

## A profile of gender-based violence research in Europe

Bradbury-Jones, Caroline; Clark, Maria; Paavilainen, Eija; Appleton, Jane

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# **A Profile of Gender-based Violence Research in Europe: Findings from a Focused Mapping Review and Synthesis**

## **Introduction**

Violence against women and girls is one of the most prevalent human rights violations in the world (United Nations Population Fund 2016). As enshrined within the Beijing Declaration of 1995, this refers to any act of gender-based violence that results in - or is likely to result in - physical, sexual or psychological harm to women, including coercion and deprivation of liberty (United Nations 1995).

The terms ‘gender-based violence’ and ‘violence against women’ tend to be used synonymously. The reason for this interchangeability is recognition that most gender-based violence is perpetrated by men against women. However, they are not the same. Bloom’s (2008) definition incorporates three components of gender-based violence: It occurs as a result of normative role expectations associated with each gender; it is based on unequal power relationships between the two genders; it operates within the context of a specific society. Social constructions of gender (on which gender-based violence are based) are described by the World Health Organization (WHO) (2017) thus: people are born female or male, but learn to be girls and boys who then grow into women and men. That said, it is important to recognize the wider spectrum of sex and gender development which challenges the binary notion of two sexes; blurring traditional male-female boundaries and including ‘intersex’ characteristics (Ainsworth 2015; Reardon 2016).

Men and boys can be victims of gender-based violence and so too can those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) (Carlton, Bennett Cattaneo & Gebhard 2016). However, it is widely acknowledged that the majority of people affected by gender-based violence are women and girls (Council of Europe 2011). Moreover, women and girls as victims of gender-based violence suffer specific, long-term consequences of

gender discrimination (health-genderviolence.org, 2016). Gender-based violence can therefore be regarded as a structural mechanism used to sustain male dominance and there can be no real equality between women and men when women experience gender-based violence (European Union 2012). Hence the importance of any efforts through policy, practice or research to tackle the issue.

Reflecting on these definitions, gender-based violence can be conceptualized as a broad issue of which violence against women constitutes a part (Bloom 2008). Defining violence against women as a form of gender-based violence is helpful. It emphasizes that violence is directed at a woman, *because* she is a woman (Council of Europe 2011; Women against Violence Europe (WAVE) 2016).

Establishing clarity on these definitional issues is crucial because as WAVE (2016) point out, common definitions form a critical component of quality service provision for women and children who have fallen victim to gender-based violence. In this article we use the term ‘gender-based violence’ with a focus on violence against women and girls. This is in line with others who seek to emphasize the gendered nature of the issue (health-genderviolence.org, 2016). Also, although we are aware of the semantic debates regarding ‘victim’ and ‘survivor’ (Samelius et al. 2014), we tend to use the term victim, as one that highlights the enduring and harmful nature of gender-based violence (while accepting the importance of survivorship).

### **Forms of Gender-based violence**

Gender-based violence takes many forms, including for example, sexual harassment, sexual violence (including rape), intimate partner violence (IPV), stalking, forced marriage, forced sterilisation, forced abortion and Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) (Council of Europe 2011). It also includes emerging forms of ‘technological violence’, such

as on-line harassment (European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) 2016). An overview of the forms of gender-based violence is presented in Table 1.

[Insert Table 1]

Gender-based violence has potential to occur at every point in the life-cycle of women and girls. We are inspired by the notion of the female life-cycle of gender-based violence as proposed by Heise, Pitanguy and Germain (1994). We have modified this slightly to incorporate contemporary forms of gender-based violence, such as on-line grooming and cyber-bullying (Table 2) which reflects the emerging forms of violations as captured already in Table 1. The life-cycle approach helps to illustrate the potential cumulative impact of violence experienced by girls and women. The WHO (2015) advocate a life-course approach as one that emphasizes how as a health determinant, gender cuts across four age stages – the girl child, adolescent girl, adult women and older women. We argue that importantly, this approach highlights the risks of gender-based violence from cradle (and even ‘pre-cradle’) to grave: age offers no protection from gender-based violence.

[Insert Table 2]

## **Background**

The Council of Europe’s (2011) Convention in Istanbul on preventing gender-based violence against women and girls was the first legally binding regional instrument to address different forms of violence, such as psychological violence, stalking, physical violence, sexual violence and sexual harassment. During 2014-16, further important policy drivers regarding gender-based violence came out of Europe. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) reported on the first survey of its kind on violence against women across the 28 Member States of the European Union (FRA 2014). 42,000 women from across the region were asked about their experiences of physical, sexual, and psychological

violence, stalking, sexual harassment, and the role played by new technologies in women's experiences of abuse. The survey results revealed extensive abuse affecting many women in Europe. Moreover, it showed how most of this remains un-reported.

In 2015, the WHO Regional Office for Europe published '*Beyond the mortality advantage: investigating women's health in Europe*'. This investigation showed that although women in the WHO European Region have better health compared to many countries of the world, gender inequities are increasing within and between countries in the region. They concluded that gender and socioeconomic determinants affect opportunities for girls and women in the region, threatening their right to health and well-being across the life-course (WHO 2015). This was followed by the '*Strategy on women's health and well-being in the WHO European Region*' (WHO 2016) which as the name suggests, laid out the strategic actions required to tackle gender-based violence.

At a similar time, the European Parliament for Citizen's Rights and Constitutional Affairs (2016) reported on a study that identified the various types of violence perpetrated against women, and the inter-related factors that impinge upon women's gender equality. The study illuminated the difficulty in gathering data that helps to prevent violence against women in Europe. This included problems with comparison of data between EU Member States due to differences in legal definition; not all Member States have criminalised all forms of violence against women (European Commission 2016a).

