

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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Gender-based violence (GBV) against women with precarious legal status and their access to social protection in advanced welfare societies: an analytical contribution to reconstruct the research field and its institutional development

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to map the emergence and development of a research field around the topic of “gender-based violence (GBV) against women with precarious legal status and their access to social protection in advanced welfare societies”. We explore the academic knowledge production around this topic as a specific research field by using bibliometric data. We investigate the place occupied by scholars who publish in well-established journals, and their disciplines, in order to understand the relevance of different disciplines and groups of researchers in the knowledge production within the field. Our methodology includes analysis of co-authorship, cross-country collaboration, and co-citation. The search strategy is informed by discursive practices and knowledge production by influential international civil society actors (CSAs) involved in framing welfare responses to GBV against women with precarious legal status. Our results suggest that the knowledge produced in the field increased in terms of number of publications between 2010 and 2021, indicating a process of institutionalisation. Disciplines oriented towards certain groups of professionals such as clinical psychology, medicine, health, nursing, and social work, affiliated mainly to institutions in the US, Canada, and the EU, have a prominent role in knowledge production in this field. In our conclusions, we discuss the implications of these results in relation to gender studies and migration studies, along with some limitations of the use of bibliometrics software combined with an intersectionality approach.

Keywords: Gender-based violence, Forced migration, Intersectionality approach, Bibliometric analysis, Migration studies

Introduction

This study focuses on knowledge production in the field of gender-based violence (GBV) against women with precarious legal status *and* their access to social protection in advanced welfare societies. This choice allows us to focus on just one specific intersection of gender and migration studies: i.e. gender-based violence *and* women with precarious legal status. To approach our chosen field of research, we have looked to knowledge produced outside of academia as a point of departure. In this regard, as further explained in the Sect. 1.2, a propaedeutically qualitative exploration of grey literature was made to explore the ways in which some prominent civil society actors (CSAs) have internationally framed a) GBV as a public problem and b) public responses to it. In line with conceptualisations of GBV against women developed by internationally recognised CSAs, we use specific terminology to map academic authors and disciplines that contribute to knowledge production within this field.

The field of research explored in this paper has increasing relevance, given the large number of people living outside protection systems as a consequence of the exclusionary effect of institutionalised categories that restrict entitlements based on the legal status of migrants. The question of access to social protection systems for individuals with precarious legal status calls attention to the welfare-migration nexus (Ryndyk, Sutter, and Odden, 2021). In order to access social rights and entitlements (i.e., social protection systems), human beings need to be recognised as members of particular rights regimes (e.g., citizen regimes/citizenship; human rights regimes/humanitarian protection; migration regimes/residence) (Benhabib, 2004). In this regard, this study looks exclusively at knowledge production that refers to those with “precarious legal status”, operationalised as people who are subject to migration controls but have not been granted refugee status, and are thus denied access to refugee resettlement programmes. More specifically, by “women with precarious legal status” (see Table 1), we refer to asylum seekers and refused asylum requests; special visa categories, such as spousal and temporary workers (framed here as immigrant); and some human rights cases, such as migrants who have overstayed their visa (framed as displaced or stateless).

In the following section, we present the theoretical background to our research, with particular attention given to the debate around the conceptualisation of GBV against women and its links with feminist, intersectional, post-colonial, and post-national discourses and actors. Further, we briefly introduce membership regimes in respect to human/social rights and entitlements and their conceptualisation around categories used by non-state actors. This is propaedeutically to clarify the background literature that directly informs our study.

Conceptualisation of gender-based violence (GBV) against women with precarious legal status and their access to social protection in advanced welfare societies

Our theoretical framework draws on different bodies of literature and conceptualisations of GBV against women with precarious legal status *and* their access to social protection in advanced welfare societies.

Table 1 Research questions and related terminology composing the complex query

RQ1 – Public problem	RQ1 – Target group	RQ2 – Public responses/interventions
Violence against women; trafficking; prostitution; sexual abuse; interpersonal violence; rape; sexual violence; honour-based violence; sexual assault; forced marriage; stalk; domestic violence; intimate partner violence; sex work; victimisation; violence; institutional violence	Women; woman; fem*; migrant; asylum seeker; immigrant; displace; stateless	Helpline; shelter; social protection; social work; social support; welfare service; rehabilitation; social policy; welfare policy

Current discussion at the cutting edge of gender and migration

Firstly, we explore *feminist migration scholars and the conceptualisation of gender in migration studies*. Recent studies focusing on knowledge production in the field of migration research (Levy et al., 2020; Sirckeci et al., 2017), and with particular attention to feminist analysis within migration studies (Kelson & DeLaet, 1999; Kofman, 2020; Morokvasic, 1984; Nawyn, 2010), have suggested that *gender* should be understood as “*more than an individual-level binary category ascribed at birth (...) It is, rather, a system of power relations that permeates every aspect of the migration experience*” (Nawyn, 2010, p.760). Despite the increased incorporation of gender analysis into migration research, it has also been highlighted that there remains a degree of gender blindness among migration scholars (Kofman, 2020; King et al., 2006, p.249), and that “*gender (and often women) continues to be largely ignored*” (Nawyn, 2010, p.758). In this regard, transnational feminist scholars (Mohanty, 1988; Mukhopadhyay, 2015) have highlighted that the marginalization of colonial past as well as of race, ethnicity, sexual identity, class, and cast markers corresponds to a political act by those academics and activists who are in a position of power when addressing women’s rights and struggles. For instance, Mohanty (1988) pointed out that the knowledge produced around the “third world women” is constructed as an inherently homogenous monolithic group where women are subjected to a singular a-historical notion of male domination. Furthermore, it has been suggested (Mukhopadhyay, 2015) that scholars using specific analytic categories of sisterhood and sameness while referring to gender equality meant framing the problem of GBV as having a one-size-fits-all solution, without considering historical and contextual differences in terms of poverty, discrimination, and neocolonial power relations.

