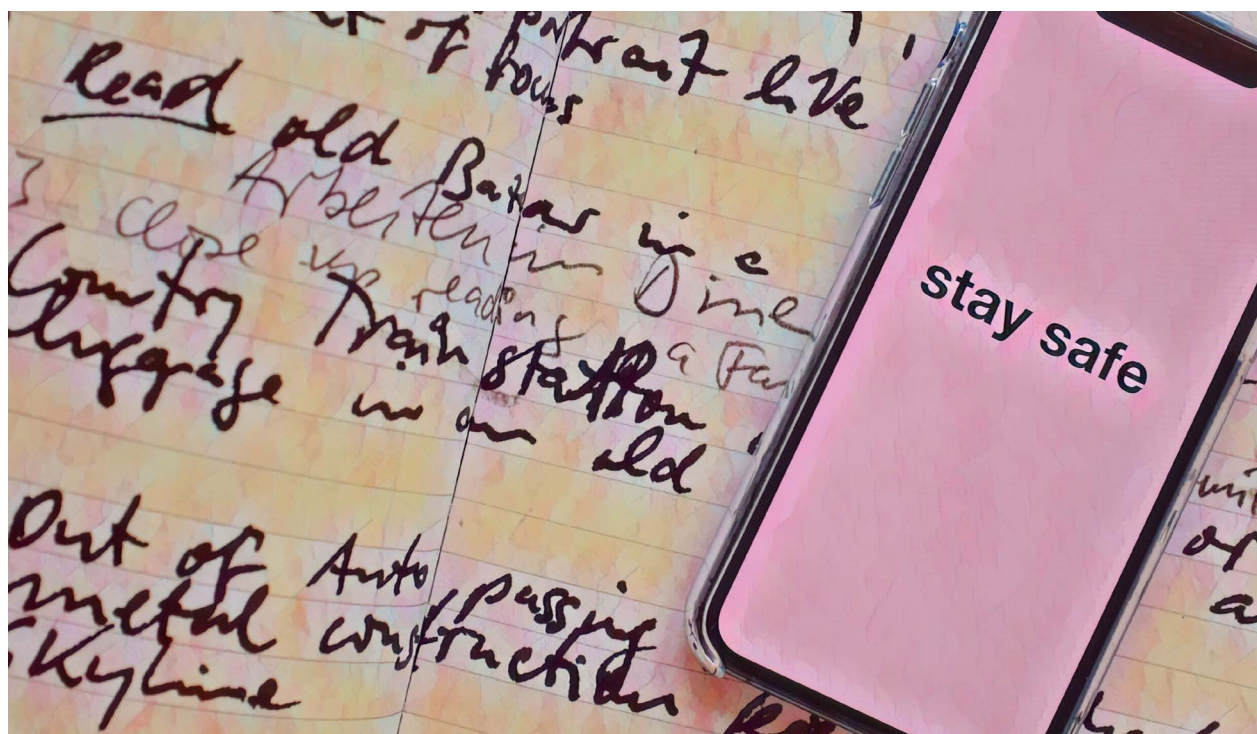
education in South Korea were assessed (Ryoo & Cheung, 2021): The international students in the study rated sexual violence-related training as one of their top needs, and that most preferred safety education to be delivered via videos and some self-directed smartphone-based method. Lee et al. (2013) conducted a study with similar needs assessment goal but among new migrant and refugee women in Australia. The study also reported a highly expressed need for family violence information and resources; although both migrant and refugee groups showed preference for having website- and media-based resources, migrant women reported a significantly higher preference for the use of online or community news media, whereas more refugee women preferred the use of ethnic radio for information sharing.

Four studies reported on how certain digital tools were utilized to implement services originally delivered in-person (Lilleston et al., 2018) or during the COVID-19 pandemic (Gillespie et al., 2022; Marrs Fuchsel, 2023; Sabri et al., 2020). Lilleston et al. (2018) introduced a mobile anti-GBV community outreach program for Syrian refugee women and girls in Lebanon. Some case management sessions were provided by cell phone contact. Studies by Gillespie et al. (2022), Marrs Fuchsel (2023), and Sabri et al. (2020) were focused on participants' experiences with services delivered remotely during COVID-19. These four studies, along with many of the previous 11 ones, offered several key issues and common challenges when considering building and developing digital interventions to address GBV for (im) migrant and refugee communities, all of which are reported below.