The background policy and research had already established the challenges involved in undertaking research on gender-based violence in Europe, reflecting the significant socio-economic, legal and geo-political differences in how violence is conceptualized and actioned in low income versus middle income countries, including war, conflict and poverty in developing countries (European Commission, 2016a, 2017; Council of Europe, 2011). As researchers of gender-based violence in England and Finland, the wave of interest at policy

level in Europe piqued our interest. We questioned what was happening in the field from a research perspective. We knew of a significant amount of research taking place, but we did not have a clear impression of its nature and scope. Given the emergent policy interest in gender-based violence in the region, we considered it timely to undertake a review that profiled research activity in Europe.

There are limitations to focusing on Europe that we will explore later. But we argue that capturing research activity at this level might identify potential trends and neglected areas of research across the region that could be considered in relation to the policy context. Such insights have potential to inform the direction of future research activities, producing evidence on how to address the enduring impacts of gender-based violence on women and girls across the life-course.

## **Review Methods**

The aim of the project was to identify clusters of research interest (where researchers are focusing their attention) and to identify gaps and neglected areas of gender-based violence research. Specifically we wanted to answer the following review questions in relation to gender-based violence research in Europe:

1. What types of methodologies are being used?
2. Where is research being conducted geographically?
3. What patterns of research activity/interest can be discerned across Europe?

We undertook a comprehensive literature review that we refer to as a ‘focused mapping review and synthesis’. This is an emerging form of review that we describe in detail here, for the processes to be understood and associated judgements about rigor to be made. Also, the level of detail will help readers who are interested in undertaking this form of review themselves. Grant and Booth (2009) described a typology of 14 review types and associated

methodologies, presenting these as a typology. Appraised against that typology, our approach aligns closely with a mapping review/systematic map, where:

‘Mapping reviews enable the contextualization of in-depth systematic literature reviews within broader literature and identification of gaps in the evidence base... [They] may characterize studies... according to theoretical perspective, population group or the setting within which studies were undertaken’ (Grant & Booth 2009, p. 97).

In addition to mapping, we also conducted a focused synthesis to examine one particular issue: gender-based violence research in Europe. This methodological approach to reviewing literature is becoming a popular way of investigating a range of issues for example, theory in qualitative research (Bradbury-Jones, Taylor & Herber 2014) and vicarious trauma in child protection research (Taylor, Bradbury-Jones, Breckenridge, Jones & Herber 2016). Recently, Jones, Taylor, MacKay, Soliman, Clayton, Gadda, Anderson and Jones (2016) used this approach to scope UK child protection research between 2010 and 2014. They mapped the topics investigated, maltreatment types and the research approaches used. Authors who use this approach advocate it as a means of mapping and categorizing existing literature to determine patterns and gaps in a contemporary area of social concern; hence its relevance to our review.

The focused mapping review and synthesis is unique in that it focuses on: 1) targeted journals; 2) a specific subject; 3) a defined time period. Some forms of review – such as systematic reviews - strive towards extensive searches in order to retrieve all relevant literature on a subject. The focused mapping review however, searches within specific, pre-determined journals that are selected on their likelihood to contain articles relevant to the field of inquiry. Exhaustive database searches are not required to provide the snap-shot profile. In sum, it is the purposive selection of journals that sets a focused mapping review and synthesis apart from other types of review. It has the benefit of taking a phenomenon (in

this case gender-based violence research in Europe) and drawing ‘attention to its completeness within the literature’ (Taylor et al. 2016, p.3). It is not better than other forms of review; it simply forms a different purpose.

### **Selection of journals**

Journals were selected purposively on their likelihood to publish research relevant to gender-based violence. Using the international Scopus (2017) SCImago Journal and Country Rank, we searched for ‘violence’ and ‘abuse’ to identify the highest ranked journals in the field. Excluding journals that were not directly related to our area of interest (for example those with a focus on drug abuse, conflict and injury) we ended up with 13 journals targeted for the review (Table 3). We debated extensively whether to include journals that are disciplinary based, for example nursing or social work because we know that these types of journals provide an outlet for such work. However, accepting the limitations, this was a ‘focused’ review, hence the target journals. We recognised that our journal choice meant that only articles published in English made it into the review. We discuss the limitations of this later.

[Insert Table 3]

### **Retrieval of articles**

Each team member was responsible for three (or in some cases four) specific journals. A key decision in a focused mapping review and synthesis is the time period. In our previous reviews, the timeframe has varied from three months (Bradbury-Jones et al. 2014) to six years (Taylor et al. 2016), with the main criterion being the ability to answer the review question. Like many other forms of review, we undertook an initial scoping to determine the feasibility and parameters of the project (Grant & Booth 2009). The lead reviewer (*insert initials*) accessed each journal to determine the likely amount of relevant articles. We had initially set a six-month timeframe, but the scoping identified that this was likely to yield



insufficient data. Extending the timeframe to several years would have overcome this, but was beyond the time resources of the small review team and may have compromised depth and quality. So although there were inherent limitations, we decided on a time period of one year.