In recent years the complexities in the composition of migratory flows have been increasingly taken into consideration by scholars, whose renovated attention has been addressed to diversity in populations’ composition such as women and gender/sexual marginalised groups (e.g. LGBTQ+) (Haas, Castles, and Miller, 2014). Consequently, female international migration is also categorised looking at both the women’s positions in the economic market of the receiving country (ies) and their positions within the family. As an example, gendered categories have made it possible to investigate the different positions and experiences of male and female domestic workers from Filipino communities in Italy and Canada (Banfi, 2008; Parreñas, 2015). The results of the latest showed that not only do migration paths differ between male and female domestic workers, but that the experience of racial segregation into domestic work is different for men and for women. Finally, in terms of GBV and precarious legal status, the same investigation on gendered Filipino communities (Ambrosini, 2020; Parreñas, 2015) pointed out how the state’s construction of domestic work can leave women at the mercy of employment agencies (Canada) or in the precarity of irregular migration (Italy) (Ambrosini, 2020; Banfi, 2008; Parreñas, 2015).

Following this stream of research, our study looks at GBV as different forms of discrimination (ILGA, 2022) related not only to a specific ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, but also linked to “national regimes of citizenship, which are inherently exclusionary and produce separate legal codes and practices to differentiate groups of people within the same national space” (Bhuyan, 2012, p.6).

The use of the term “women” does not directly exclude a variety of identity formations. Regarding the latter, the Brazilian philosopher Marcia Tiburi (2020) highlights that feminist discourses on “women, black women, black Brazilian women, black Brazilian transwomen, black Brazilian Trans Muslim Lesbian Women have both a political potential of affirmation and a risk of social fragmentation depending to different interests in time and space” (Tiburi, 2020, p.96). In our study, the aim is to analyse in bibliometric terms a specific stream of literature that frame the problem and the solutions to GBV against women having a *precarious legal status* in the specific context of welfare advanced societies, with the aim to investigate the power relations in terms of knowledge production.

Secondly, our study draws on *conceptualizations of gender-based violence (GBV) and membership regimes in advanced welfare societies*. A recent study was carried out by Ozcurumez et al. (2021) as part of a larger international project called SEREDA,¹ which sought to investigate the conceptualisation of GBV in forced migration through a scoping review. Using search terms limited to only two simple queries – “Sexual and Gender-based Violence” and “Sexual and Gender-based violence and refugees” – Ozcurumez et al., (2021, p.66) retrieved respectively 292 and 91 scholarly articles and policy reports published in English between 1993 and 2018. What they found was that GBV is conceptualised mostly in relation to women (Ozcurumez et al., 2021, p. 69), limiting the analysis of violence occurring in specific contexts such as conflict zones, war, and refugee camps. The scoping review revealed that the literature focused mostly on geopolitical areas such as Sierra Leone, Syria, Afghanistan, Liberia, and Lebanon, confining violence in spatial territories without considering how gendered experiences of violence are embedded in the displacement journey, on the way towards resettlement contexts (Ozcurumez et al., 2021, pp. 67–69). The confinement of GBV to specific geopolitical spaces with an emphasis on the “homeland” was also confirmed by the literature on sex trafficking (Davidson, 2001; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002, in Nawyn, 2010; Palmary, 2021), which referred mainly to violence experienced by women in their country of origin.

Concerning the conceptualisation of GBV exclusively in contexts of forced migration, post-colonial feminist scholars (Abu-Lughod, 2011, 2013; Fassin & Barnett, 2016; Martinsson and Griffin, 2016; Ozcurumez et al., 2021; Spivak, 1988, 2012) have pointed out how the use of the concepts of “violence” and “women” contribute to reinforcing the positive image of male white saviours in humanitarian contexts who rescue black women from wild and uncivilised societies. While Nawyn (2010) has pointed out that the field of migration studies has not incorporated much of the findings related to GBV into mainstream research (Nawyn, 2010, p.758), Ozcurumez et al. (2021) advocate for including both resettlement contexts and intersectional approaches in the study of GBV in the context of migration, looking not only to GBV migration experiences across time and space, but also to social protection responses involving a plurality of state and non-state actors.

¹ The SEREDA Project is a major new research initiative that is being undertaken across the United Kingdom, Australia, Sweden and Turkey by a multi-country research team from the University of Birmingham, University of Melbourne, Uppsala University and Bilkent University. It is funded by German, Swedish, and EU donors, and carried out by academics and NGO actors in the UK, Australia, Turkey, and Sweden. (Retrieved from <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/superdiversity-institute/sereda/index.aspx>).

Post-national approaches to migrants' access to welfare regimes

Shifting our attention from humanitarian settings to resettlements contexts in welfare advanced society, a key issue discussed among post-national migration scholars (Abji, 2016; Pinelli, 2020, 2021; Scheibelhofer, 2022) is that governments in resettlement contexts are reluctant to find permanent political solutions (Abji, 2016) to GBV experienced by migrants with precarious legal status. Consequently, responsibility for access to social protection systems in the context of resettlement is displaced from the state to civil society as key actors involved in the enforcement of human rights (e.g., in the form of advocacy, political action, and/or service provision). With reference to GBV interventions accessed by migrant women with precarious legal status in Western liberal democracies, attention has been drawn to the role of professionals working within the social protection systems and in organisational settings like CSAs in advocating for anti-deportation policies and in addressing violence against such women within debordering practices (Abji, 2017).

Furthermore, although human rights in resettlement contexts are formally recognised within membership regimes (e.g., citizenship, residency, humanitarian protection) (Benhabib, 2004), access to these fundamental rights still requires the intervention of a state authority which must formally recognise them (Abji, 2016). In this sense, the membership regimes fall short to acknowledge the variability and precarity of the legal and administrative real-life conditions of migrants in resettlement contexts (e.g., migrant populations displaced for longer periods of time, who might relocate to different states, regions, and cities depending on family structures, generational evolution, social networks, mixed marriages, and other circumstances linked to geopolitical processes), which in turn has real consequences for access to institutionalised social protection systems (Ryndyk et al., 2021).

