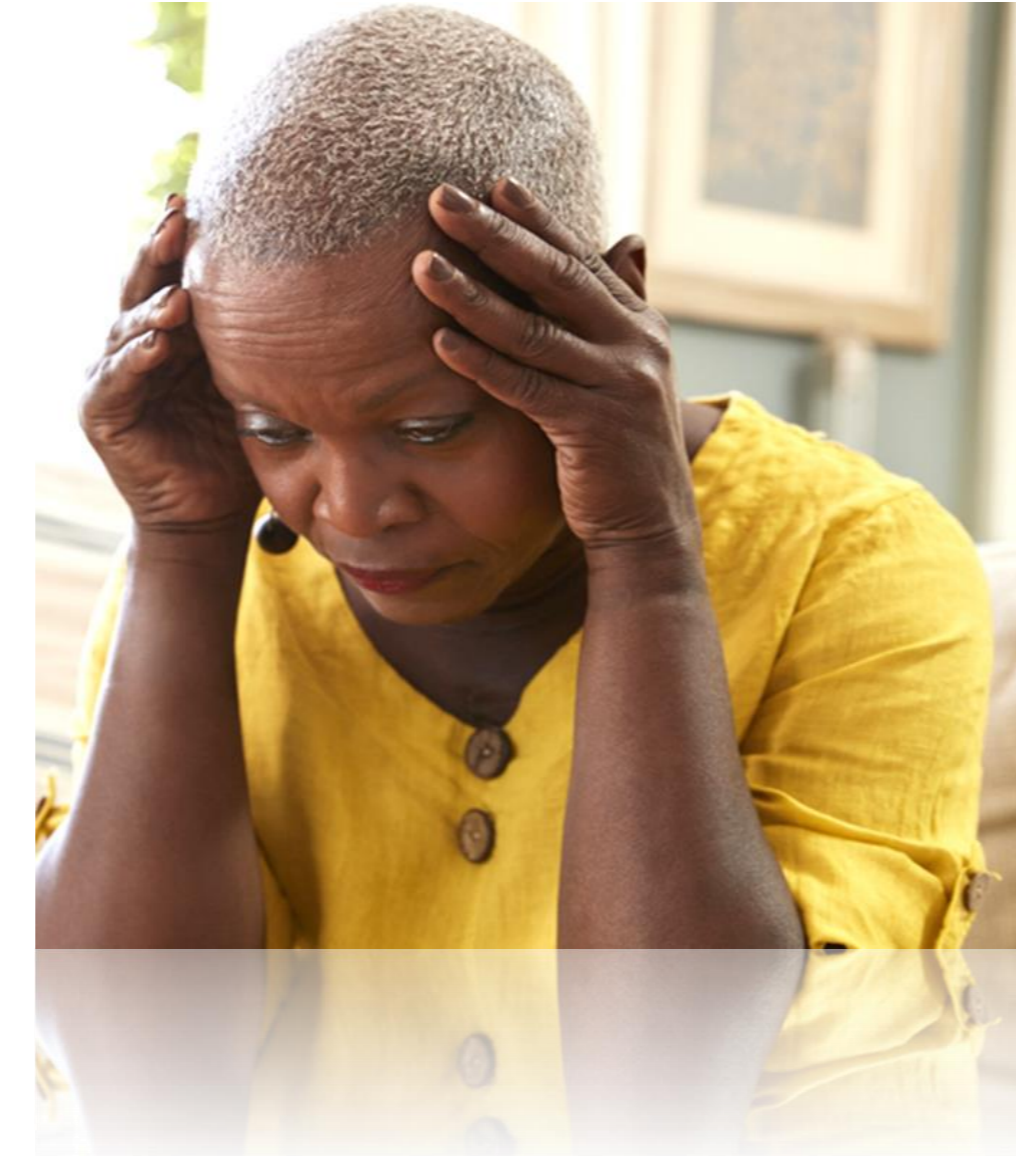


Background

Older adults are largely excluded from sexual violence (SV) prevention and intervention, owing to perceptions of elders as asexual or undesirable, which is further complicated when dementia is present.¹ Because SV is not perceived as a social problem in later life, knowledge in this area is limited. Thus, an eight-database systematic scoping review was conducted to offer an understanding of how SV in later life is perceived, barriers to and solutions for prevention.



Objectives

1. To explore what is known about perceptions of SV in later life and how this may be related to prevention as well as possible barriers to and solutions for prevention.

