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Navigating the Complexity of Gender-Based Violence: A Scoping Review

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ABSTRACT *This scoping review examines gender-based violence in Europe, including intimate partner violence, stalking, workplace sexual harassment, and non-partner sexual violence. It analyzes 48 empirical studies (2019-2024) in English from British and European contexts, excluding US-based research and COVID-19-only studies. While legal frameworks and support systems have evolved through initiatives like the Istanbul Convention, gender-based violence remains prevalent and perpetuates inequality. Most research focuses on intimate partner violence, underscoring a need for deeper exploration of stalking and workplace sexual harassment. Male victims are often overlooked, leading to underreporting and dissatisfaction with services. The review highlights the importance of qualitative research into victim and perpetrator experiences, as well as the motivations behind violence. Inclusive policies, enhanced professional training, and increased funding are crucial to address these gaps.*

KEYWORDS Gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, stalking, workplace sexual harassment, non-partner sexual violence

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1 INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the fight for gender equality has made significant progress, with important milestones such as the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence from 2011, also known as the Istanbul Convention¹ (European Commission, n.d.; Leye et al., 2021). This convention explicitly acknowledges that violence against women is a violation of fundamental human rights. The Istanbul Convention prompted various European countries to create legislation and legal frameworks aimed at combating gender-based violence (Leye et al., 2021; Miaz et al., 2024). Additionally, more attention was drawn to the victims of such violence, leading to the establishment of several support initiatives. The Istanbul convention also provided various impulses in the areas of prevention, international cooperation, and monitoring (Leye et al., 2021; Miaz et al., 2024).

Nonetheless, gender-based violence remains a complex and persistent phenomenon that continues to affect numerous societies on multiple levels (Miaz et al., 2024; van Vugt & Pop, 2022). Gender-based violence can deepen gender inequality in society, creating conditions that make such violence more likely to happen again (van Vugt & Pop, 2022). Violence against both women and men is facilitated by unequal gender expectations and stereotypes in society. Gender-based violence encompasses a wide range of forms, including physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence, directed at a person because of their gender² or disproportionately affecting people of a certain gender (European Commission, n.d.). These forms of violence continue to pose a serious threat worldwide to individuals, communities, and the overall progress toward gender equality. In Europe, for example, 1 in 10 women has experienced some form of sexual violence, and 1 in 20 women has been subjected to rape (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014). This is also why data is being collected at the European level to map this phenomenon, as prevalence rates are crucial for developing evidence-based policies. One example of this is the EU Survey on gender-based violence (EU-GBV survey), a survey that, for the first time across Europe, used a uniform methodology to map gender-based violence (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014). In Belgium, this survey was conducted in 2021-2022 and assessed intimate partner violence, non-partner violence, childhood violence, stalking, and sexual harassment in the workplace³. It explored the prevalence of these forms of violence on the one hand, and also

¹ See Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CETS No. 210): <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list?module=treaty-detail&treatynum=210>.

² Gender in this paper is defined according to the definition used in psychology and sociology: "The state of being male or female as expressed by social or cultural distinctions and differences, rather than biological ones; the collective attributes or traits associated with a particular sex, or determined as a result of one's sex." See: https://www.oed.com/dictionary/gender_n?tl=true.

³ See: [Uitvoering EU-GBV-survey: resultaat van interfederaal samenwerking | Vlaanderen.be](#).

mapped the consequences and impact thereof. In Belgium, experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown were also surveyed (Statistiek Vlaanderen, n.d.).

Although data collection in these various domains has already been completed, this scoping review aims to further contextualize the data within the scientific knowledge of these fields.. It provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of the psychological and sociological scientific literature on gender-based violence. Specifically, we will focus—in line with the Eurostat survey (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014)⁴—on four specific forms of this violence: intimate partner violence, stalking, sexual misconduct in the workplace, and (sexual) violence between non-partners. By delving into the characteristics of both perpetrators and victims, perceptions surrounding these phenomena, and the factors influencing the reporting of violence and seeking help, we aim to gain deeper insights that can contribute to more effective prevention and intervention strategies.