The reality of increasing numbers of people living outside protection systems, such as women victims of GBV with precarious legal status, underlines the relevance of this research area. In our methodology, we use terminology that allows us to map studies and literature involving production of knowledge on GBV that takes into consideration both the resettlement context and access to social protection systems in advanced welfare societies (Høgsbro and Shaw, 2018). Thirdly, we draw on the influence of CSAs on the conceptualisation of GBV in the international and national policy arena. In democratic welfare states, civil society is seen as key actors involved in the enforcement of human rights through advocacy, political action, and/or service provision (Hodgkinson & Foley, 2003; Trägårdh, 2007; Arvidson, Johansson, Scaramuzzino, 2018). As a consequence, in resettlement contexts, the conceptualisation of GBV is historical linked to the fight against violence (Johansson & Hvinden, 2007) as part of “the achievement of women's rights” (Rosche, 2016) and strongly related to feminist movements and CSAs (e.g., INGOs, NGOs, advocacy groups). In her work, Rosche (2016) points out the great influence over the process of inclusion of gender equality in the Agenda 2030 held by UN offices (i.e., UN Women) with their headquarters based in New York, as well as the primary involvement of INGOs based in EU countries, such as Oxfam (The Netherlands), GADN (UK), and Care International (Switzerland), alongside other women's rights and international organisations (i.e., Action Aid, International Planned Parenthood Federation). The goal of ending violence against women declared by international

CSAs (Rosche, 2016) was rapidly extended to other international policy domains, such as migration, within a process of negotiations among UN member states that concluded in 2018 with the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration (GC) (IOM,). In this context, the International Organisation for Migration, IOM (headquartered in Germany) played a major role in negotiating the adoption of the GC at the UN General Assembly, drawing a clear connection between the GC and the Agenda 2030 gender equality goal (IOM,).

In sum, gender mainstreaming and gender/migration policy discourses are tied to conceptualisation of GBV produced by both UN offices (i.e., UN Women) and CSAs headquartered mainly in Western countries. The latter organisations are not only prominent voices in framing the problem of GBV in the international policy arena, but also provide support and resources for the implementation of social protection activities in advanced welfare societies.

Methods and tools

Adapting the process of systematic literature review to the intersectionality-informed analysis

In the previous paragraphs, we presented *GBV against women* as a category of analysis, invoked by feminist migration scholars to help conceptualise how structures of power and inequalities operate across time and space. We further highlighted the feminist critique of migration studies that points to GBV as being confined exclusively to conflict and refugee contexts. Finally, we discussed the importance of the discursive production of both the public problem of GBV and its public solution (e.g., social protection) by CSAs in democratic welfare states. Drawing on these debates, this study analyses the position of scholars involved in knowledge production on GBV against women with precarious legal status *and* their access to social protection in advanced welfare societies.

The choice of methodology is made following the assumption that a common terminology used both within and outside academia reinforces a specific conceptualisation of GBV in specific resettlement contexts. In this regard, before operationalising our aim into research questions and developing a mapping strategy, we gave analytical attention to grey literature, limited to the following: a report titled “The Situation of Women Specialist Support Services in Europe” (WAVE, 2019) and documents and material produced by recent (2016–2020) EU-funded projects such as the “Co-creating Counselling Method for Refugee Women GBV Victims” (Inka et al., 2019), the “SWIM- Safe Women in Migration” project (Fondazione L’Albero della Vita, 2020), and “PROVIDE – Proximity on Violence: Defence and Equity” (ISMU, 2020). These projects were selected because they all involve INGOs, or international networks of NGOs involved in policy making in the field of GBV and migration. All these projects address specific forms of violence in migration contexts across time and space; and all are focused on specific forms of interventions in resettlement contexts and are not limited to refugee resettlement programmes. All the reports inform the key debate on the division of responsibilities concerning welfare responses to GBV experienced by migrant women with precarious legal status. Finally, all projects were selected partly because they have strong links to CSAs operating under the EU’s geopolitical influence, which have a significant impact on the international conceptualisation of GBV in the context of migration. Nevertheless, the

criteria used to select the grey literature bring certain limitations; these are discussed in paragraph 5.

The method of bibliometric analysis and its application in this study

Building on a bibliometrics analysis of the literature, this study investigates whether and how GBV as a category of analysis takes a prominent position in academic journals, exploring the place occupied by scholars who publish in well-established journals, and their disciplines, in order to understand the relevance of GBV within the scientific academic landscape. Given the existing limitations of bibliometric analysis (Kofman, 2020; Levy et al., 2020), our methodology included analysis of co-authorship, cross-country collaborations, and co-citation.

The theoretical framework of this study draws on intersectionality as a concept (Hofart, 2021; Moradi and Grzanka, 2017; Nash, 2014; Kofman, 2020) that captures the advantages and disadvantages experienced by all people within a structural system of power (CIJ, 2020). For the scope of this study, we used the Intersectionality-Based Policy Analysis Framework (IBPA) (Hankivsky, 2012)² as a guiding tool to develop the research questions. The analytical point of departure was to identify “the problem” and apply the following question and related sub-question to our aim: *How have representations of “the problem” come about? Who was involved in defining the problem in this way? What types of evidence were used?* (Hankivsky, 2012, p. 39). In accordance with our aim, the first research question (RQ1) of our study can be formulated as follows: *Who produces the knowledge related to the problem of GBV against women with precarious legal status? How does the research community come about over time (i.e., historically) and in space (i.e., geographically and institutionally)?*

In the second stage, the authors used the equity principle of the IBPA framework³ in combination with the question: *What are the current policy responses to the problem?* (Hankivsky, 2012, p. 39). In this sense, the aim was to identify the research (and researchers) involved in the production of knowledge that concerns both the representation of the problem “GBV against women with precarious legal status” and its political outcome, represented by policy responses. Consequently, the second research question (RQ2) was: *Does the community of researchers produce knowledge related to welfare responses or the absence of responses to GBV against women with precarious legal status?*

The next step was to combine the format of the IBPA with the process of systematic literature review (Cochrane, 2019) for the identification of relevant documents. For the identification of the literature, the authors created a search strategy (Cochrane, 2019), using a complex query⁴ which was tested in different databases. In the process

² The IBPA (Hankivsky, 2012) is an analytical tool developed by the Institute for Intersectionality Research and Policy, Canada, for the analysis of public policies. It is composed of eight guiding principles (intersecting categories, multi-level analysis, power, reflexivity, time and space, diverse knowledge, social justice, and equity) and 12 questions (divided into five descriptive questions and seven transformative questions) with related sub-questions. The framework is flexible and can be used in combination with other methods and adapted to all areas of policy and interventions.

³ The equity principle extends the analysis of social inequalities to the concept of fairness by promoting analysis that considers ways of equalising health outcomes between more and less disadvantaged groups and communities (e.g., policies, interventions). The concept of inequality is used to measure differences in outcomes created by the social structure, while equity targets the root causes of inequalities created by the social structure and thus has a transformative intention.