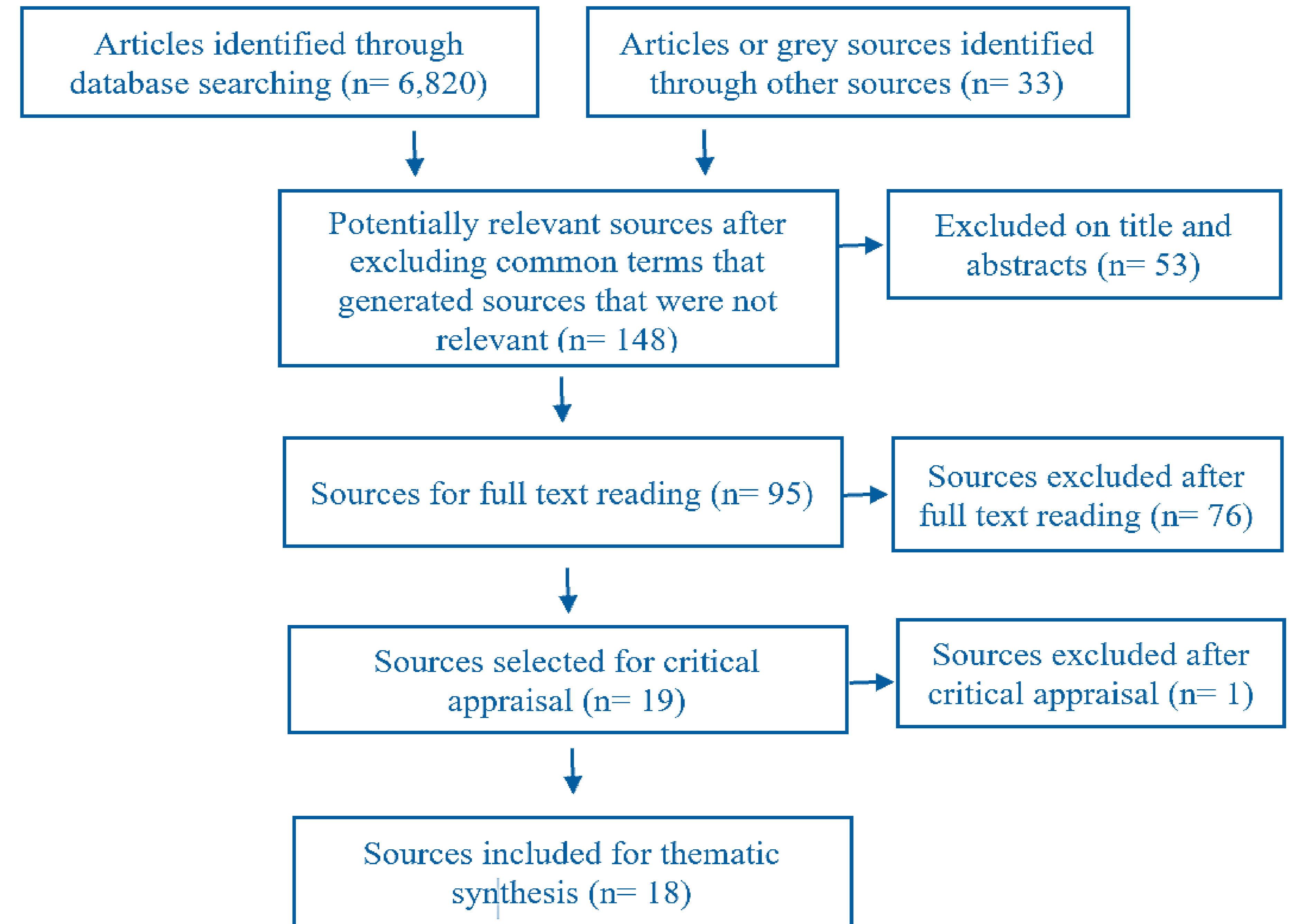
Methods

A scoping review was conducted using the search words “older” OR “elder*” OR “aged” OR “geriatric*” OR “senior*” OR “later life” OR “lifespan” OR “life course” OR “resident*” and “nursing home*” OR “care home*” OR “long-term care” OR “residential” or “institutional” and “community” AND “elder sexual abuse” OR “sexual abuse” OR “sexual violence” OR “sexual offense*” OR “sexual assault” OR “rape” AND “perception*” OR “belief*” OR “bias” OR “myth” OR “stigma” OR “experience” OR “knowledge” OR “awareness” AND “perception*” OR “belief*” OR “view*” OR “reflection” OR “opinion” OR “bias” OR “myth” OR “stereotype” OR “stigma” OR “experience” OR “knowledge” OR “awareness” OR “prevent*” OR “strategies” OR “approach” OR “recommendations” to locate scholarly articles and reports in Ageline, CINAHL, EMBASE, Medline [PubMed], APA PsychINFO, SocINDEX with Full Text, Social Sciences Abstracts, and Social Work Abstracts databases.