2 METHODOLOGY

As previously mentioned, the aim of this scoping review is to present the current state of the scientific literature on four forms of gender-based violence: intimate partner violence, stalking, workplace misconduct, and sexual violence that did not occur between partners. Furthermore, this selection was made as part of a project commissioned by the Belgian Institute for the Equality of Women and Men (IGVM)⁵. While this delineated scope provided a useful structure for the review, certain important topics, such as cyberviolence and violence against LGBTQ+ individuals, remain underexplored. The scoping review was conducted between February and April 2024. In consultation with all authors, both Dutch⁶ and English⁷ search terms, as well as inclusion and exclusion criteria, were determined.

⁴ The most recent version of the Eurostat survey was conducted in 2021. See: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-statistical-reports/w/ks-ft-22-005>.

⁵ The scoping review is part of the research project titled "Analysis of Data from the Eurostat Survey on Gender-Based Violence," conducted by UCLL and UGent, commissioned by the IGVM (January–December 2024).

⁶ Prevalentie AND genderspecifiek geweld, Daders AND genderspecifiek geweld, Perceptie AND intiem partnergeweld, Perceptie AND seksuele intimidatie op het werk, Frequentie AND genderspecifiek geweld, Levensloop AND genderspecifiek geweld, Gevolgen AND genderspecifiek geweld, Aangifte AND genderspecifiek geweld, Persoonskenmerken AND genderspecifiek geweld, Gezinskenmerken AND genderspecifiek geweld, Risicofactoren AND genderspecifiek geweld, Beschermende factoren AND genderspecifiek geweld.

⁷ Prevalence AND gender-specific violence, Perpetrators AND gender-specific violence, Perception AND intimate partner violence, Perception AND workplace sexual harassment, Frequency AND gender-specific violence, Life course AND gender-specific violence, Effects AND gender-specific violence, Reporting rates AND gender-specific violence, Victim characteristics AND gender-specific violence, Family AND gender-specific violence, Risk factors AND gender-specific violence, Protective factors AND gender-specific violence, Prevalentie AND genderspecifiek geweld, Prevalence AND gender-based violence, Perpetrator AND gender-based violence, Frequency AND gender-based violence, Life course AND gender-based violence, Reporting OR dark number OR dark figure OR underreporting OR unrecorded AND gender-based violence, Victim characteristics AND gender-based violence, Family characteristics AND gender-based violence, Risk factors AND gender-based violence, Protective factors AND gender-based

The search string focused on empirical British and European research published in English and Dutch between 2019 and 2024. This time frame was necessary due to the vast amount of literature available on this subject and the feasibility of the literature review. Research originating from the United States was excluded for the same reason, as the authors also assessed that national contexts vary intensely. Studies that focused exclusively on the impact of COVID-19 on gender-based violence were also excluded, as this scoping review aimed to provide a broader perspective on the phenomenon rather than merely the effect of this specific situation on it.

The search terms were entered into the databases Google Scholar and Web of Science. To ensure feasibility, the English search terms were refined and the search results narrowed due to the high volume of hits and the need for more relevant articles.⁸ Only empirical studies from the disciplines of psychology and sociology were considered for the longlist, selected on the basis of title relevance. Information such as the author, title, year, and journal was systematically recorded in an Excel file. Subsequently, the abstracts, and if necessary, the full texts of the articles, were reviewed to compile a shortlist. This process resulted in a shortlist of 48 English-language articles. Ultimately, no Dutch-language literature was retained. The majority of studies in this shortlist were quantitative (n=38), but there were also qualitative (n=9) and mixed-methods studies (n=1). The literature came from the following countries: Belgium (n=2), Denmark (n=2), Estonia (n=1), France (n=2), Germany (n=2), Ireland (n=1), Italy (n=9), the Netherlands (n=4), Norway (n=3), Portugal (n=1), Spain (n=10), the United Kingdom (n=4), and Sweden (n=5). Two studies were conducted at the European level. Most studies surveyed both male and female respondents (n=29), while some focused exclusively on male (n=5) or female (n=14) respondents. Nearly two thirds of the articles used a sample drawn from the general population (n=30), but six studies specifically focused on perpetrators and twelve on victims. Finally, the theme most commonly found in this literature review was intimate partner violence (n=30), followed by sexual violence (n=8), workplace misconduct (n=7), and stalking (n=3). Upon the recommendation of the Belgian Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, four key reports were also included in this literature review (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014; Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, 2010, 2015, 2017). These fall outside the specified time frame but serve as valuable supplements to the literature found⁹. An earlier report on sexual violence, the UN-MENAMAIS-report (Keygnaert et al., 2021) is not included in this review, but is an important source as it gives an extensive analysis

