

Intimate Partner Violence Interventions within Immigrant Communities in Canada

Thaís do Nascimento Cortez

J050472

Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Law Enforcement Studies, Justice Institute of British Columbia

Author Note

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Abstract

My research project explores intimate partner violence (IPV) interventions within the immigrant communities in Canada. With migration being a central element of life globally, addressing challenges like IPV is critical for ensuring social cohesion and well-being. IPV affects people across all demographics, but immigrant populations often face unique cultural, social, and economic stressors that can exacerbate the risk of violence. Although Canada has implemented IPV interventions through various legislative and programmatic efforts, gaps remain, particularly in effectively addressing the cultural nuances of immigrant population. Through a secondary research approach, this literature review identifies key themes, such as cultural sensitivity and tailored interventions, the effectiveness of IPV programs, inadequacies within the Canadian Justice System (CJS), and the lack of qualitative research on IPV interventions. My findings show that culturally tailored interventions, which account for post-migration challenges, shifts in gender roles, and isolation, are critical for immigrant population; also, that standard IPV programs often fail to address these complexities, leading to gaps in effectiveness and recidivism rates. Additionally, it was also showed that structural inadequacies within the CJS, such as court delays and inconsistent access to programs, further prevent successful intervention outcomes.

Keywords: Intimate partner violence, immigrant communities, interventions, cultural sensitivity.

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Intimate Partner Violence Interventions within Immigrant Communities in Canada

According to the International Organization for Migration (2024), there are an estimated 281 million international migrants, or around 3.6% of the world's population. In 2020, 59 million international migrants were in North America, or 21% of the global migrant population (International Organization for Migration, 2024). In Canada, where nearly one in four people are immigrants, which represents 23% of its population—the largest percentage in 150 years and the highest among G7 countries (Statistics Canada, 2022)—the challenges faced by this diverse population go beyond cultural adaptation, often becoming life-threatening. Among these challenges, intimate partner violence (IPV) stands out as a hidden epidemic.

Migration has become a main element of life globally, and it is an essential source for replenishing countries' population, especially in countries like Canada where the proportion of seniors (aged 65 and over) is expecting to increase to 29.8% in 2068 (Statistics Canada, 2024). Furthermore, any issue or problem that poses serious obstacles to the integration and transition of immigrants is not only detrimental to their own lives in the new country, but also to the well-being, social cohesion, economic growth, and general welfare of the population. For this reason, it is crucial to study the problem of intimate partner violence, specifically the responses that Canada provides to this problem and its impact on the immigrant population.

The World Health Organization identified family and intimate partner violence (IPV) a global health issue (WHO, 2010). It is not unique to immigrant populations, but rather it achieves all types of individual, independent of age, sex, gender, social and economic status, or ethnicity. It is a type of violence that disproportionally treats the safety and well-being of women and children across the world, taking place with relative invisibility in their lives and homes (WHO,

2010). In Canada, IPV is responsible for a significant portion of the country's violent crimes. According to the Government of Canada (2018), 26% of all violent crimes reported to the police are domestic violence cases, and women and girls represent 67% of the victims in these cases. Despite many advances in programs and legislative reforms in recent years, there are still many gaps in the existing literature regarding Canada's responses on IPV (Ryan et al., 2022; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2022).

This is especially true regarding the responses focused on immigrant communities, even though there are studies confirming the key role that understanding the cultural context of the individuals represents in preventing domestic violence (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2022). Although there are different types of interventions for offenders and survivors offered by correctional services or community-based programs (Tutty et al., 2020), only a few of these interventions are based on a culturally sensitive model. It is important to investigate how the cultural element is being explored in these interventions and the ways in which they are being delivered to accommodate the diverse immigrant communities that exist in Canada, in which family members may face unique challenges post-migration (Jin & Keat, 2010).