⁴ (“Violence against women” OR trafficking OR prostitution OR “sexual abuse” OR “interpersonal violence*” OR rape* OR “sexual violence*” OR “honour based violence” OR “sexual assault” OR “forced marriage*” OR stalk* OR “domestic violence*” OR “intimate partner* violence” OR “sex work*” OR victimisation OR violence* OR “institutional violence*”)

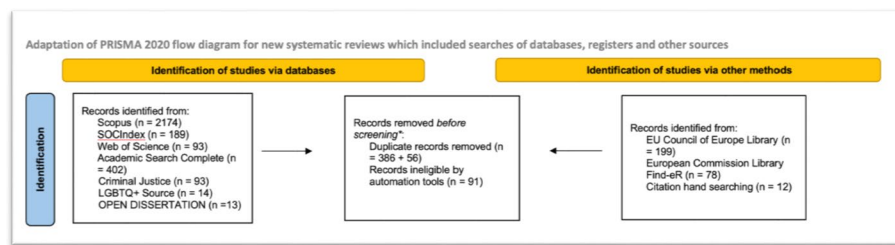


Fig. 1 Identification and selection of relevant literature

of systematic literature review, the complex query is composed of multiple interrelated terms (Cochrane, 2019). The use of each term can be connected to truncation (e.g., asterisks) and proximity elements (e.g., AND, OR, W2, W5) in order to refine the search results (see footnote). However, adding or removing terms or punctuation in a query might disproportionally affect the results, depending on the databases used. Table 1 displays the final version of the complex query. Initially, we ran six official trials including various terms under each column in the table (Public Problem, Target Group, and Public Responses) but the results were imbalanced (e.g., 0 documents retrieved in some databases). Furthermore, terminology related to refugees is avoided in the query because, as explained above, our aim was to focus on the knowledge produced concerning migrant women with precarious legal status. Limitations associated with this decision are discussed in Sect. 5.

The terminology composing the complex query was derived from the research questions (see Table 1) stated above. We again emphasise that the terminology used here in relation to the identified problem, such as “GBV against women with precarious legal status” and “public responses and interventions”, is influenced by the grey literature produced by relevant international CSAs and limited to the scope of the study, which is to identify conceptual elements inside academia (i.e., in publications) which are shared and commonly used outside the academic field of knowledge production (i.e., among CSAs).

Following the evidence-based protocols of systematic reviews (see Fig. 1 below), meta-data were collected from 10 databases, covering multiple sources of knowledge. A filter was added which meant that only documents published after the year 2010 were included. This decision was made because very few records could be found for the previous years, as well as because 2010 marked the political threshold for the Istanbul Convention (2011), the first legally binding policy tool in the field of violence against (migrant) women. 3,176 records were identified, and after duplicates were removed in Zotero, 2,790 records remained. After additional software removal in Ryaan, the number of records remaining was 2,734 (Fig. 1). Given the relatively high number of records identified, VOSviewer software (van Eck & Waltman, 2020) was used to perform bibliometric analyses. When using software with bibliographic data from different sources,

Footnote 4 (continued)

AND (helpline OR shelter* OR "social protection" OR "social work*" OR "social support" OR "welfare service*" OR rehabilitation OR "social policy*" OR "welfare policy*") AND ((women OR woman OR fem*) W/5 (migrant* OR "asylum seeker*" OR immigrant* OR displace* OR stateless)).

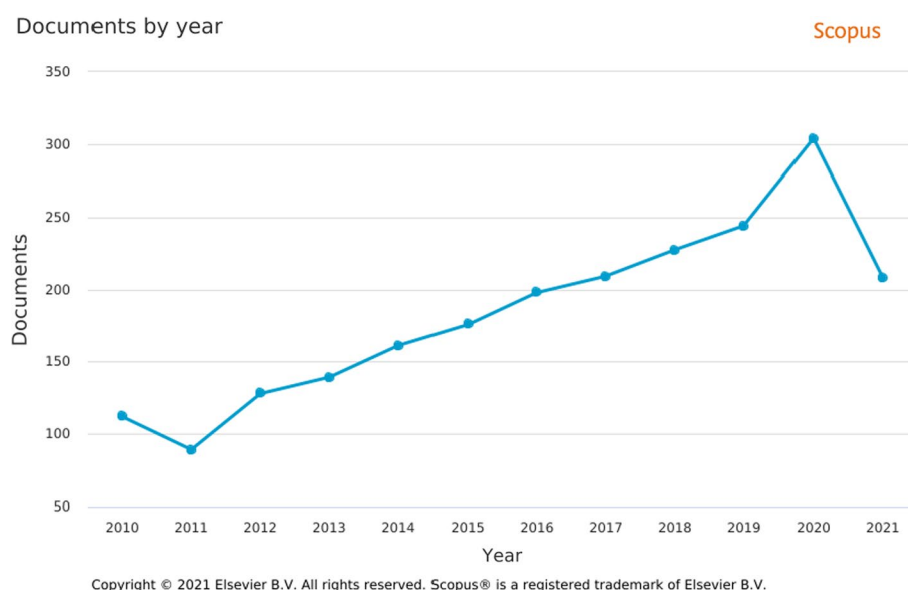


Fig. 2 Documents published per year

data cleaning must be performed to produce a structured file in which all the data imported display the same comparable variables.

In the process of data cleaning, two limitations were encountered. First, it was impossible to access and format the same information in all the databases, leading to the decision to include only data retrieved from Scopus. This decision was based on the fact that 68.4% of records included in the Zotero library before duplicate removal were gathered using Scopus. Furthermore, the database provides comprehensive data, such as citation information (i.e., author, document title, sources, EID, year), bibliographic information (i.e., affiliation, correspondence address, editor), abstract information (i.e., complete abstract, author keywords, index keywords), funding details, and additional information such as the list of references used in every document extracted. The second limitation at this stage of the systematic literature review is related to the impossibility of including research published in languages other than English, which in turn automatically excludes experiences from particular settings.

Results

Analysis of the institutional field

In the following sections, the field of “GBV against women with precarious legal status *and* their access to social protection in advanced welfare societies” is explored in bibliometric terms. The number of documents published between 2010 and 2021 (Fig. 2) shows consistent growth. The decline seen in 2021 probably refers to the fact that the analysis is based only on publications released during a five-month period from January to May of 2021.