violence, Perception OR attitudes AND intimate partner violence, Perception OR attitudes AND workplace sexual harassment, Intimate partner violence AND consequences, Intimate partner violence AND reporting, Stalking AND consequences, Stalking AND reporting, Workplace sexual harassment AND consequences, Workplace sexual harassment AND reporting, Non-partner sexual violence AND consequences, Non-partner sexual violence AND reporting.

⁸ The aforementioned search terms shown in the previous footnotes are the most recent and final version of the search terms.

⁹ Feedback from the IGVM was also incorporated into the paper afterwards.

of the prevalence, risk factors and impact of sexual violence in the Belgian adult population.

3 INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

3.1 Perpetrators

The primary focus of this part of the literature review is on violence within intimate relationships, examining physical, verbal, psychological, and emotional violence (Instituut voor de gelijkheid van vrouwen en mannen, 2010). Both male and female perpetrators exhibit emotional and personal risk factors, such as a lack of self-awareness or stress factors, and frequently experience feelings of anger and hostility. Perpetrators also report that they often experience mental and physical health problems (Instituut voor de gelijkheid van vrouwen en mannen, 2015). Interviews with male perpetrators of intimate partner violence revealed three main categories of perceived causes: characteristics of the perpetrator (including emotional disorders, personality traits, and jealousy), characteristics of the victim that generally influence relationship dynamics (such as personality traits and a tendency toward violence), and situational factors such as alcohol use and relational stress (Cunha et al., 2022). The latter relational factor was also found in the report by the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men (2010), where victims of intimate partner violence indicated that the quality, of and satisfaction with, the relationship were perceived as low.

The significance of certain risk factors for perpetration in partner violence appears to differ depending on the gender of the perpetrator. In the Netherlands, socio-economic factors play a more significant role for female perpetrators of partner violence than for male perpetrators (Bijlsma et al., 2022), a finding also supported by the longitudinal study conducted by Schumann et al. (2023) in Germany. Male perpetrators more frequently show a higher prevalence of drug or alcohol addiction and are more likely to have a history of criminal behavior compared to female perpetrators (Bijlsma et al., 2022; Loewenstein et al., 2022).

Perpetrators of intimate partner violence that leads to a fatal outcome tend to have a longer history of violence within the relationship and are more likely to struggle with mental health issues (Johnston et al., 2024; Loewenstein et al., 2022). Furthermore, perpetrators exhibited more frequent and severe violence toward their partner if they experienced more stressful and traumatic life events (Rivas-Rivero & Bonilla-Algovia, 2022).

Vall et al. (2021) report that perpetrators are generally aware of the problematic nature of their violent behavior toward their partner, which impacts both the partner and the children. However, psychological or emotional violence is less frequently recognized by the perpetrator, while the partner does perceive it as problematic.

3.2 Victims

The prevalence and risk factors of partner violence vary between genders and specific demographic groups. Research has shown that women are at greater risk of becoming victims of partner violence when they are younger, have children, have a lower income, and experience little social support (Instituut voor de gelijkheid van vrouwen en mannen, 2010; Joksimovic et al., 2024).