**Abuser's digital surveillance** is very often discussed as a major barrier to accessing digital services for partner violence, despite the geographically diverse contexts of the studies (e.g., Elbelassy et al., 2022; Lilleston et al., 2018). Increased partner abuse at home constrains survivors' ability to access

cell phones (e.g., partner controlling of phone use), call IPV hotlines, and limited time for women with IPV experiences to talk to service providers on the phone (Sabri et al., 2020). Digital surveillance, to a great extent, compromises survivors' privacy when using these tools for services, peer support, and community building. For example, in Lilleston et al.'s (2018) study, while phone-based case management sessions, for some women, were more suitable than in-person outreach, the remote delivery of case management held safety risks for some women, such as those whose phones were monitored by abusers at home, and that time-constrained or interrupted sessions may compromise service quality (Lilleston et al., 2018). Phone ownership can be highly gendered among some (im)migrant or refugee communities. For example, according to Yankah et al. (2020), in Syrian refugee communities, men own personal phones while women often share phones with other family members; men in the family may even monitor women's use of phone to "protect [them] and

their families from shame" (p.137). Some studies documented how women navigate and resist partner's digital surveillance to protect their digital privacy and safety. To use a phone or internet-based services safely, for example, women often use password-protected phone applications, delete messages regularly (Yankah et al., 2020), erase web search histories and/or any evidence of digital service use (Elbelassy et al., 2022; Sabri et al., 2023). For video counseling, a useful strategy is adopting code words or hand gestures to signify safety concerns at home (Sabri et al., 2020). Since abusers may impose digital surveillance without consent, some people with IPV experiences expressed need to learn strategies to detect such surveillance (Elbelassy et al., 2022). Other participants said they prefer smartphone-based intervention with no need for Wi-Fi to computer-based; Some recommended using phone-based messaging apps, such as WhatsApp, than regular texting (Sabri et al., 2023).



### **The lack of linguistically relevant services**

was brought up as a major challenge by participants across many studies. For example, Gillespie et al. (2022), reported how some anti-violence hotlines, while offering different languages before the pandemic, was only operating in Italian during COVID-19 in Italy. Participants (Latinx immigrant women in the United States) in Marrs Fuchsel's (2023) study generally shared positive experiences with remote services during COVID-19, such as phone calls, telehealth, online counseling, but some participants talked about language barriers and experiencing racism when reporting to police. While some digital services rely on certain built-in translation tools to provide different language options, participants commented that these translation tools may not always be reliable, sometimes causing mistranslations or failing to capture sufficient cultural nuances in translation (Sabri et al., 2023). **Cultural relevancy and understanding** surfaced as an additional issue within the findings. For instance, a participant in Gillespie's et al. (2022) study emphasized how having a service provider who speaks the language is not sufficient, instead the professional should share some common understandings of the cultural background or have a similar cultural identity. Vroegindewey and Sabri (2022) sought feedback on the BSHAPE intervention from Black immigrant women with IPV experiences, and some participants expressed the need for having professionals who are also Black with experiences with the specific racialization they have been through.

**Lack of digital access, literacy, or comfortability** can become challenging for many (im)migrant survivors, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, Sabri et al. (2020) reported survivors' barriers to accessing computer for their children to do virtual learning during COVID; without computers, their children had to do homework on survivors'

cell phone. Gillespie's et al. (2022) study highlighted the lack of linguistic and culturally relevant online services during the pandemic in Italy. For example, a participant provided an example of linguistic marginalization: Some anti-violence hotlines, while offering different languages before the pandemic, was only operating in Italian during the pandemic. These additional challenges migrant women had to experience during COVID-19 should be considered as "increased institutional violence against migrant women" (Gillespie et al., 2022, p.13).

On the one hand, the authors across many studies identified the lack of digital literacy as contributing to migrants' vulnerability to digitally-facilitated IPV or DV (Henry et al., 2022; Louie, 2021; Zaidi et al., 2015). On the other hand, having digital access and knowledge may still not be sufficient. The majority of the women participants in Zaidi et al.'s (2015) study did report a "good" or "excellent" level of digital literacy and that most of them owned digital devices such as smartphones. However, Zaidi et al. (2015) stated that the women "were not empowered by ICT (information communication technologies) or CMC (computer mediated technologies) access or usage" (pp.95-96). Arguably, the digital "disempowerment" is also shaped by the multilayered structural inequities produced in and after migration (Henry et al., 2022).