Internationally, GBV as policy issue and related debates entered the political space in 2011, leading to the Council of Europe’s approval of the Istanbul Convention. The Convention has been strongly advocated for by feminist movements and represents

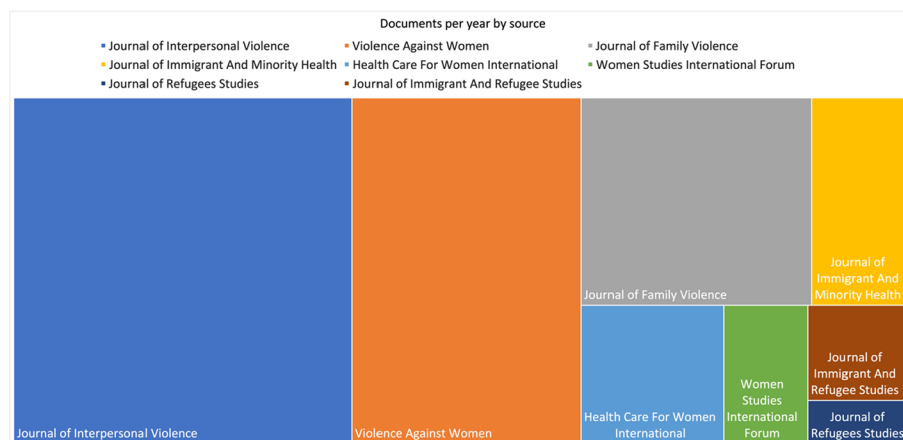


Fig. 3 Total number of published documents by source—years 2010/2021

the first legally binding treaty created to tackle violence against women. Articles 60 and 61 refer explicitly to violence against women in the context of migration (e.g., asylum claims and non-refoulement principles). The Convention has since been adopted by EU member states and non-member states such as the US, Canada, and Japan.

The intensified growth in publications reached its peak in 2020, with 304 publications registered in Scopus, along with 204 documents published from January to May 2021 (a relatively high number for a five-month period) and can be understood as a token of the recent but continuous institutional development of the field. If we look at the total number of documents published by source (Fig. 3), we see that the journals most active in the last decade are the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, which is oriented towards the field of clinical and applied psychology; *Violence Against Women*, which is specialised in subject areas such as law, gender studies, and political science; and the *Journal of Family Violence*, which publishes research in law, political science, and clinical psychology.

In our dataset, the first source related directly to the field of migration is the *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, which, along with *Health Care for Women International*, publishes in the field of international health, medicine, and epidemiology. Finally, lower in the ranking we found *Women's Studies International Forum*, which represents the field of development studies, education, sociology, and political science; *Journal of Refugee Studies*, which relates to the area of development, international relations, and political science; and the *Journal of Immigrant and Refugees' Studies*, publishing in the field of geography, demography, development, and health.

Furthermore, we analysed the annual total number of publications by the journals included in our dataset. In particular, we examined the years between 2010 and 2015, as we were interested in the foundational knowledge on which our subject matter rests.

Table 2 displays the journals that published the most per year (in bold); selected journals in migration studies (in bold) that published at least three items; and, finally, selected journals in migration studies (in bold) that published in 2010, and therefore initiated the production of knowledge at the cutting edge of GBV and migration, but eventually did not pursue the topic (fewer later publications after 2010).

Overall, despite consistent growth in the number of publications over the first five years, we can observe (Table 2) that, in 2010, the leading journals were, again, *Violence Against Women*, *Journal of Family Violence*, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, and *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*. This indicates that the aspects of migration, ethnicity, and race are mainly absorbed by the disciplines of law, health, and medicine when it comes to the study of gender-based violence within families or interpersonal relations. Still looking at 2010, *Social Politics* along with two publications from Princeton University and the State University of New York respectively, *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, *The Journal of Refugee Studies*, and *The Review of International Political Economy* were all active in the field. These findings indicate an initial and tentative interest in considering gender, sexuality, and migration not as separate clusters, but rather interlocking systems of power with political relevance. Nevertheless, this promising emerging body of knowledge did not last over time, as confirmed by an analysis of the publications from 2011 to 2015. Indeed, the literature developed mostly around the category of GBV described in terms of “women’s issues”, “family issues”, and “health issues”. Therefore, categories of race and ethnicity are assimilated into investigations of the physical, mental, and legal practical consequences of violence, with little attention paid to the political and transformative perspectives of women in international migration processes. Finally, we highlight that knowledge specifically addressing themes related to culture and sexuality, as well as to the social aspects of violence, such as that produced by journals like *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, the *British Journal of Social Work*, and *Affilia—the Journal of Women and Social Work*, increased between 2012 and 2015.

Based on this overview of the leading journals in the field, we can conclude that, with some exceptions, the epistemic community of migration studies tends to disappear when the focus is on GBV in resettlement contexts. Further, as explained previously, this study aims to identify studies focused on representing GBV while also framing public responses and interventions. In other words, such knowledge has a political influence in legitimising the categories of “migrants” entitled to specific forms of social protection. In this sense, the prepositions related to “gender” and “violence” do not have the power of affirmation in the field of migration studies, nor do prepositions related to “migration” have the power of affirmation in gender-related disciplines, as evinced by the relatively low number of publications by gender-related journals. The result is a double exclusion when the grammar of gender intersects that of migration reproducing established disciplinary hierarchies in academia. Thus, when Levy et al. (2020) describe the institutionalisation of migration studies as a research field, the authors point to the evolutionary development of discursive regimes related to race, ethnicity, culture, refugees, transnationalism, and social development, alongside the traditional discursive practices related to labour market/economy, demography, and psychology, missing out the gender studies, development studies, and social work studies present in our dataset.