Respondents who have been victims of partner violence more often experience unstable housing conditions and health problems (Roland et al., 2022). In the report by the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men (2010), men and women with lower education levels or without employment did not experience more partner violence than those with higher education levels. However, women with a higher degree or income than their partner are more frequently victims of controlling behavior as well as physical and psychological partner violence, which can be seen as violence triggered by the frustration the partner feels due to a status mismatch (van Vugt & Pop, 2022).

Women also experience more frequent and severe forms of physical partner violence, while men are more likely to face psychological violence (Instituut voor de gelijkheid van vrouwen en mannen, 2010, 2015). Moreover, men are at a higher risk of partner violence when they live in urban areas, have children, and receive little social support (Instituut voor de gelijkheid van vrouwen en mannen, 2010; Joksimovic et al., 2024).

Women with disabilities are also exposed to various forms of violence, including financial, sexual, and psychological abuse. Partners often exploit their dependence (Anyango et al., 2023). These women frequently experience neglect and find it more difficult to leave the relationship due to their reliance on their partner. Care providers often overlook psychological abuse, despite many of these victims having experienced violence in or since childhood. This highlights the increased vulnerability of women with disabilities to partner violence.

Victims who generally feel a certain gratitude toward their partner are at an increased risk of both psychological and physical partner violence (Baldry & Cinquegrana, 2021). In same-sex relationships, female victims experience less physical partner violence compared to heterosexual relationships (Lejbowicz, 2022). Research by Momene et al. (2020) shows that the emotional dependence of the victim on the perpetrator is significantly associated with higher levels of social stress and dysfunctional perfectionism. Dysfunctional perfectionism in victims of partner violence refers to unrealistically high expectations they have for themselves, an intense fear of making mistakes, and a constant drive for perfection. These perfectionist tendencies can lead to increased vulnerability to manipulation and abuse, as victims often try to meet the perpetrator's unrealistic demands to avoid conflict. This exacerbates the negative dynamics within the relationship, where social stress and perfectionism mutually reinforce each other. Additionally, individuals who were victims of sexual violence in childhood are more likely to

experience partner violence (Instituut voor de gelijkheid van vrouwen en mannen, 2010).

Moreover, religion has been identified in the literature as a factor that may influence victimization. Individuals with religious beliefs reported being less frequently victimized by intimate partner violence than other women and men (Instituut voor de gelijkheid van vrouwen en mannen, 2010). This highlights the dual role religion can play in the context of partner violence, where it can provide support on the one hand but also create an environment that either fosters the violence or hinders the victim from seeking help (Pertek et al., 2023).

3.3 Perception

The perception of intimate partner violence plays a crucial role in how individuals understand and respond to this phenomenon. Believing in legitimizing myths about psychological intimate partner violence against women can result in the perception of this behavior as non-problematic by the abused partner, leading to its eventual acceptance (Cinquegrana, 2023). This is supported by a report from the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men (2015), where victims of psychological partner violence do not define it as such. Other forms of intimate partner violence, such as sexual coercion exerted by the partner on the victim, may also be tolerated or not perceived as risky behavior (Garrido-Macías et al., 2022). This could contribute to the underreporting of victimization in prevalence studies.

The extent to which gender-based violence is recognized relates to the respondent's level of education and that of their parents (Osuna-Rodriguez et al., 2023). Dziwiewa and Glowacz (2022) emphasize that perceiving oneself as a victim (acknowledging that one is a victim) is a crucial first step toward seeking help. Recognizing the partner's behavior as problematic is essential to create awareness of relational issues and then take the step toward seeking assistance.

Grembi et al. (2024) find that female respondents with more stereotypical beliefs perceive intimate partner violence as less severe and less frequent. These stereotypical beliefs can also lead to victim-blaming of victims of intimate partner violence in society. In the Dutch study by Kuijpers et al. (2021), respondents considered physical forms of intimate partner violence, especially situations involving a male perpetrator and a female victim, as the least acceptable.

