

# SVRI FORUM 2022

## Sexual violence in the context of domestic abuse against women: **A scoping review of promising intervention practices**

September 20, 2022



# Hello!



REGROUPEMENT DES MAISONS  
POUR FEMMES VICTIMES  
DE VIOLENCE CONJUGALE

LABORATOIRE  
D'ÉTUDES sur la  
**violence**  
et la **sexualité**



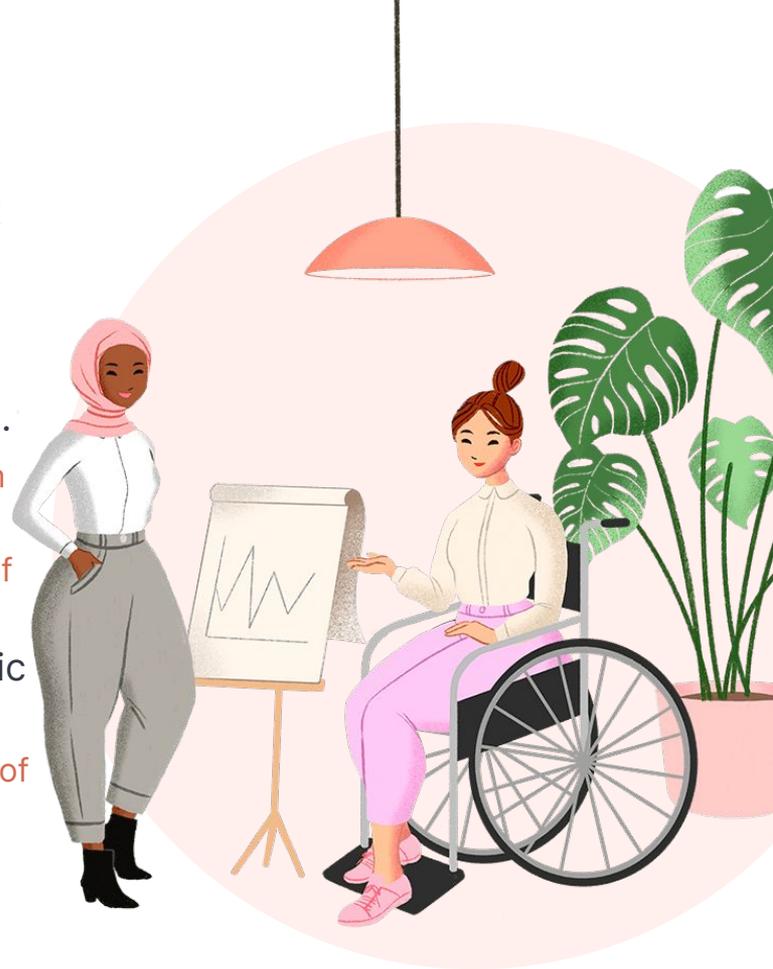
Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

# Background & aim

- Sexual violence in the context of domestic abuse is prevalent and associated with significant negative health outcomes.
  - 33% of women's shelter service users (Moreau, 2019).
- No review has specifically focused on interventions for survivors of sexual violence in the context of domestic abuse.
  - Reviews on domestic violence interventions without any focus on sexual violence (Arroyo et al., 2017; Stover et al., 2009; Trabold et al., 2020).
  - Reviews on other forms of sexual violence experienced outside of an intimate relationship (Heard & Walsh, 2021; Lomax & Meyrick, 2022).
- Women survivors of sexual violence in the context of domestic abuse face specific issues that may impact interventions.
  - Co-occurrence with other forms of domestic violence and forms of sexual violence sustained outside the relationship, doubts about the severity, difficulties recognizing sexual violence as coercive, romantic feelings towards the partner, etc.