Reconstruction of structural and relational components of the field

Citation networks

A citation analysis of the 2,174 documents was conducted using VOSviewer. When working with citation links in VOSviewer (van Eck & Waltman, 2020), the citation attributes indicate the number of citations of a document (Table 3) or the total

Table 2 Total number of documents per year by source

Source	Year of publication						Total
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
Violence Against Women	5	4	4	4	5	4	26
Journal of Family Violence	4	1	6	6	2	6	25
Journal of Interpersonal Violence	3	4	5	5	6	1	24
Violence and Victims	2	2	3	3	2	1	13
Affilia—Journal of Women and Social Work		3	2	2	2	2	11
Sexuality Research and Social Policy	1		5	5			11
Issues in Mental Health Nursing	3		2	2	2	1	10
Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health			2	2	2	2	8
Health Care for Women International	2	1	2	2		1	8
Aggression and Violent Behavior	1	3			2	2	8
AIDS and Behavior	2		2	2	1		7
American Journal of Community Psychology			3	3		1	7
BMC Public Health			1	1	3	1	6
Social Politics	4				2		6
Culture, Health and Sexuality	1		1	1	2	1	6
BMJ Open			3	3			6
Journal of Clinical Nursing			2	2	1		5
British Journal of Social Work	2		1	1		1	5
Social Science and Medicine	1	1	1	1		1	5
Making Capitalism in Rural China			2	2			4
Archives of Women's Mental Health		1	1	1	1		4
Health and Social Work		1			2	1	4
Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry			2	2			4
Journal of Women's Health			1	1	1	1	4
Gender, Place and Culture	1		1	1		1	4
PLoS ONE		2				2	4
Handbook on the Psychology of Violence			2	2			4
International Journal of Drug Policy			1	1		2	4
Journal of Transcultural Nursing	1				1	1	3
Overcoming Domestic Violence: Creating a Dialogue Around Vulnerable Populations				3			
Law and Social Inquiry	1				1	1	3
Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy	2	1					3
Child and Family Social Work	1					2	3
Psychosocial Intervention					2	1	3
Annals of Epidemiology		1	1	1			3
European Journal of Psychotraumatology			1	1	1		3
Family Practice		1			1	1	3
Children and Youth Services Review		1				2	3
Feminist Criminology			1	1		1	3
Journal of Community Health		1			1	1	3
Community Mental Health Journal			1	1	1		3
Sexualities	1		1	1			3
Women and Therapy		1	1	1			3
Women's Studies International Forum	1	1			1		3
Global Public Health		1	1	1			3
Italian Journal of Public Health	1		1	1			3
Journal of Refugee Studies	1						2

Table 2 (continued)

Source	Year of publication						
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
Workable Sisterhood: The Political Journey of Stigmatized Women with HIV/AIDS (Princeton University)	2						2
Refugee Survey Quarterly	2						2
Unequal Desires: Race and Erotic Capital in the Stripping Industry (State University NY)	1						1
Review of International Political Economy	1						1

Table 3 The 20 most cited documents in order of citation score and other relevant attributes

Reference	Weight < Citations >	No. of authors	Main disciplines of author(s) by affiliation	Country of author
Lancaster C. A. (2010)	620	5	Medicine	US
Biaggi A. (2016)	398	4	Psychology/Psychiatry	UK
Richie B. E. (2012)	367	1	Sociology	US
Bernstein E. (2010)	269	1	Women's studies; Sociology	US
True J. (2012)	266	1	Politics and international relations	Australia
Pottie K. (2011)	245	20+	Medicine	Canada
Deering K. N. (2014)	213	8	Medicine	Canada
Yim I. S. (2015)	211	5	Psychology	US
Bancroft L. (2012)	209	3	Medicine	US
Shelley L. (2010)	197	1	Policy and International Affairs	US
Abubakar I. (2018)	190	20+	Medicine	UK
Gallagher A. T. (2010)	182	1	Law and International relations	Australia
Aldridge R. W. (2018)	177	10	Medicine	UK
Lagdon S. (2014)	162	3	Psychology	UK
Hankivsky O. (2010)	150	7	Women; Health; Social work	Canada
Weine S. M. (2012)	134	2	Psychiatry	US
Betts A. (2013)	128	1	Migration and International Affairs	UK
Li Q. (2010)	127	2	Medicine	US
Bernstein E. (2012)	126	1	Women's studies; Sociology	US
Weitzer R. (2011)	115	1	Sociology	US

number of citations of all documents published by an author (Table 4). The weight indicates the importance of an item (in our case, items are authors and documents). The more important the item, the greater its weight (Van Eck & Waltman, 2020). In addition, we analysed citations while looking at the disciplines and research fields to which the authors belong (Tables 3 and 4). Disciplines and research fields have been coded mostly based on the institutions to which the authors were affiliated. It is interesting to note that the largest research field in this selection, by number of citations, is medicine (n.7). If we also include psychiatry and psychology, we see that most of the works are within the broader field of “health” (n.11). Other relevant fields are sociology/social work (n.5) and, finally, international affairs/relations (n.4). It is not

Table 4 The 20 most cited authors and other relevant attributes

Author	Weight < Citations >	Author's discipline	Subfield of medicine and health	Country of author	Author of 20 most cited publications
Messing J. T	566	Social work		US	No
Campbell J. C	376	Medicine/Health	Nursing	US	No
Gagnon A. J	321	Medicine/Health	Nursing	US	Yes
Shannon K	310	Medicine/Health	Sexual health	Canada	Yes
Duff P	283	Medicine/Health	Sexual health	Canada	Yes
Hassan G	262	Medicine/Health	Clinical psychology	Canada	Yes
Varcoe C	261	Medicine/Health	Health care	Canada	Yes
Thaller J	214	Social work		US	No
Vives-Cases C	211	Sociology		Spain	No
Glass N. E	202	Medicine/Health	GBV and global health	US	No
Stockman J. K	197	Medicine/Health	GBV and global health	US	No
Lila M	185	Social psychology		Spain	No
Sabri B	171	Medicine/Health	GBV and health	US	No
Li X	157	Medicine/Health	Sexual health	US	Yes
Ford-Gilboe M	155	Medicine/Health	GBV and women's health	Canada	No
Gracia E	148	Social psychology		Spain	No
Cho H	143	Social work		US	No
Haj-Yahia M. M	128	Social work		Israel	No
Ward-Lasher A	121	Social work		US	No
Ahmad F	118	Medicine/Health	Health care	Canada	No

surprising that some of the documents most cited are written by authors focused on migration or women's studies.

Further, authors connected to English-speaking institutions dominate this selection of publications, with half of publications from the US, five from the UK, three from Canada, and two from Australia.

When we turn to the 20 most cited authors within the database, and some of the attributes that characterise them (Table 4), the dominance of medicine/health is confirmed by the higher-weight citation of 12 authors in this field.