Through a transformative worldview, I aim to examine the variety of IPV interventions in Canada, with a particular focus on immigrant communities. In this paper, I employ a secondary research method to address this issue in Canada, providing an overview of current program interventions by reviewing the existing literature on IPV responses and immigrant communities. The research question raised in this study is: How do Canada's IPV interventions address the needs of immigrant's population? And the sub-question is: What are the outcomes of these interventions? Given the diversity of its population, which is predominantly composed by

immigrants, I argue that cultural differences must be taken into serious consideration when designing intervention programs in Canada, particularly in the context of IPV and its profound consequences.

Literature Review

This literature review provides a comprehensive understanding of the existing responses to the intimate partner violence in Canada and the nuances surrounding the immigrant communities in this context. Several key themes emerged that closely aligned with the research question, and five were categorized to fit within the framework of this research. However, some critical areas fell outside the study's scope and deserve further investigation, including the specific barriers immigrant women face in accessing IPV support services, the need for comparative studies that evaluate the effectiveness of IPV in different immigrant groups, and the responses of law enforcement agencies in Canada to IPV cases in immigrant communities. Exploring these aspects in future research could offer deeper insights into systematic challenges and opportunities for improving IPV interventions and policies.

Criminalization of Intimate Partner Violence

It is important to note that research consistently shows that the majority of IPV cases involve male offenders and female survivors (Grant, 2017). For this reason, the term “intimate partner violence” is used in this paper specifically to refer to violence perpetrated by men against women. Additionally, it should be clarified that the terms intimate partner violence, family violence and domestic violence, despite having distinct meanings, they often appeared in the literature as synonyms and were used to refer to physical, psychological, emotional, sexual and

economic violence between intimate partners. In this paper, the term “intimate partner violence” was preferred.

Historically, intimate partner violence has been treated as a private matter, but legislative advances have redefined its response, making it an issue that warrants criminal justice intervention and a source of public concern. Since the 1990s, IPV has been brought into the public sphere and criminalized (Couture-Carron et al., 2022). Currently, there is no specific crime of IPV in the Canadian Criminal Code, instead its concept covers a range of conduct and offenses that can be committed against intimate partners – definition that includes current or former spouse, common-law partner and dating partner (Department of Justice Canada, 2022). Also, according to the Department of Justice Canada (2022), these conducts include assault (causing bodily harm, with a weapon and aggravated assault), kidnapping and forced confinement, sexual assault (causing bodily harm, with a weapon and aggravated sexual assault), criminal harassment, threats and homicide. IPV is also recognized as an aggravating factor in sentencing under the Criminal Code, section 718.2(a)(ii), and its provisions provide sanctions that are both punitive and rehabilitative (Grant, 2017).

Couture-Carron et al. (2022) explain that in Canada the police are obliged to lay charges when there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe that an assault has occurred, and crown attorneys are obliged to prosecute cases with sufficient evidence. However, for example, assaults that do not leave visible physical marks are subject to the police’s discretion in terms of investigation (Couture-Carron et al., 2022). Consequently, police intervention has become the main social response to IPV, as it is usually one of the survivors' first contact with both the criminal justice and protection systems (Couture-Carron et al., 2022).

The police response to IPV must account for the diverse communities it serves. Discretionary decisions should be made through a culturally sensitive lens, recognizing the varied experiences of immigrant population in Canada. Currently, offenders are prosecuted under federal law, while the provinces manage the administration of justice, including the implementation of IPV interventions (Cotter, 2021). This division of competence allows provincial laws and authorities to tailor responses to better serve their communities. However, insufficient attention has been given to the unique circumstance of immigrants in IPV (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2022) and this population still face significant challenges in navigating a justice system that greatly differs from their countries of origin—a scenario that needs to change.

Current Responses Framework for Addressing Intimate Partner Violence

Over the last 40 years, North America has implemented IPV intervention programs primarily from a feminist lens. This approach examines the political and socio-historical discourses and movements that shape systemic responses to IPV (Wilson et al., 2021), while incorporating the experiences and perspectives of women victim-survivors of violence committed by men. These interventions typically involve psychological or psychoeducational therapies for aggressors and offer victim-survivors supportive counseling and safety planning resources (Ashbourne & Baobaid, 2019). Community-based programs may operate in connection with the justice system, particularly through correctional services, or through self-referral. They can also be integrated with healthcare, mental health services, housing support, or the child welfare system (Ashbourne & Baobaid, 2019; Stewart, L. & Power, J., 2014).