Karlsson et al. (2022) investigated the perception of the severity of intimate partner violence in relation to a country's overall gender equality scores. This Europe-wide study focused on the role of national context and gender equality in shaping individual perceptions of the severity of partner violence. The likelihood of considering partner violence as less severe was higher in countries with low gender equality. The differences between countries in gender equality accounted for 14% of the variability in perceptions, while gender equality at the national level explained 22% of this cross-country variability.

3.4 Consequences

Recent research has shown that intimate partner violence has a wide range of significant and diverse consequences (Instituut voor de gelijkheid van vrouwen en mannen, 2015). Elvin-Nowak et al. (2023) reported that victims of such violence not only experience more psychological issues and depression but also show an increased prevalence of physical health problems. This indicates the profound impact of partner violence on both the mental and physical health of victims. It is noteworthy that psychological issues are primarily found among female victims, as established by the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men (2010). These issues include reduced self-esteem, feelings of guilt or shame, and even an increased tendency toward aggression. Additionally, research indicates that physical injuries are more common among female victims (Instituut voor de gelijkheid van vrouwen en mannen, 2010). Lastly, partner violence can drastically and negatively affect the victim's work performance and social functioning, causing the effects of the violence to extend into the victim's professional and everyday life (Instituut voor de gelijkheid van vrouwen en mannen, 2015, 2017).

Moreover, intimate partner violence can negatively impact other family members, particularly children, as documented by Stiller et al. (2021). Observable violence between partners can affect the children's quality of life and reduce their sense of safety in the home. This exposure can also increase the risk of becoming a perpetrator of intimate partner violence later in the children's lives, as suggested by Gracia et al. (2020), potentially perpetuating the cycle of violence across generations.

Psychological violence, a common aspect of intimate partner violence, is also associated with suicidal behavior in victims, as demonstrated in the research by Puig-Amores et al. (2022). These findings underscore the urgency of understanding and addressing the various dimensions of partner violence, not only for those directly involved but also for the broader family dynamics and society as a whole.

3.5 Seeking help

The help-seeking behavior of victims of intimate partner violence is influenced by various obstacles and stimuli, as identified in recent research. Badenes-Sastre et al. (2024) found that victims are often unaware of the severity of their situation, leading to psychological processes that minimize the situation, exonerate the perpetrator from responsibility, or promote self-blame, making them reluctant to seek help. These findings may be connected to the fact that violence occurring within the current relationship is often kept secret (Instituut voor de gelijkheid van vrouwen en mannen, 2010). On the other hand, research by Colagrossi et al. (2023) shows that increased media attention to cases of femicide can stimulate help-seeking behavior among other victims of intimate partner violence, encouraging them to take action. According to the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men (2010), women are more likely than men to share their experiences with others in

informal settings as well as with professional services. Younger victims are also more likely to do so (Instituut voor de gelijkheid van vrouwen en mannen, 2010). Additionally, it appears that male victims are less satisfied with the professional help they receive compared to female victims (Instituut voor de gelijkheid van vrouwen en mannen, 2010).

The decision of witnesses to report partner violence to the authorities is influenced by various factors, as documented by Leon et al. (2021). Their study showed that witnesses were more likely to report cases of emotional, physical, and sexual violence than cases of controlling behavior. Additionally, the perception of the perpetrator's level of responsibility in the violence played a role in the decision to report or not. Respondents with higher education levels were also more likely to report intimate partner violence when they witnessed such situations. In some communities, partner violence is viewed as a private matter between the couple, which leads to it not being reported (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014).

Further research by van Baak et al. (2024) identified specific reasons why witnesses chose to report partner violence. These reasons included concerns about safety, observing an escalation of the situation, personal distress caused by the unrest, loss of contact with the victim, lack of intervention from others, receiving advice to report the violence, or personal experiences with partner violence. These findings highlight the complexity of help-seeking behavior in the context of intimate partner violence and underscore the need for a multifaceted approach to reduce barriers to assistance and ensure the safety of all involved.