Finally, **digital access may be impacted by state regulations**. As mentioned, Yankah et al. (2020) described a mobile phone-based intervention for Syrian girls and women in Turkey. As the team initiated the texting-based anti-GBV program, they initially chose to use a text messaging software called Twilio which was quickly banned due to state emergency (Yankah et al., 2020). The team had to switch to other platforms.

## 4

DIGITAL  
COMMUNITY  
SUPPORT AND  
ACTIVISM

Despite the challenges imposed by digitally facilitated GBV, (im)migrants actively and innovatively use digital technology (e.g., social media, blogs, and mobile phones) to navigate and resist GBV, such as seeking information and resources, building survivor peer support, and leading anti-GBV activism. Several studies provided empirical examples of how **(im)migrant communities locate resources online and build digital community support to address GBV-related concerns** across different geo-cultural contexts (Gillespie et al., 2022; Grewal, 2004; Kim, 2017; Schmidt & Buechler, 2017; Wollersheim et al., 2017; Zaidi et al., 2015). Grewal's (2004) dissertation explored the communication patterns and access to information and resources among Indian immigrant women who experienced DV and abuse in the United States. The study highlighted how survivors navigate abusers' digital surveillance and control to use communication technologies, such as phone, Internet, and email, to look for resources and community support and stay in touch with family members. For instance, some survivors used the television and the Internet to find alternative housing solutions (e.g., anti-GBV shelters), learn about the stories of other survivors, and search for legal and immigration-related support. The study reported a much higher use of the Internet after survivors left the abusive relationship. Wollersheim et al. (2017) researched with 115 refugee women in Australia who participated in a community empowerment program on mobile phone use and peer support building; as participants shared the benefits of phone-based peer support, several highlighted how this type of digital community building allowed them to challenge particular DV

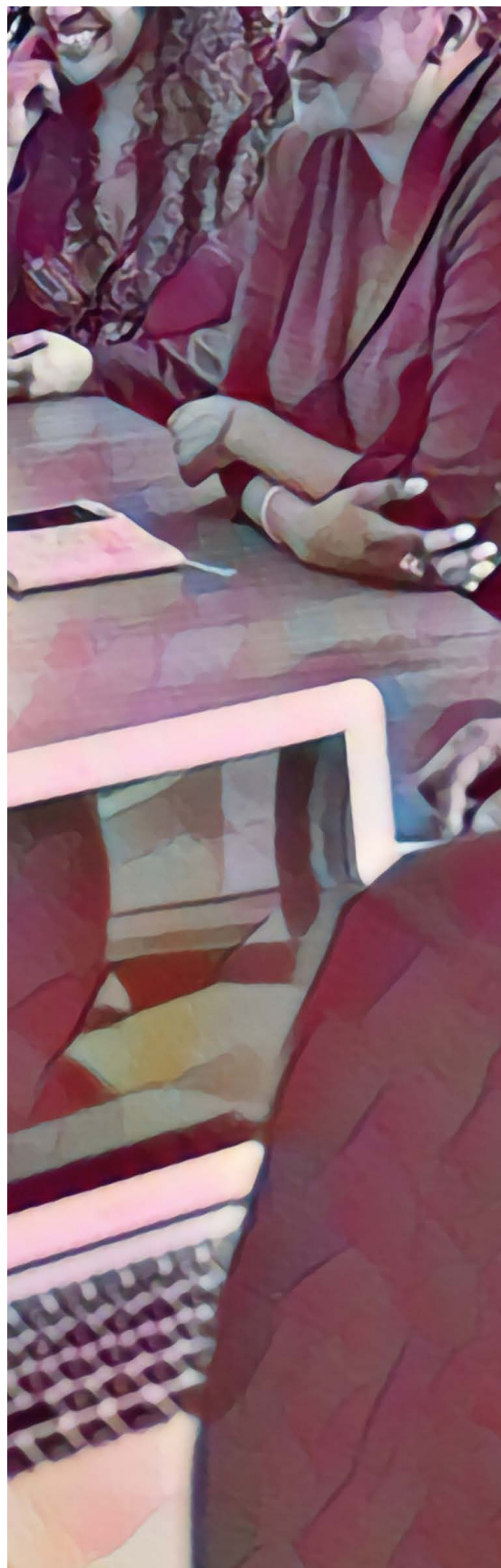
situations, such as reporting incidents and navigating partners' complete control over family finances.