Within the very broad field of medicine/health, we find a variety of subfields. It is not surprising to find three researchers with profiles related to GBV and health. Other themes include sexual health (n. 3), nursing (n. 2), health care (n. 2), and clinical psychology (n.1). The remaining eight authors can be linked to the social sciences, specifically the disciplines of social work (n. 5), social psychology (n.2), and sociology (n.1). Also, the dominance of the English-speaking world is clear, with a few exceptions: i.e., Spain (n.3) and Israel (n.1).

It is also interesting to note that respective analyses of the most cited publications and authors produce similar results, but with certain salient differences. This is also confirmed by the fact that only six of the 20 most cited authors have written at least

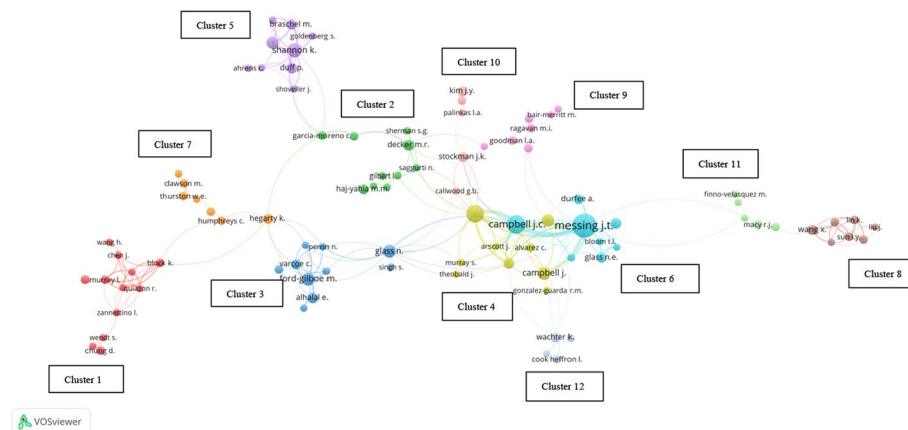


Fig. 4 Visualisation map of co-authorship links

one of the 20 most cited publications, all of which are within the field of medical/health research.

On the one hand, this result might be due to differing practices of co-authorship between disciplines, where publications within the field of medicine/health often have several co-authors (e.g., 20+), creating a cumulative effect on citations of authors. On the other hand, the recognition of GBV as a ground of social protection of migrant women also came with the medical, psychological, and social conceptualisation of violence as a “traumatic experience” of vulnerable women groups or women victims (Fassin & Barnett, 2016). In this sense, the knowledge created by scholars in health- and social work-related disciplines confirms a prevalent humanitarian mission to identify mechanisms of protection and treatment of the symptoms of traumatic experiences of violence (Fassin & Rechtman, 2009).

Co-authorship network

A co-authorship analysis was conducted in VOSviewer to frame the structure and the intensity of collaborations among researchers from different countries and disciplines. In this sense, we can describe the power relations in the field in terms of number of collaborations (co-authorship by authors, Fig. 4) and networking (co-authorship by countries, Fig. 5). Of the 5,418 authors in the dataset, 303 authored at least three documents between 2010 and 2021. For each of these 303 authors, we calculated the total strength of the co-authorship (i.e., the total strength of the co-authorship links between a given researcher and other researchers).

The co-authorship filter (authors with at least three documents in co-authorship) was used to identify scholars who are more active in terms of collaborations and publications (single-authored documents are not included in this selection). The map below seems to indicate that authors from cluster 4 (yellow) and cluster 6 (light blue) work more closely, creating an interdisciplinary field between social work and nursing. It is interesting to note that some of the authors included in those two clusters (i.e., Messing, Campbell, and Glass) are the most cited authors in our dataset (Table 4), confirming the prominence of US “clinical” or “practice-oriented” scholars.

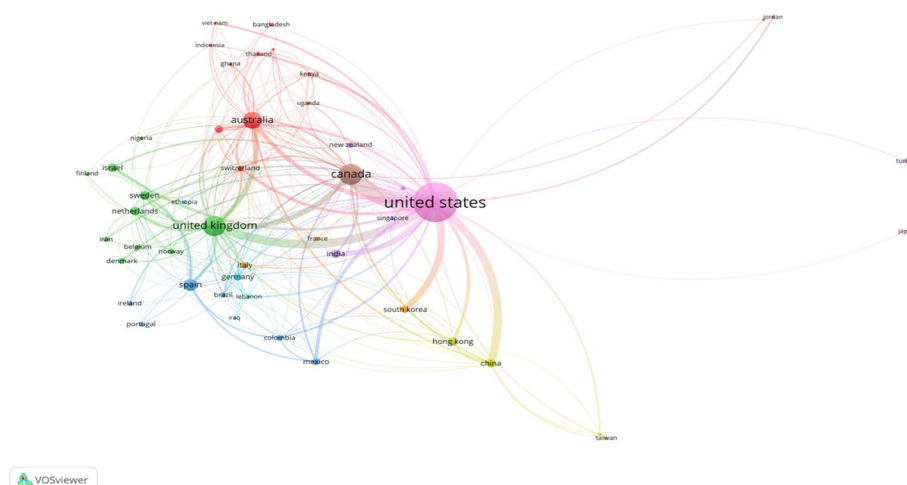


Fig. 5 Visualisation map of co-authorships links by countries

Clusters 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, and 12 confirm again the production of knowledge within collaborations between the fields of health, nursing, psychology, and social work. Worth mentioning are clusters 10 (pink) and 9 (pale violet), in which disciplines such as health, medicine, and nursing are more oriented towards ethnic minority groups (e.g., African Americans, internally displaced women) and gender/sex minority groups (LGBTQA+, queer communities). Cluster 9 also includes scholars in the field of critical studies, using qualitative approaches such as participatory methods. Finally, cluster 11 (light green) stands somewhat apart, with scholars working in the field of psychology/social work, specialising in child welfare, violence, and trauma.

Looking at country networking (co-authorship analysis based on authors' affiliations) (Fig. 5), at the centre of the map below, the US shows the largest overall output in terms of co-authorship links. Nevertheless, the US stands on its own (isolated at the centre of the map), reflecting its overall lower weight of international co-authorships compared to the total number of documents published. US scholars collaborate most closely with Canada, followed by the UK, Australia, and South Asian and South American countries. On the contrary, European countries conform to the international trend, and particularly strong links exist between the UK and Nordic countries. Spain, Italy, Germany, and France display a slightly different international trend, oriented bidirectionally: international collaborations have developed between EU countries and with non-EU countries. This two-dimensional internationalisation process might be explained by linguistic factors (e.g., France collaborates with Canada; Spain with Mexico and Colombia).