Journal archives for 2015 were systematically searched for all articles that met the inclusion criteria as detailed in Table 4. A key discussion point among the team was what we considered to be ‘Europe’. We debated whether it should include the 47 countries as per the Council of Europe (<http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/47-members-states>); 28 countries ([https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries_en)) or 51 (<https://www.countries-ofthe-world.com/countries-of-europe.html>). For the sake of breadth and to glean insights from as many countries as possible, we chose the latter and set the parameters at the 51 included countries. Retrieval of articles involved a stepped process. This began with chronological scrutiny of every issue within in each included journal. Titles, abstracts and key words were searched for ‘women’, ‘girls’ ‘mothers’ and ‘gender’. We also searched for ‘men’ and ‘boys’ to retrieve articles that had perpetration as the focus. Full text download of eligible articles was then undertaken. We also obtained full text articles where the inclusion eligibility was unclear. As a mechanism to enhance rigor, we worked in pairs to check each other’s retrieval processes to confirm inter-rater consistency. This allowed any areas of uncertainty to be discussed and agreed. The lead reviewer (*insert initials*) appraised all articles against the inclusion criteria to agree those for final inclusion.

[Insert Table 4]

### **Data abstraction (mapping)**

Articles meeting the inclusion criteria were read in full and each reviewer loaded predefined details onto a mapping proforma developed for the study (Table 5). The proforma reflects most of the forms of gender-based violence as shown in Table 1 and the life-cycle

approach to violence (Table 2). In effect, we mapped theoretically to the framework for the review. Working in pairs we checked the mapping process to ensure accuracy in data abstraction. We did not critically appraise the included studies for quality because our purpose was to profile what was happening in the field, rather than to draw conclusions from the included studies' findings.

[Insert Table 5]

### **Data analysis**

We approached the review with a-priori understanding of the potential nature and scope of gender-based violence, reflected in the article retrieval and data abstraction. This led to a largely deductive analysis, framed by our predetermined categorizations of gender-based violence and life-course stages. However, during analysis we were open to the inductive emergence of new categories. Mirroring the paired processes described for other parts of the review, we double-checked the analysis, to ensure that the final results (synthesis) provide an accurate and robust account.

## **Results**

An important finding of this review is that in their reporting, researchers do not always make clear the gender-based violence nature of their studies. This made retrieval of relevant articles more difficult than we had anticipated. In many articles, the gendered issue was obscured and implicit rather than explicit. However, after close scrutiny of full text articles and agreement across the team, 32 articles met the inclusion criteria and were included in the review. As a result, a comprehensive profile of gender-based violence research in Europe, mapped to the journals included in the review was produced (Table 6). Key findings are presented here in relation to the review questions.

[Insert Table 6]

### **Research approaches and methodologies being used**

An array of approaches and research designs were used. From the 32 articles, 16 reported the use of quantitative methodologies (including three trials, three self-report questionnaires and three surveys) and there were 12 articles reporting on qualitative study types. There was also one documentary analysis (Anitha & Gill 2015), two mixed-method studies (Holt 2015, Schneider, Banholzer and Albarracin 2015) and one systematic review (Ali, Naylor, Croot and O’Cathain 2015). These findings reflect what can be considered a ‘healthy mix’ of methodologies being used in the field of gender-based violence research in Europe. This is entirely congruent with the plethora of research questions being addressed.

### **Geographical location of research**

Most studies were undertaken by researchers from the UK (n=8), followed by Spain (n=5), Sweden (n=4), Germany (n=4), Finland (n=3), Ireland (2) and Serbia (n=2). Other contributions came from Czech Republic, Greece, Italy and the Netherlands. Most studies were conducted within single countries (although some of these involved multiple organizations from within that country). Given the significant investment of European funding bodies such as Horizon 2020 and DAPHNE (welcomeurope 2016) on pan-European research, we were surprised that only seven studies involved cross-country collaborations. Of these, five were with collaborators from outside Europe with no other participating European country (Kyegombe, Abramsky, Devries, Michau, Nakuti, Starmann, Musuya, Heise & Watts, 2015 (UK and Uganda); Keeling & Fisher, 2015 (UK and Australia); Bellows, Lemke, Jenderedjian & Scherbaum, 2015 (Germany and USA); Dyer, Feldmann & Borgmann, 2015 (Germany and USA); and Vézina, Hébert, Poulin, Lavoie, Vitaro and Tremblay, (2015 (Ireland and Canada). There were just two included articles that involved pan-European collaborations: Tiwari, Fong, Chan, Yan, Lam, Tang & Graham-Kevan, 2015 (UK, Sweden and Hong Kong) and Djikanovic, Wong, Simic, Marinkovic, Van Weel & Largo-Janssen, 2015 (Serbia and the Netherlands). So our review findings suggest that researchers are

tending to turn to collaborators outside Europe – rather than collaborate within it. We consider this a point of interest, rather than significance. The important finding is that collaborations *are* taking place (and are being published), although they are in the minority in comparison to single country studies.

Three studies were undertaken by researchers from within Europe, focusing on countries outside Europe – we could term this: European researchers ‘looking outwards’. These were a systematic review undertaken by a UK team investigating IPV in Pakistan (Ali et al, 2015); an analysis of men’s discourses of IPV in Nicaragua by Swedish researchers (Salazar and Öhman’s, 2015); and a German study analysing rape in the DR Congo (Schneider, Banholzer & Albarracin, 2015). Conversely, Carlson, Casey, Edleson, Tolman, Walsh and Kimball (2015) were the only authors included in the review who were outside Europe ‘looking inwards’. Their study involved in-depth interviews with representatives from different continents including Africa, Asia and Europe. Initially, we had questioned whether these three publications met the inclusion criteria for the review. Did they constitute ‘research in Europe’? After some debate we retained them on the basis that they assist in creating the profile of what is happening in Europe, responding directly to review question 2.