**Document promising intervention practices used with survivors of sexual violence in the context of domestic abuse**

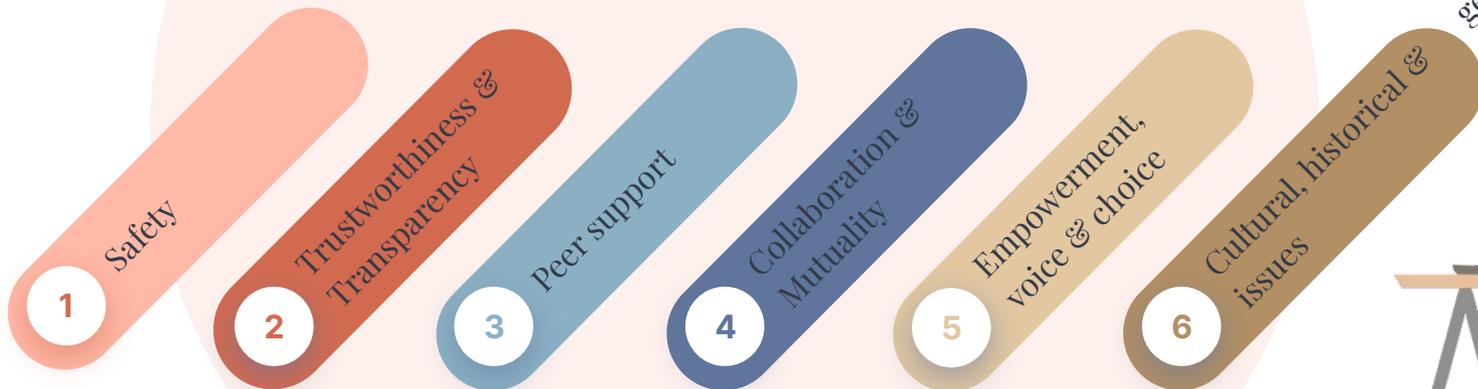
# Methodology

- **Scoping review** of articles published in scientific journals from 2012 to 2022.
- **Databases:** PsychINFO, Sofia, PubMed, SAGE Journals et Gender Studies.
- **Keywords:** shelter worker best practice with sexual violence, best practice for victims of sexual abuse in the context of domestic violence, tailored intervention on sexual violence by professionals, gold standard interventions with sexual trauma, etc.
- **Inclusion criteria:** published in peer-reviewed scientific journals in the last 10 years in English or French; studies on intervention practices for women who have experienced sexual violence in an intimate relationship.



# Trauma-informed care approach

- Provide services that are sensitive to the various traumatic experiences that women may encounter throughout their lives.



# Results

- Final sample : 43 articles.
- Few studies focusing on interventions for survivors of sexual violence in intimate relationship were found, so we included more broadly intervention studies targeting:
  - Domestic violence that briefly addressed sexual violence;
  - Sexual victimization in adulthood.
- On the final sample of studies:
  - 15 on professionals' views on interventions;
  - 10 on the impacts of interventions or measures validation;
  - 4 on women's opinions of services, how to improve them, and facilitators and barriers to their recovery process;
  - 3 on recommendations from survivors and service providers.



# Results

## Recommandations

- **Collaboration & Mutuality:** Provide an important role in service planning to survivors.
  - Collect and build on empirical evidence from survivors;
  - Ask about their goals and adapt services;
  - Offer control over the procedures.
- **Trustworthiness & transparency:** Commit to a transparent process to ensure trust restoration.
  - Therapeutic relationship contribute to the recovery;
  - Decisions made with transparency.
- **Safety:** Organize a safety planning with survivors.
  - Safe space to live;
  - Know where to go if not safe;
  - Safe during and after disclosing sexual violence.



# Results

## Recommendations

- **Empowerment:** Let survivors have the freedom to recover from the assault in the way that best suits them.
  - Avoid pressuring survivors to cope in specific ways;
  - Demonstrate sensitivity to trauma-related responses.
- **Peer support:** Provide opportunities to share with other survivors.
  - Benefits different from those of a professional consultation;
  - Negative experience for some (e.g., retraumatization, burden of care);
  - Evaluation revealed positive effects of group therapy on survivors.
- **Cultural issues:** Approach all survivors with compassion and respect, regardless of ethnicity and culture.
  - Nuisance of prejudicial attitudes toward racialized communities;
  - Fear of discrimination;
  - Diversity training that fosters critical perspectives, awareness and evaluation of one's own assumptions about cultural diversity.



# Conclusion

- Improve interventions for survivors so that they are better tailored to their needs and realities.
- Create guidelines that will establish the parameters of optimal practices and conditions for success and allow to:

Foster a climate of trust between  
service providers and survivors;

Encourage disclosure of sexual abuse  
in the context of domestic violence;

Establish a safety net;

Reduce revictimization.



# Thank you!



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*Evissa*

Équipe Violence Sexuelle et Santé

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