**Migrant women's use of digital support networking is also an important protective strategy to respond to structural and interpersonal violence migrant women commonly experience before and during migration.** Schmidt and Buechler (2017) explored Central American women's experiences during migration trips to Mexico and their protective strategies to navigate violence (e.g., rape, sexual assaults, and trafficking). Many women chose to use digital social networking tools and applications, such as WhatsApp and Facebook, to stay in close contact with one another, such as sharing information related to travel safety and violence prevention (Schmidt & Buechler, 2017). Finally, (im) migrant sex workers were included in Machat et al.'s (2022) study that focuses on the occupational health and safety among sex workers (primarily women and gender minority groups) in Vancouver, Canada; the study reported that being an (im)migrant to Canada was associated with higher odds of primarily seeking clients for sex work online and that the use of online was directly linked to decreased violence at work.

**Immigrant and refugee communities strategically use digital tools and platforms to raise public awareness of GBV and organize community anti-GBV campaigns** (Hislop, 2022; Hosseini, 2019; Frazier-Rath, 2021; Kort, 2005; Mukherjee, 2013). Mukherjee (2013) analyzed the content of blogs related to DV against South Asian immigrant women in the United States and identified diverse topics on DV that were discussed among South Asian immigrant communities, from the meaning-making of DV in relation to migration and gendered norms, to community education and interventions, and to survivor storytelling and social advocacy. It is notable that blogging offers a space for disagreements and debates, such as different feminist positionings on

violence against women, DV as a public or private issue (Mukherjee, 2013). The study by Hosseini (2019) showed how Êzîdî survivors of sexual violence, who were forcibly displaced by Islamic State, used social media, YouTube, and blogs to tell personal stories of their experiences surviving systemic rape during wartime. The stories provided “first-hand information” to raise public awareness, support survivors (Hosseini, 2019, p.191), and shifted a “helpless victim” narrative to survivor stories of women “who are re-taking control of their lives” (p.192). Hislop (2022) critically reflected on how Black immigrant women use online and televised spaces to center their needs for survival and justice in the face of their complex lived realities of sexual violence, systemic racism, criminalization of Black sexualities, and legal systems that disadvantage migrants and refugees. Hislop (2022) argued that the digital spaces and technologies mobilized for healing and advocacy often “provide paradoxical avenues of justice” (p. 337), as the public digital engagement allows for storytelling and empowerment while simultaneously exposure the survivors to potential harassment, violence, emotional burdens, and trauma.

**Digital and online communications facilitate transnational community activism and solidarity building among migrants in response to GBV.** Guemar’s (2016) dissertation explored the migration experiences, identity negotiation, and political engagement of highly skilled Algerian women who migrated outside of Algeria during and after the Algerian Civil War in the 1990s, through surveying 142 Algerian women living abroad and 15 in-depth interviews with participants residing in the UK, France, Canada, Spain, or the United States. In part of this work, Guemar (2016) documented Algerian migrant women’s use of social media, primarily using a Facebook-based group, to provide mutual support, share concerns related to women’s rights and needs, and organize



resources to demonstrate transnational solidarity and advocate for women back in Algeria who experienced violence (e.g., police violence against women). In a similar vein, Kort (2005) analyzed Islamic websites and demonstrated some evidence of how the Islamic teaching related to DV is being reformed and diversified by the use of online spaces among diverse Muslim American and immigrant groups. The finding suggests the potential of the Internet in not only promoting community activism against DV but reshaping Islamic knowledge and thoughts in a transnational space.

Finally, **while almost all studies in this subsample foregrounded the digital experiences and activism of woman-identified (im)migrants, one study focused on men's digital activism against GBV.** Specifically, Frazier-Rath's (2021) empirical work highlighted the challenges and dilemmas that Syrian refugee men faced as they initiated online campaigns against sexual violence against women in Germany. The refugee men, for example, felt that in order to have their advocacy well received, they had to first justify and demonstrate that they are very well integrated (or "integratable") in Germany and socialized into "German values" particularly on "gender equality and treatment of women" (Frazier-Rath, 2021, p.97). The critical analysis demonstrated concretely how dominant anti-refugee discourse and systemic xenophobia against refugee shape the advocacy focus and content, which, the author argues, "creates limitations for activism aimed at ending sexualized violence" (Frazier-Rath, 2021, p.84).

Overall, through social media, blogs, and mobile phones, migrants seek information, build survivor support networks, and lead anti-GBV activism. These efforts empower individuals to access resources, share stories, challenge violence, and promote awareness across diverse geo-cultural contexts. The digital landscape facilitates

transnational activism and solidarity-building among migrant communities in response to GBV. This transnational reach of digital technologies, furthermore, redefines community activism against GBV, fostering connections, resource exchange, and collective resilience for structurally marginalized populations.