### **Patterns of research activity/interest across Europe**

There were three distinct groups of articles that unsurprisingly mapped to our inclusion criteria (see Table 6 for tabulation of themes). The first related to participant focus: women and girls as victim/survivors, or men and boys as perpetrators. Of these, the majority investigated victimization and survivorship among women and girls (n=25) compared to perpetration by men and boys (n=7). Four articles investigated professional perspectives of dealing with GBV and these are reported later. The second theme linked to violence across the life-course, capturing violence and abuse against children (n=9); young people and adolescent girls (n=3) and older women (n=2). The third category was type of gender-based

violence, with IPV being the most widely researched issue in the included articles (n=24). The results are structured around the first two themes, with the third theme inter-woven. This is because type of gender-based violence straddles both themes and separating them further risks over-reduction of data.

## **Theme 1: Participant focus**

### ***Women and girls as victims/survivors***

Myhill (2015) reported that some research evidence has pointed to gender symmetry in IPV prevalence. He argued however, that many IPV studies have small, under-representative samples, with research designs that make it difficult to distinguish between different types of abuse. Reporting on a UK national population survey, he showed that coercive controlling abuse is highly gendered and asymmetrical, with women overwhelmingly the victims.

We were surprised that we did not find any articles addressing FGM/C and similarly, there was only one study on early and forced marriage (Anitha & Gill 2015). This article examined British media's constructions of forced marriage as portrayed in newspapers. The authors reported a 'moral panic' that constructs forced marriage as a cultural problem that threatens Britain's social order. They argue that this type of discourse undermines attempts to tackle forced marriage as a form of violence against women.

The issue investigated most was IPV, with 24 of the articles having this as the primary focus. Sexual abuse (n=6) and stalking (n=2) were also investigated, mostly (but not exclusively) in the context of IPV. One article (Mamo, Bianco, Dalmaso, Giroto, Mondo & Penasso 2015) reported on a retrospective study concerning emergency department visits of women who died as a consequence of femicide. They found that in most cases, death was preceded by episodes of physical violence that could be documented and identified by

admissions in emergency departments. This article reinforces the importance of timely and assiduous interventions in the detection and prevention of femicide.

There was a grouping of papers that focused on IPV and post-separation issues. Forssell and Cater (2015) interviewed mothers in Sweden regarding their children's (n=165) patterns of contact with their fathers post-separation. The mothers had all experienced IPV from the children's father. The results showed that children who had witnessed most violence were less likely to have contact with their father than those who had witnessed less. These findings are important when considering post-separation risks to women and children. For example, Morrison (2015) reported continued abuse of women and children following parental separation, linked to contact arrangements. Similarly, Holt (2015) provided clear evidence of post separation contact facilitating continued abuse of women and children.

Nikupeteri, Tervonen and Laitinen (2015) interviewed Finnish women/mothers and 13 children. They identified that in cases of post-separation stalking of the family, children's security can be eroded. They suggest that practitioners can play a significant role in facilitating 'safety talk' between mothers and their children. Another article by members of the same team (Nikupeteri & Laitinen 2015) highlighted that children's lives are shadowed by post separation stalking. The study shows how the mother-child bond can be impacted negatively; a point that will be explored further in the next section. Collectively, this group of articles emphasize the enduring risks to women and children constituted by IPV that extend way beyond the point of separation.

Several studies highlighted the impacts of gender-based violence on wellbeing and health. In their analysis of the relationship between child sexual abuse, attachment style and depression among young female adult victims, Cantón-Cortés, Cortés and Cantón (2015) found a correlation between secure attachments and low depression scores and corresponding anxious attachment styles and high depression scores. Their findings confirm that

characteristics of child sexual abuse such as type of abuse, relationship with the perpetrator and continuity of abuse can impact on attachment style and depression symptomology. Kelmedi's (2015) study on domestic violence against women in Kosovo illuminated the impact on women's experiences of issues such as poverty, patriarchal culture and strictly defined gender roles. Such stark gendered inequalities are by no means restricted to certain countries, but Kelmedi's study provides a reminder that the legal and socioeconomic status of women across Europe might vary considerably between countries.

In terms of strategies to address IPV, the Randomized Controlled Trial of Michalopoulou, Tzamalouka, Chrouros and Darviri (2015) in Greece, evaluated the impact of interventions to reduce the psychological impacts of IPV such as stress, depression, locus of control and coping. Their study showed a moderate effect of a stress management program on stress (but none of the other outcomes). Learning from such studies across the rest of Europe regarding interventions that work in one context is important. Holt (2015) reported on a mixed-method study in Ireland that included a survey of 219 mothers and interviews with children, mothers, fathers and professionals. She argued that men need not be excluded from their children's lives but can be supported to be 'good enough' fathers. Their findings show how important it is for abusive men to take responsibility for their behavior on children and ex-partners; an issue that connects with the following section.

### ***Men and boys as perpetrators***

Articles that investigated perpetration hold some important findings about discourses of violence. For example, Salazar and Öhman (2015) investigated how young Nicaraguan men (n=91) express their understandings of IPV and sexual abuse towards women. Discourses ranged from challenging gender inequality to supporting patriarchy and male dominance. The authors argue that the discourse supporting gender equality and men's

responsibility for violence is struggling to achieve recognition compared to the dominant discourse that justifies and perpetuates violence against women.