References

1. Bows, H. (2018). Practitioner views on the impacts, challenges, and barriers in supporting older survivors of sexual violence. *Violence Against Women, 24*(9), 1070-1090. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801217732348>
2. National Council for Mental Wellbeing (2019). Stigma regarding mental illness among people of color. [Photograph]. Retrieved from <https://www.thenationalcouncil.org/BH365/2019/07/08/stigma-regarding-mental-illness-among-people-of-color/>

Systematic Scoping Review Results (Modified from PRISMA)



Contact

Please contact Dr. Hand with questions at mhand2@gmu.edu



Background

Older adults are largely excluded from sexual violence (SV) prevention and intervention, owing to perceptions of elders as asexual or undesirable, which is further complicated when dementia is present.¹ Because SV is not perceived as a social problem in later life, knowledge in this area is limited. Thus, an eight-database systematic scoping review was conducted to offer an understanding of how SV in later life is perceived, barriers to and solutions for prevention.



Objectives

1. To explore what is known about perceptions of SV in later life and how this may be related to prevention as well as possible barriers to and solutions for prevention.

Methods

A scoping review was conducted using the search words “older” OR “elder*” OR “aged” OR “geriatric*” OR “senior*” OR “later life” OR “lifespan” OR “life course” OR “resident*” and “nursing home*” OR “care home*” OR “long-term care” OR “residential” or “institutional” and “community” AND “elder sexual abuse” OR “sexual abuse” OR “sexual violence” OR “sexual offense*” OR “sexual assault” OR “rape” AND “perception*” OR “belief*” OR “bias” OR “myth” OR “stigma” OR “experience” OR “knowledge” OR “awareness” AND “perception*” OR “belief*” OR “view*” OR “reflection” OR “opinion” OR “bias” OR “myth” OR “stereotype” OR “stigma” OR “experience” OR “knowledge” OR “awareness” OR “prevent*” OR “strategies” OR “approach” OR “recommendations” to locate scholarly articles and reports in Ageline, CINAHL, EMBASE, Medline [PubMed], APA PsychINFO, SocINDEX with Full Text, Social Sciences Abstracts, and Social Work Abstracts databases.

References

1. Bows, H. (2018). Practitioner views on the impacts, challenges, and barriers in supporting older survivors of sexual violence. *Violence Against Women, 24*(9), 1070-1090. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801217732348>
2. World Health Organization (2002). Chapter 5: Abuse of the elderly. In E. Krug, L. L. Dahlberg, J. A. Mercy, A. B. Zwi, R. Lozano (Eds.), *World report on violence and health* (pp. 125-145).
3. Ploeg, J., Lofeld, & Walsh, C. A. (2013). What is “elder abuse”? Voices from the margin: The views of underrepresented Canadian older adults. *Journal of Elder Abuse and Neglect, 25*(5), 396-424. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08946566.2013.780956>
4. Med Transport Center. (2019). Selecting a nursing home or assisted living facility? Which is the best choice? [Photograph]. Med Transport Center. <https://medtransportcenter.com/selecting-a-nursing-home-or-assisted-living-facility-which-is-the-best-choice/>

Results

- Several overarching themes were identified, including needs for further (a) knowledge and awareness, (b) research and (c) policy changes and development, (d) intersectional prejudice, (e) SV being a taboo with limited support, (f) sociocultural differences, and (g) uncertainty.
- **The following were identified as influencing perceptions of SV in later life:** (a) knowledge and awareness, (b), ageism and sexism, (c) stereotypes and myths, (d) SV being a taboo linked with disbelief, (e) culture and sociocultural differences, and (f) confusion and uncertainty.
- **Barriers to prevention included:** remaining needs for (a) knowledge, awareness and training, (b) continued research to inform policy and practice, (c) policy changes surrounding screening, reporting and investigation, (d) victim support and (e) for an accepted definition of SV in later life.
- **Themes relating to solutions for prevention included:** (a) greater promotion of knowledge and awareness, (b) interdisciplinary research, (c) policies to improve reporting, screening, exams, and investigations, (d) increased support for at-risk elders and survivors, and (e) a clear definition of SV, including in later life, with sensitivity to cultural differences.

Conclusions and Implications

- Further investigation is needed to understand why SV is perceived as a crime of desire in consideration of most SV cases being linked with aggression² and greater efforts are needed to address this.
 - Continued research on the causes of SV, including in later life, is particularly recommended.³
 - Research is expressly needed on how non-dominant groups are disproportionately impacted.¹
 - Power, privilege and intersectional prejudice should be explored, along with the needs of perpetrators.
- Policymakers should ensure multi-level education, including mandated training in long-term care, while working to increase support for caregivers of individuals with dementia.³
- Interdisciplinary collaboration among practitioners is essential, especially among social workers, other healthcare workers, and long-term care workers, to comprehensively advance prevention.¹
- Greater awareness is needed on SV in later life, to address rape myths centered on young, White female victims attacked by strangers as well as current stigma linked with SV, especially in later life.^{1; 3}

Contact

Please contact Dr. Hand with questions at mhand2@gmu.edu