## DISCUSSION

The negative health and economic impacts associated with GBV are well documented for racialized immigrants and refugees in Canada, who face intersecting vulnerabilities associated with systemic racism, precarious immigration status, and structural barriers to accessing services that are linguistically and culturally relevant. While the COVID-19 pandemic increased attention to the potential benefits of developing digital responses to GBV, this scoping review underscores the need to attend to intersecting structural inequities, including precarious immigration status, racial disparities, sexual minoritization, and economic vulnerabilities that can legitimize and perpetuate GBV and present barriers for people experience GBV to seek and access support.

**Our review highlights the importance of attending to and addressing not only interpersonal forms of violence but also the larger systems and structures that perpetuate and reinforce GBV.** For instance, digital platforms construct a powerful discursive space for private (e.g., WeChat one-on-one messaging), group (e.g., Facebook closed group chat) and public dialogue (e.g., public Twitter posts) about GBV, which can give space for both the direct perpetration of interpersonal online harassment and the reinforcement of certain cultural stereotypes, societal ideologies, and structural oppression that contribute to the prevalence of GBV. While recognizing the complex ways through which digital technology may be mobilized to perpetuate GBV, we also

identified empirical evidence documenting the active and innovative use of digital tools among (im)migrant communities to build community support, organize for anti-GBV campaigns, and resist dominant GBV storytelling. Through a critical lens of digital inequity, we should consider in what ways the lack of digital access and resources among racialized (im)migrant populations may compound intersecting and interlocking systemic oppression across social, economic, and political domains (Crenshaw, 1991; Wolfson et al., 2017; Zheng & Walsham, 2021). Overall, this review suggests prominent systemic challenges that can compromise the digital experiences of (im)migrant communities. Taken findings across the four themes reported, the following list is a synthesis of main systemic challenges:

- **The intersecting systems of marginalization**, including precarious immigration status, financial precariousness, linguistic exclusion, lack of digital literacy, and social isolation, can jointly contribute to (im)migrants' vulnerability to gendered violence perpetrated via using digital tools.
- **Limited access to affordable digital services and technology devices, along with inadequate digital literacy education**, can hinder (im)migrants' ability to seek community support online and digital services for GBV. Their digital experiences may be **further compromised by abusers' digital control or surveillance, the patriarchal practice of gendered ownership of digital devices (e.g., cell phone), and exposures to online harassment and misinformation**.
- Digital technology can facilitate **a discursive space that allows for the circulation of gendered and racist stereotypes** of (im)migrant groups and misrepresentations of GBV/GBV survivors,

all of which arguably contribute to the public (mis)beliefs and epistemic violence against communities impacted by GBV.

- **The digital-discursive space, as an extension of many "offline" communicative spaces, is not immune to the impact of systemic oppression, such as racism, homo/transphobia, and xenophobia, and classism.** (im)migrant communities utilize digital technology for anti-GBV advocacy and community building may:
  - Directly experience or witness xenophobic or racist attacks and other forms of online harassment;
  - Find themselves excluded or marginalized within the broader "mainstream" feminist/anti-GBV movement and have to constantly navigate systemic exclusion to demonstrate the legitimacy of their activism.

By recognizing and challenging these systemic issues, we can work towards creating more equitable and supportive environments for all individuals affected by GBV. Despite these challenges posed by these intersecting systemic issues and digitally facilitated GBV, it is imperative to highlight that (im)migrant communities exhibit active and innovative use of digital technology to navigate and resist such violence. Their digital efforts and collective activism against GBV and structural forms of oppression have been well documented in this review.

## THE LIMITATIONS OF THE REVIEW

While this scoping review provides valuable insights into the intersection of gender-based violence (GBV), digital technologies, and racialized (im)migrant populations,



it is important to acknowledge several limitations inherent to the methods employed and the characteristics of the sample included in this study.

The search strategy was designed to strike a balance between feasibility, breadth, and comprehensiveness. While we employed a broad range of search terms associated with migration, digital technologies and GBV, some studies that delve into these topics as part of their study findings, may have omitted all three topics in the paper's title and abstract, thereby leading to their exclusion from our study sample. While we attempted to address this limitation through the full-text screening process, it is possible that some relevant studies may have been missed due to this approach.