Diaz-Aguardo and Martinez (2015) also studied male perpetration. They investigated types of adolescent male dating violence against women, with 4,147 participating violent and non-violent boys in Spain aged 14-18 years. Violent boys showed lower self-esteem and greater justification of male dominance and IPV against women; and greater justification of aggression in conflict resolution. They have also received more dominance and violence messages from adults in their families – indicating the significant intergenerational impacts of violence.

Studies investigating broader issues of gender-based violence (such as war crimes) did not feature highly in the review. One exception was that of Schneider, Banholzer and Albarracin (2015) who reported the findings from a survey of Congolese ex-soldiers, on ordered rape (that is, rape under command). They highlighted soldiers' fear of punishment and commanders' distribution of stimulant drugs. Such findings bring to attention perpetrators' own vulnerability in a context of hierarchy and power relations and underscore the complexity of gender-based violence. Like the boys in the study by Diaz-Aguardo and Martinez (2015), violence breeds violence and it is important to bear in mind the intergenerational impacts of violence for all concerned, whether victim or perpetrator.

In terms of interventions, psychological treatment programs with male perpetrators of IPV have shown promising results (Fernández-Montalvo, Echauri, Martinez, Azcarate & Lopez-Goñi, 2015). Also with a focus on intervention and bringing an additional global perspective to our review, Carlson et al. (2015) reported on findings from interviews with 29 representatives from across the world that included Europe. The representatives were drawn from organizations that self-identified as implementing efforts to engage men and boys in violence prevention, for example, university programs and governmental organizations. This



article contains important messages for tackling gender-based violence internationally by emphasizing how strategies to engage men and boys in violence prevention need to be responsive to cultural, economic and contextual concerns. This is particularly relevant to our review given its focus on multiple countries and contexts.

### ***Professional responses to gender-based violence***

Four articles focused on professional attitudes and responses. Virkki (2015) investigated social and healthcare professionals' views on the division of responsibility between perpetrator and victim on ending IPV. Similarly, Djikanovic et al. (2015) measured attitudes and perceived preparedness of physicians in Serbia to deal with IPV against women. Their survey of 435 physicians drawn from primary healthcare settings showed that their attitudes towards IPV were better than preparedness to deal with the issue. The study highlighted education as a moderate predictor of preparedness. In relation to responses, Keeling and Fisher (2015) from the UK conducted interviews with 15 women who had disclosed domestic violence to a health professional. They reported on how some professionals had failed to act upon the disclosure, which the authors argue, is analogous with the behavior of the perpetrator. Collectively, this group of articles highlight the importance of appropriate professional attitudes and responses in dealing with gender-based violence.

### **Theme 2: Violence across the life-course**

The life-cycle approach was reflected in our findings, with coverage of gender-based violence research focusing on children and adolescent girls, through to older women. Additionally, many articles implicitly or explicitly captured intergenerational aspects of violence and abuse that we present later. Nine articles focused on children, such as those of Morrison (2015); Nikupeteri, Tervonen and Laitinen (2015); and Holt (2015). Adolescents and young girls were the subject of gender-based research in three articles, including those of Vézina et al. (2015) and Diaz-Aguardo and Martinez (2015). Holt (2016) investigated the

issue of adolescent-to-parent abuse, which she argues, is becoming recognized as a significant social problem in the Global North. Holt's study is a reminder that abusive relationships are complex and multidimensional.

Older women featured in two articles. In these, Petrusic, Todorovic, Vracevic and Jankovic (2015) highlighted the significantly hidden issue of financial abuse, and Stöckl and Penhale (2015) explored a range of different types of abuse experienced by older women, reporting on the physical and mental health issues associated with IPV. Both these articles underscore the importance of viewing IPV as a problem that does not discriminate according to age.

Intergenerational violence was evident in many included articles. Exploring the impact of maternal childhood abuse on women's own mothering, Fuchs, Möhler, Resch & Kaess (2015) showed that the period in a child's life when child locomotion develops is a critical time for mothers with a history of abuse. The authors suggest that targeted interventions during this period are needed to break intergenerational cycles of abuse. Vézina et al. (2015) evaluated dating victimization among 443 adolescent girls and young women. Their study showed how a history of violence, childhood behavior problems and adolescent high risk behaviors were associated with increased risk of being victimized psychologically and/or physically/sexually in their adolescent and early adult dating relationships.

Izaguirre and Calvete (2015) interviewed 30 Spanish mothers to assess the impact of IPV on children's emotional and behavioral problems. Results showed that most children had witnessed IPV and as a result of exposure to violence, children develop psychological, social and school problems. Their learning of aggressive behaviors is remarkable and is sometimes directed towards their mother. This study highlighted how women therefore experience twofold victimization: by their partner and children. Pels et al. (2015) conducted interviews with 100 mothers in the Netherlands who had experienced IPV. Most reported negative

experiences with parenting. Similarly, in the context of post-separation stalking, Nikupeteri and Laitinen (2015) show clearly the negative impacts on the mother-child bond which have potential to become intergenerational. This group of included articles point to the impacts of IPV on children, adolescents and women, that while not inevitable, can lead to cycles of abuse that are difficult to break.

Overall, our findings reflect an interest in gender-based violence research in Europe that focuses on girls and women across the life-course. Given the cradle-grave nature of gender-based violence and its intergenerational impacts, these studies are crucial. It is important to recognize however, that intergenerational transmission of abuse is not inevitable. As illustrated by Fuchs et al. (2015) strategies can be developed to promote resilience and as Mauritzson, Bergendahl Odby, Holmqvist and Nilsson (2015) express it: the fog can lift and recovery is possible.