4 STALKING

Stalking is recognized as a serious form of gender-based violence, in which the victim is systematically harassed, contacted, or followed, violating the victim's privacy (Hauch & Elkit, 2023). Research indicates that men are more often subjected to unwanted communication and vandalism, while women are more frequently victims of persistent stalking behaviors and cyberstalking (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014). However, there is a gender-related difference in the perception of stalking, with men being less likely to recognize certain behaviors as stalking. Additionally, studies show that male victims are less likely to seek help and tend to wait longer to report stalking to the authorities (Maran et al., 2020).

Stalking typically occurs between individuals of different genders, with victims potentially experiencing severe psychological effects such as symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, chronic stress, anger, and anxiety (Hauch & Elkit, 2023). These psychological impacts can have significant negative effects on the victims' daily lives, professional activities, and social relationships. Additionally, victims are at risk of direct physical harm, both to their bodies and their property. The psychological effects can also indirectly cause physical symptoms, such as weight issues, headaches, and stomach pains (Maran et al.,

2020). Furthermore, there are practical inconveniences, such as the need to change a phone number (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014).

Victims of stalking often face difficulties when reporting to the police, as evidenced by research from Taylor-Dunn et al. (2021). They report negative experiences, including feeling that the police respond inadequately, do not take them seriously, or even partially blame them. These findings underscore the need for improved law enforcement and support systems to adequately protect and support victims of stalking.

5 SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

Sexual harassment in the workplace is a serious issue with various consequences, as shown by recent research. Blindow et al. (2021, 2022) found that the youngest group of respondents, aged between 26 and 35 years, experienced more boundary-crossing behavior at work, with women being more frequently victimized. Among men, those with a migration background were the most harassed. The victims of sexual harassment in the workplace, both male and female, showed an increased risk of prolonged absence from work and were more likely to use psychotropic medication.

Further research by Kessler et al. (2020, 2021, 2024) in Norway highlights the gender dynamics of sexually inappropriate behavior in the workplace, with women being more frequently confronted with such behavior and perceiving it more often than their male colleagues. For respondents of both genders, holding hostile attitudes toward women and having traditional values was associated with a reduced likelihood of judging social-sexual behavior as sexual harassment, regardless of the actor's gender. Conversely, those who endorsed hostile attitudes toward men were more likely to classify social-sexual behavior as sexual harassment.

The negative impact of sexually inappropriate behavior on both the physical and mental health of victims is highlighted by Maran et al. (2022), who also note that it adversely affects the overall work environment. Additionally, witnesses to such behavior are also impacted by the negative atmosphere it creates in the workplace.

Motivations for reporting sexually inappropriate behavior in the workplace were identified by Bull (2022), who interviewed researchers and doctoral students. The motivations included preventing other women from having similar experiences, seeking justice, and avoiding negative repercussions of inappropriate behavior on academic careers. Because of the significant impact of boundary-crossing behavior on both the professional and private lives of victims, the scientific literature underscores the urgent need for more research and deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

6 SEXUAL VIOLENCE BETWEEN NON-PARTNERS

Sexual violence is a complex phenomenon influenced by various factors, including the characteristics of perpetrators, victims, perceptions, and the reporting of such incidents. Researchers have identified misogyny as a significant facilitating factor for men to engage in gender-based violence (Rottweiler et al., 2025). This attitude can contribute to a culture where sexual violence is considered acceptable.

The vast majority of perpetrators of sexual aggression are men (Schapansky et al., 2023), and having a history of being a victim of sexual violence is often linked to committing such acts. The research also highlights that sexual aggression is primarily perpetrated by a partner or ex-partner, and rarely by a stranger (Schapansky et al., 2023). These findings underscore the importance of understanding the dynamics within intimate relationships and the role that power dynamics play in sexual violence.