The sample of studies included in this review is primarily composed of articles published in English-language peer-reviewed journals, doctoral dissertations, and one book chapter. While efforts were made to ensure diversity in terms of geographical representation, the majority of studies are led by researchers based in the United States, even when the study's sample resided in a non-Western context. Additionally, we were unable to review the rich scholarship produced in French-language journals in Canada, which could potentially introduce a bias in the findings and limits the generalizability of the results to non-English and non-Western cultural, social, and political contexts.

The majority of studies included in the sample address GBV against cis-gender (im)migrant or refugee women. As a result, our analysis does not reflect the experiences of IPV, sexual harassment, or abuse experienced among gender-diverse individuals and their unique challenges related to violence, or use of digital technologies to respond to forms of abuse where gender may not be the primary factor.

In conclusion, while this scoping review offers a valuable overview of the current state of research on GBV and digital technologies among and racialized (im) migrant populations, the aforementioned limitations underscore the need for measured interpretation of the findings and highlight opportunities for future research to address the gaps and nuances identified.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, our analysis identified diverse and at times “paradoxical” (Hislop, 2022) roles that digital technology plays in the lives of racialized (im)migrants. (Im)migrants and service providers employ digital technologies to foster healing, seek justice, and find community, but may also be exposed to harassment, coercive control, and threats of abuse, within digital spaces and through digital tools. These nuanced findings challenge common binary categorizations of digital technology as being either “positive” (e.g., digital solutions for GBV) or “negative” (e.g., a facilitator of GBV) in the context of GBV or anti-GBV discourse.

To enhance community support and resistance against GBV, policymakers and service providers should prioritize digital literacy education and expand equitable digital access for marginalized groups. This will enable increased innovation and access to both professional and non-professionalized anti-GBV digital advocacy and support. **When addressing digital inequity, we must recognize that digital inequity is deeply intertwined with, and impacted by, other intersecting systems of marginalization faced by (im)migrants.**

With this recognition, we recommend:

- Proactively engaging the expertise of (im)migrants in their lived realities with digital technology, including both their digital challenges and innovative ways to navigate these challenges.
- When designing and evaluating anti-GBV digital interventions, recognizing that (im)

migrants are a highly diverse population with different digital experiences and preferences; taking into considerations issues including safety and confidentiality, linguistic and cultural sensitivity, cultural norms and understanding of GBV, and the influence of different forms of systemic oppression, such as sexism, classism, racism, and poverty, on their unique GBV and/or digital experiences.

- Leveraging existing digital platforms that have been commonly adopted among (im)migrant groups for GBV-related activism and support; working collaboratively with community members to enhance the safety and usability of these platforms for anti-GBV interventions.

Furthermore, policymakers and social service and advocacy organizations focused on combating GBV should also **address how circulation of racial and gender stereotypes through the Internet and social media can normalize abusive behaviors, harassment, and discrimination against racialized (im) migrants.** Specifically, we recommend:

- Recognizing the complex and nuanced ways through which digital tools are utilized to perpetrate GBV and collaborating with diverse (im)migrant groups to develop adequate policies to define and address various forms of digital GBV and manifestations of racism, homo/transphobia, and/or xenophobia perpetrated through social media or digital tools.
- Providing linguistically and culturally responsive support to racialized (im) migrants who experience digital GBV.
- Creating programs and funding opportunities for (im)migrant-led digital campaigns resisting and challenging online harassment and abusive language motivated by racism, homo/transphobia, and/or xenophobia.

Finally, **additional research is needed to understand the experiences of GBV among diverse (im)migrant groups and how their diverse intersecting identities and experiences of privileges and oppression may influence their digital encounters with GBV.** Given the findings of this review and gaps identified, we recommend future research that explores:

- The experiences of diverse racialized (im)migrant LGBTQ communities pertaining to digital GBV and their ways of resistance and community support.
- Beyond digital IPV or DV, other forms of digital GBV (e.g., gendered labor exploitation, online harassment, workplace bullying, trafficking) related to the experiences of (im)migrants.
- The ways through which various forms of digital GBV impact (im)migrants living with different intersecting experiences of marginalization (e.g., racialized migrant women sex workers who are mothers, international students experiencing partner violence, and refugees living with precarious employment and housing), as well as their resistance and community support through leveraging digital technology.

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# Digital Technology's Complex Role in Facilitating and Responding to Gender-Based Violence among (Im)migrants:

A SCOPING REVIEW

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