## **Discussion**

The complexity of gender-based violence across the life-course involves interconnected aspects of violence, including structural state-sanctioned inequalities, ritual abuse and torture (Barron, Miller & Kelly 2015), hate crimes, war crimes and child sexual exploitation (CSE) more generally. These forms of gender-based violence however, did not feature highly in our review. The most frequently researched issues were IPV and sexual abuse. This is entirely congruent with overall significance of these issues globally (Ali et al. 2015). IPV is one of the most serious and pervasive forms of gender-based violence, with an estimated 35% of women worldwide having experienced either physical and/or sexual IPV or sexual violence by a non-partner at some point in their lives (WHO, Department of Reproductive Health and Research, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, South African Medical Research Council 2013). Moreover, patterns of abuse are invariably interconnected, with association between IPV and substance use both in its perpetration (Choenni,

Hammink and van de Mheen 2017) and victimization (Sullivan, McPartland, Armeli, Jaquier and Tennen 2012).

Patterns of abuse are known to be intergenerational and our findings have pointed to connections between childhood and later life experiences that support other research. For example, Namy, Carlson, O'Hara, Nakuti, Bukuluki, Lwanyaaga, Namakula, Nanyunja, Wainberg, Naker & Michau (2017) report how IPV is often associated with violence against children in the same household. Similarly, in their investigation of teen dating behaviour, Jouriles, Mueller, Rosenfield, McDonald and Dodson (2012) demonstrated how teens' exposure to severe IPV and recent harsh parenting were both positively associated with teen dating violence perpetration.

In the context of Europe, IPV exists in all Council of Europe member states and occurs at all levels of society (Council of Europe, 2016). An estimated one-fifth to one-quarter of all women have experienced physical violence at least once during their adult lives, and more than one-tenth have suffered sexual violence involving the use of force (Council of Europe, 2016). Forty-three per cent of women within the European Union area have experienced some form of psychological violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2014). Of all women who were the victims of homicide globally in 2012, almost half were killed by intimate partners or family members (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2014). Femicide as a devastating outcome of IPV was highlighted in one of our included studies (Mamo et al. 2015) and underscores the life threatening nature of this issue.

We were surprised at the lack of studies focusing on FGM/C. The issue has attracted a great deal of debate (Dustin 2010) and has become the subject of policies and legal frameworks in Europe and across the globe. Across EU Member States there has been a trend to recognize FGM/C as a criminal act (EIGE, 2013). In the UK, the Female Genital

Mutilation Act 2003 was amended in the Serious Crime Act 2015 to protect actual or potential victims under civil law. There is limited prevalence data around FGM/C across Europe (EIGE, 2013), but an analysis of FGM/C prevalence across 30 countries, reported that at least 200 million women and girls alive today have undergone the procedure and in most of these countries, the majority of girls were cut before the age of five (UNICEF 2016). These statistics point to the significance of the problem.

Similarly, ‘honor’- based violence has become a pressing issue across the world (Gill & Brah 2014), yet studies investigating the issue were not visible within our review. The same can be applied to early and forced marriage and human trafficking. Worldwide, more than 700 million women alive today were married as children (below 18 years of age). Of those women, more than 1 in 3—or some 250 million—were married before 15 (UNICEF 2014a). Around 120 million girls worldwide (slightly more than 1 in 10) have experienced forced intercourse or other forced sexual acts at some point in their lives. By far the most common perpetrators of sexual violence against girls are current or former husbands, partners or boyfriends (UNICEF 2014b). Adult women account for almost half of all human trafficking victims detected worldwide and collectively, women and girls account for about 70 per cent (UNODC 2014).

Table 1 shows emerging forms of violation such as online harassment, bullying and abusive use of information and communication technologies. One in 10 women in the European Union has experienced cyber-harassment since the age of 15 (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2014). This type of harassment includes receiving unwanted, offensive and sexually explicit emails, text messages or advances on social networking sites. However such forms of gender-based violence were not particularly visible in our review.

One study on cyber-bullying nearly made it into the review, but it did not focus specifically on violence against women (Bayraktar, Machackova, Dedkova, Cerna & Sevcikova 2015).

There are a number of explanations why some issues seem under-represented in our review. It may reflect the relative newness of certain phenomena as issues of empirical study in Europe (for example cyber-bullying and FGM/C), with a body of evidence yet to be built. Early and forced marriage is by no means a new issue globally, nor is FGM/C, but in the context of Europe, only recent decades have seen these issues attract policy and research attention. We find it difficult to conceive that studies on these issues are not taking place. As a major European grant funding programme, DAPHNE III had an annual budget of 18.5 million euro for the period 2007-2013 to fund European projects on violence prevention. [http://www.welcomeurope.com/european-funds/daphne-iii-fight-violence-102+2.html#tab=onglet\\_details](http://www.welcomeurope.com/european-funds/daphne-iii-fight-violence-102+2.html#tab=onglet_details)

Latterly, the Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme 2014-2020 (European Commission 2016b) has a budget of 439 million Euro. It is likely that publication outputs from grants funded through these programmes simply did not make their way into our review. In itself this raises interesting questions about publication trends and where researchers from such studies are publishing their results. This is perhaps a line of further inquiry. A search of the open-access databases of such research programmes would no doubt retrieve final publications in the form of reports, books and conference proceedings. These may be of value for inclusion in future reviews that adopt a more integrative methodology.