On the victim side, certain groups of women are at increased risk of becoming victims, such as women with alcohol or drug addiction and a history of physical or emotional abuse (Leone et al., 2019). Moreover, women generally have a higher risk of becoming victims of sexual violence compared to men, with younger women being at the highest risk (Lippus et al., 2020; Ortensi & Farina, 2020; Parejo, 2023). This risk is further heightened for bisexual women and women with a migration background (Ortensi & Farina, 2020). Victims not only experience physical injuries but also various psychological and emotional consequences from the violence. They report feelings of fear, anger, and shame, a loss of self-confidence, and several other psychological issues (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014).

Perceptions of sexual violence in the general population are strongly influenced by prevailing gender stereotypes. Female perpetrators are more likely to be seen as overly emotional and out of control, while male perpetrators are more often attributed with selfish motives (Phillips & De Roos, 2022). Worryingly, a significant number of respondents in Phillips and De Roos's study (2022) believe that the violence is provoked by the victim, which may indicate deep-seated misconceptions about the nature of sexual violence.

The reporting of sexual violence is influenced by various factors, including the victim's trust in the legal system (Poletti et al., 2024). According to the survey by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014), feelings of shame hinder victims from seeking help or reporting sexual violence to the police. Reporting to the police is also not a priority for victims; they primarily need psychological support and protection, as noted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014). Additionally, witnesses of the violence may be influenced by concerns about safety, uncertainty about the situation in general, or conservative gender norms, which can lead to underreporting of such incidents (Poletti et al., 2024).

7 CONCLUSION

Gender-based violence manifests as a complex phenomenon where men are often the perpetrators and women the victims, as evidenced by the four forms of violence discussed in this paper. However, it is crucial not to overlook male victims. Further research is urgently needed to understand why men are less likely to seek professional help, report violence to authorities, and why they are often dissatisfied with the help they receive (Instituut voor de Gelijkheid van Vrouwen en Mannen, 2010; Maran et al., 2020). Another extremely vulnerable group is women with disabilities. Their dependence is often exploited, and which calls for extra alertness from care providers (Anyango et al, 2023).

Specifically for intimate partner violence, more emphasis should be placed on psychological violence, as it often goes unnoticed and both perpetrators and victims struggle to recognize it as problematic (Cinquegrana, 2023; Dziewa & Glowacz, 2022; Garrido-Macías et al., 2022; Karlsson et al., 2022; Osuna-Rodriguez et al., 2023). Awareness of the severity of the situation is a crucial factor in seeking help. It is also notable that stalking victims often feel dismissed when reporting to the police (Taylor-Dunn et al., 2021). Regarding workplace harassment, there are gaps in the literature concerning the characteristics of perpetrators and victims (Blindow et al., 2021, 2022; Bull, 2022; Kessler et al., 2020, 2021, 2024; Maran et al., 2022). In cases of sexual violence outside of intimate relationships, there is a lack of insight into the characteristics of male victims and limited research on the factors that influence whether victims seek professional help or report the violence to authorities (Lippus et al., 2020; Ortensi & Farina, 2020; Parejo, 2023).

The process of compiling the shortlist of 48 articles and the analysis of these articles reveal a predominant trend toward quantitative research within the field of gender-based violence. While such research is essential for understanding the scope and frequency of violence, there is a clear need for qualitative research, such as interviews or focus groups, that provides deeper insights into the complex dynamics and personal experiences of both perpetrators and victims. Furthermore, the literature indicates a specific lack of studies focusing on the characteristics and motivations of perpetrators. Even more concerning is the finding that, within the scope of this scoping review, there is extremely limited scientific literature on specific topics such as stalking and workplace sexual harassment. This research gap underscores the urgency for targeted studies on these critical yet underexplored aspects of gender-based violence.

The findings of this literature review underscore the need for an inclusive approach to policy and practice concerning gender-based violence. This includes developing specific programs and services for male victims, potentially based on those already established for female victims, enhancing awareness and training for professionals, ensuring that reports of gender-based violence are taken seriously by law enforcement agencies, providing comprehensive psychological support for victims, and increasing research funding to address knowledge gaps and develop

more effective interventions. These measures would contribute to a more inclusive and effective approach to gender-based violence, ensuring that all victims receive the support they deserve.

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