In Oceania and Asia as well, the development of international collaborations is comparatively lower and unevenly distributed. Finally, within African countries, South Africa displays a significant international trend, with a high proportion of links with Australia, the EU, Canada, and the US.

Discussions and conclusions

As shown in the results, the growth of publications between 2010 and 2021 testifies to a process of institutionalisation of GBV against women in resettlement contexts, which has developed around disciplines such as clinical psychology, medicine, health, nursing, and social work.

Our results indicate that the predominance of documents published in English by scholars collaborating within professional practice-oriented disciplines developed mainly in the US, Canada, and the EU. This might indicate that those scholars and their institutional affiliations occupy a position of relative power in the production of knowledge within their respective disciplines. Furthermore, the documents analysed in our dataset belong to specific disciplines such as medicine, health, psychiatry, psychology, and nursing, followed by social work and sociology. It is interesting to notice that migration studies have a less prominent position in our database, especially if we look at the 25 journals where the 25 most-cited migration studies articles were published (according to a recent bibliometrics analysis by Sirkeci et al., 2017) none of which were present in our database.

As reported by Fassin and Barnett (2016, pp. 89–90), under pressure from feminist and gay rights movements, the Geneva Convention was updated to include recognition of persecution based on gender and sexual orientation. Its inclusion was legitimised based on the humanitarian aim of protecting women and liberating them from patriarchal domination (Fassin & Barnett, 2016). In the knowledge produced by scholars in fields connected to health and social work, we also see evidence of this humanitarian mission to identify mechanisms of protection for migrant women, facing the risk to shift attention away from structural forms of power and inequalities to focus instead on questions such as what the symptoms of traumatic experience are, and who is responsible and must therefore pay for social interventions and treatment (Fassin & Barnett, 2016). The community of practice-oriented scholars poses the question: “What can we do to help women who experience violence in the context of migration?”. To a certain extent, they also try to propose feasible short- and medium-term policy solutions and interventions (Hankivsky, 2012). At the same time, the transformative sides of the question—including what inequalities actually exist in relation to the problem; the identification, assurance, and implementation of possible long-term transformative solutions; and the measurement of outcomes to ensure that inequities are reduced—seem less relevant (Hankivsky, 2012, pp. 41–42).

Finally, the US and Canada seem to represent self-referential actors (Fig. 5) while the UK and EU member states displayed a higher degree of international collaboration (the absolute number of international authorships based on the overall number of documents published by each country). This might be connected with the choice of terms used in our search and with the scope of our study, which was to identify documents published within the field of GBV against women with precarious legal status *and* their access to social protection in advanced welfare societies. Indeed, instrumental for international CSAs outside of academia is the conceptualisation of GBV in terms of both public problems to be tackled and public solutions to be identified. In the same way, within the academic field claim makers whose work is oriented towards both scientific and specific policy/practices are nurses, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, and doctors, i.e., street-level bureaucrats with

the public mission of rescuing, protecting, and rehabilitating by deploying specific values, work ethics, and beliefs that are communicated in the form of administrative practices, categories, classifications, variables, and definitions (Yanow, 2003, pp. 8–9). In this sense, the production of knowledge responds to a practical logic, what Bourdieu called *la raison pratique* (Bourdieu, 1994), which serves to reflect, represent, describe, and give meaning to the everyday encounters of practitioners working not only in public agencies but also in civil society organisations (NGOs, INGOs, associations), and facing the double pressure of treating the symptoms of the violence on the one hand, and on the other, navigating social protection systems which restrict the possibilities for migrant women with precarious legal status to access their social rights in resettlement contexts.

The result showing an increasing academic knowledge production oriented towards the professional groups that are supposed to meet the needs of migrant women exposed to GBV rhymes well with the relevance of the issue and might be crucial to further develop and improve services that are based on scientific data and knowledge.

Limitations

Choice of the grey literature and terminology

The grey literature is limited to international collaborations within EU countries, and it is not exhaustive. Further research could explore international collaborations in resettlement countries encompassing the EU states and CSAs. In this way, the complex query could be enriched with key terms that were not included in this exploratory bibliometric study. Suggested terms to be included are “survivors”, “psycho-social support”, “irregular migrant”, “host country”, and “LGBTQA+”. Further research might also expand the bibliometrics analysis to include knowledge production looking at different membership regimes not exclusively focused on precarious legal status, which means including terms such as “refugee”, “refugee camps”, and “exile”.

Choice of bibliometrics analysis and literature review

Last, but not least, the authors must address the limitations of evidence-based methods and tools. The process of a systematic literature review and a bibliometric analysis of metadata, alongside the IBPA interpretative approach, helped in reconstructing the institutionalisation of the research field. The digital tools and the indexed databases assume the shape of a Trojan horse in the field of knowledge, using numerical measures to circulate high-quality peer-reviewed documents registered and made available by influential publishers who do not consider non-English and non-indexed, less-well institutionalised journals (Kofman, 2020). In addition, several research institutions, including universities, are developing technical tools for bibliometric analysis whose algorithms are heavily oriented towards commercial sources. Therefore, the results and rankings within our dataset have significant limitations in terms of the methods and tools used for the analysis. The systematic literature review and the bibliometric software have created, on the one hand, a transparent and reliable research framework. But on the other hand, the output of these sophisticated digital systems reproduces the structure of power, which strongly supports the English-speaking world and its commercial interests. Thus, this type of classification comes with a high risk of excluding influential researchers and voices outside traditional academic fields, who are nonetheless involved in important critical debates.

Acknowledgements

Not applicable

Author contributions

CDM wrote paragraphs Introduction, Conceptualisation of gender-based violence (GBV) against women with precarious status and their access to social protection in advanced welfare societies, Current discussion at the cutting edge of Gender and Migration, Methods and tools, Analysis of the institutional field, Co-authorship network and Discussions and Conclusions, and the References. RS wrote Citation networks, cross-checked and edited the manuscript, and discussed with CDM key concepts and use of data and material. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Funding

Open access funding provided by Lund University.

Availability of data and materials

The bibliographic metadata are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request.

Declarations**Ethics approval and consent to participate.**

Not applicable.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Received: 14 December 2021 Accepted: 15 September 2022

Published online: 03 October 2022

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