An interesting phenomenon that we encountered when undertaking the review was the ‘hidden’ nature of gender-based violence within many articles. For example, Hellemans, Loeys, Buysse and de Smet’s (2015) study of IPV among an ethnic minority population was retrieved because we considered that it would meet the inclusion criteria as outlined in Table

4. Findings from the study showed that women were more likely to report physical violence than men. Similarly, the review undertaken by Kloppen, Mæhle, Kvelling, Haugland and Breivik (2015) on the prevalence of intra-familial child maltreatment in the Nordic countries, reported that markedly more girls than boys were exposed to sexual abuse. However, we excluded these articles (and articles like them) because the gendered issue was buried within the body of the article as an implicit, rather than explicit problem. This was particularly the case for studies that included both male and female participants (such as Hellemans and colleagues). Almost all such studies reported disproportionate effects of abuse and violence on women, highlighting a gender inequality, but we were unable to include them because they lacked an overt gender-based violence lens. A key message for researchers is to foreground the gendered nature of their research, expressed in keywords, title or abstract. This will help in the retrieval of their articles and ensure that the issue of gender-based violence remains visible within published literature. Additionally, there is a need for synergizing efforts. Collaborations are essential to address the global issue of gender-based violence and to enable researchers and professionals across Europe to consider how they can work together more effectively to improve victims'/survivors' safety and longer term wellbeing, through enhanced legislative frameworks and service improvements.

The costs of gender-based violence in Europe are based on estimate. Walby and Olive (2013) extrapolated the cost from the UK to the rest of the EU states, calculating it at EUR 228 billion a year. It is noteworthy that spending on specialised services to mitigate the harms and prevent the repetition of violence - in the case of IPV - is a mere 3 % of the cost of IPV against women (EIGE) 2014). Hence, the pressing need for practice, research and policies that can tackle the issue.

It is promising that the gender-based violence policy context in Europe is gaining momentum. For example, in 2017, the European Commission announced that violence

against women is a brutal form of discrimination and violation of women's fundamental human rights; launching the '*NON.NO.NEIN*' campaign (see #SayNoStopVAW). The campaign promotes collaborative actions to put an end to violence against women and girls across Europe; involving local authorities, national governments, and international organisations. The time is ripe for research to feed into the policy agenda. This review article may offer a useful contribution when juxtaposed with such policies, ensuring that efforts to tackle gender-based violence in Europe utilize empirical evidence to inform policies - and visa-versa.

## **Review Limitations**

The aim of this focused mapping review and synthesis was to provide insights into a previously un-investigated issue. Other types of review were possible but a focused mapping review and synthesis allowed us to develop the snap-shot profile that we had intended. There are however several limitations. We found that the complexity of gender-based violence had implications for the scope of our search and related findings. We justified focusing on violence against women as this is the most frequent and serious form of gender-based violence. We recognize that gender-based violence affects men, boys and LGBTQ people and future reviews that include their perspectives will provide a fuller picture. This will make way for greater understanding of couple violence and informed actions that benefit both genders (Espinoza & Warner 2016) and address the need for further research in this area (Badenes-Ribera, Bonilla-Campos, Frias-Navarro, Pons-Salvador & Monterde-i-Bort 2016). Similarly, we only included articles meeting the inclusion criterion regarding Europe because this was the first step within this line of inquiry. However, a number of potentially useful articles were excluded because they were undertaken elsewhere – most often North America. Future reviews that look across more countries may therefore be useful.



We only included 13 journals and this might be regarded as limiting. Previous focused mapping reviews and syntheses have included only five (Bradbury-Jones et al. 2014) and six (Taylor et al. 2016) journals, so the number of included journals is not in itself a limitation. It is the ability to answer the research question that is important. However, including more journals would almost certainly have revealed further interesting patterning than our review was able to provide. It is acknowledged that choice of journal introduces inherent bias. For example, we found a number of studies on IPV in comparison to other issues and this may be an artefact of the selected journals (Journal of Interpersonal Violence and Journal of Family Violence in particular). However, even removing these journals from the data presented in Table 6, there are still more articles focusing on IPV than any other form of violence.

We targeted journals that have explicit focus on violence and abuse. We know however that authors publish their gender-based violence related research in an array of other journals, particularly those that are discipline specific: nursing, social work etcetera. Another inherent problem associated with our journal choice is that they are English-only publications. It is likely that there are many useful studies in Europe published in other languages that were excluded. The limitations of this are acknowledged and future reviews could usefully address this issue. Overall, readers need to bear in mind the limitations of our methodology and scope when interpreting the findings of this article. That said, by definition a snap-shot captures a certain point in time, rather than creating a comprehensive profile. Larger analyses may follow.

## **Conclusions**

Like Europe itself, the landscape of gender-based violence is changing, and our review has provided a snap-shot profile of one point in time. Future analyses will provide different insights and allow for interesting comparisons. From our review we are able to suggest some implications regarding gender-based violence research in Europe. At an

individual level, researchers can help to raise the profile of the gendered nature of most violence and abuse-related research by being explicit about this in their publications. Most studies in the review were conducted from individual countries - only seven involved cross-country collaborations. Increasing opportunities for cross-national research will be helpful in addressing the global issue of gender-based violence. This can contribute to efforts that tackle enduring gender-based inequalities experienced by women and girls in Europe and across the world.

## **Implications for practice, policy and research**

- Findings make a contribution to knowledge for an academic audience who want to inform the direction of their own studies.
- Researchers and practitioners can use the review findings to explain gaps in evidence which will help them justify applications for funding.
- A recommendation is for replication of this review with a global, rather than European focus. This will create a fuller, international profile of gender-based violence research.
- Acknowledging that men and boys are also victims of abuse, future reviews that focus on the issues affecting them are needed. This would contribute to a wider understanding of gender-based violence, rather than one from a solely gendered – violence against women - perspective. It would also respond to concerns that research on males as victims has been ignored (Espinoza and Warner 2016).
- The potential to engage in more collaboration; combining expertise and interest across different countries is needed. Although this is happening to some degree, our review has highlighted the scope for greater international co-operation regarding gender-based violence in Europe.

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**Table 1: Forms of gender-based violence**

- Intimate Partner Violence, stalking;
- Sexual violence (including rape, sexual assault and harassment);
- Trafficking, slavery, sexual exploitation;
- Early and forced marriage, forced sterilization, forced abortion, female genital mutilation/cutting, and crimes committed in the name of so-called ‘honor’;
- Emerging forms of violations, such as online harassment, sexual abuse facilitated through the use of information and communication technologies, cyber-bullying.

**Table 2: Life-cycle of violence (Adapted slightly from Heise et al. 1994).**

<b>Life-cycle phase</b>	<b>Type of violence</b>
Prenatal	Prenatal sex selection, physical assault during pregnancy, coerced/forced pregnancy (rape and sexual assault). Forced and missed abortion as a result of physical violence.
Infancy	Female infanticide, sexual, emotional and physical abuse, living with domestic violence, neglect, mental abuse, trafficking.
Childhood	Sexual, emotional, mental and physical abuse, living with domestic violence, neglect, early and forced marriage, FGM/C, femicide, on-line grooming and cyber-bullying, gang affiliation.
Adolescence	FGM/C, early and forced marriage, prostitution, pornography, trafficking, sexual harassment, IPV, crimes in the name of 'honor', rape and sexual assault, on-line grooming and cyber-bullying, coercive control, gang affiliation.
Adulthood	Sexual harassment, IPV, rape and sexual assault, femicide, forced pregnancy, dowry and bride price abuse, crimes in the name of 'honor', sexual exploitation, trafficking, stalking, maternal on-line grooming and cyber-bullying, coercive control, financial/economic abuse, gang affiliation.
Old age	Elder abuse, IPV, rape, abuse of widows, sexual harassment, institutional abuse, coercive control financial/economic abuse.

**Table 3: Journals targeted for review**

	<b>Journals selected as a result of ‘Abuse’ search</b>	<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Country</b>
1	Child Abuse and Neglect	CAN	United Kingdom
2	Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment	SAJRT	United States
3	Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*	TVA	United Kingdom
4	Journal of Child Sexual Abuse	JCSA	United Kingdom
5	Journal of Elder Abuse and Neglect	JEAN	United Kingdom
6	Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma**	JAMT	United States
7	Child Abuse Review	CAR	United Kingdom
	<b>Journals selected as a result of ‘Violence’ search</b>		<b>Country</b>
8	Journal of Interpersonal Violence	JIV	United States
9	Violence Against Women	VAW	United States
10	Violence and Victims	VV	United States
11	Journal of Family Violence	JFV	United States
12	Journal of School Violence	JSV	United Kingdom
13	Psychology of Violence	PV	United States

*\*Trauma, Violence, & Abuse appeared in both searches*

*\*\* Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma previously Journal of Emotional Abuse & Journal of Psychological Trauma*



**Table 4: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for article selection**

<b>Inclusion</b>	<b>Exclusion</b>
Reporting primary research Systematic and other reviews Published in 2015 Focus on gender-based violence Research undertaken in Europe (partially or exclusively) Research undertaken by European researchers (partially or exclusively)	Editorials, discussion papers, opinions Not published in 2015 No clear focus on gender-based violence Included mixed samples (male and female) Not related to Europe

**Table 5: Mapping proforma for each journal**

<b>Title of article:</b>	<b>Country/Countries in which research conducted:</b>
<b>Authors:</b>	<b>Country/Countries of researchers:</b>
<b>Issue, Volume:</b>	<b>Study methodology:</b>
<b>Participants</b>	
Older women	
Women/mothers	
Young people and adolescents	
Children	
Professionals' perspectives	
<b>Focus</b>	
Focus on victims	
Focus on perpetrators	
Focus on prevention	
<b>Issue investigated</b>	
Broad issues of Gender-based violence (GBV)	
Cyber-bullying	
Early and forced marriage	
Female Genital Mutilation/cutting	
Harassment	
'Honor' crimes	
Intimate Partner Violence	
Rape	
Sexual assault	
Sexual abuse	
Slavery	
Stalking	
Trafficking	

**Table 6: Mapping across journals**

	CAN	CAR	JAMT	JCSA	JEAN	JFV	JIV	JSV	PV	SAJRT	TVA	VAW	VV	TOTAL
Number of articles	3	3	1	1	1	6	7	0	0	0	1	7	2	32
<b>Theme 1: Participant focus</b>														
Victims/survivors	2	3	-	1	1	6	6	-	-	-	1	4	1	25
Male perpetrators	-	1	1	-	-	0	1	-	-	-	1	2	1	7
Professionals	-	1	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	4
<b>Theme 2: Violence across the life-course</b>														
Children/parenting	2	3	-	-	-	2	0	-	-	-	-	1	1	9
Young people and adolescents	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	3
Older women	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
<b>Theme 3: Type of gender-based violence</b>														
Intimate Partner Violence	2	3	1	-	1	6	5	-	-	-	1	3	2	24
Sexual abuse	1	-	1	1	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
Prevention	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	4
Broad issues (war crimes/structural violence)	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	-	3
Physical violence	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Stalking	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	2
Rape	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
Early and forced marriage	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1