Those interventions can be offered in the format of group programs, individual therapy, as well as crisis hotlines and transitional support shelters for survivors. Intervention groups

designed for male offenders are traditionally based on Duluth model and have a psychoeducational feminist approach, with cognitive-behavioral treatment associated (Wilson et al., 2021; Ashbourne & Baobaid, 2019), but there are recent efforts to develop new models, such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy model, which has shown better initial outcomes than the Duluth model, in terms of lower recidivism rates (Zarling et al., 2022). The Duluth model incorporates a coordinated community response among courts, police, and human service providers and focus on establishing and maintaining safety for victims (Ashbourne & Baobaid, 2019). These interventions use psychoeducational programs for male IPV offenders, aiming to challenge their sexist beliefs, promote accountability, and teach alternative behaviors, such as anger management and non-violent communication (Wilson et al., 2021).

In Canada, justice-linked IPV intervention programs are implemented across the provinces, shaped by federal and provincial structures. The Correctional Service of Canada offers programs for federally sentenced IPV offenders, complemented by community-based treatment. At the provincial and territorial level, there are IPV action plans developed shaped by community-based organizations input that reflects regional needs and funding (Department of Justice Canada, 2023). Among these justice-linked services, there are also specialized IPV courts called “domestic violence courts”.

Regarding the interventions for male perpetrators of IPV, these vary in terms of approach, incorporating, in addition to the models discussed above, narrative therapy, life skills training and the risk-needs-responsivity model (Department of Justice Canada, 2023). In this way, these programs focus on the aggressors' behavior, gender beliefs and criminogenic needs, while at the same time promoting the victim's responsibility and safety. Recognizing the overlap between

IPV and child maltreatment, some responses integrate justice and child protection efforts to support healthier parenting (Department of Justice Canada, 2023).

However, due to the large representation of immigrants in the Canadian population, research shows the importance of creating new programs or modifying the curriculum of existing ones to address the cultural differences of the population (Jin & Keat, 2010; Stewart, L. & Power, J., 2014; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2022; Thandi, 2012). Developing more effective intervention strategies to identify and respond to family violence in diverse populations will increase family safety in a wider range of places and communities in Canada. Given that there are limited services that explicitly address the cultural context of IPV offenders and survivors (Ashbourne & Baobaid, 2019), it is essential to develop a better understanding of the importance of implementing new intervention models that are specifically designed for the immigrant community.

Integrative and Tailored Cultural Interventions

Research highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity and tailored interventions, particularly within immigrant communities (Jin & Keat, 2010; Stewart, L. & Power, J., 2014; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2022; Thandi, 2012). The immigrant families face unique challenges due to post-migration, which can exacerbate stressors related to family dynamics, gender roles, and financial pressures, leading to an increased risk of IPV perpetration (Jin & Keat, 2010; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2022; Emezue et al, 2021).

One of the several challenges immigrant families face is the shift in traditional gender roles. Many immigrant men come from cultures with rigid gender expectations, where men are

typically seen as the primary breadwinners and women as caregivers (Jin & Keat, 2010). According to Thandi (2012), South Asian families, for example, have in their homes gender roles clearly defined by a patriarchal model and Bhanot and Senn (2007) suggests that the South Asian men's gender role attitudes influence their violent behaviour towards an intimate partner.

Ideas of control and power are also found in non-immigrant families, but in some communities, there are different degrees and values around male privilege. In relation to the South Asian community, which has almost quadrupled over 25 years in Canada, from 1996 to 2021, constituting around 2.5 million of its population (Statistics Canada, 2024), the exploitation of values around the ideas of familism and collectivism in the unequal power dynamics of these families results in the perpetration of IPV (Ahmad et al., 2009).

Another key issue is the isolation that immigrant families often experience due to the absence of extended family and community networks in the new country. This isolation can increase the risk of both IPV perpetration and victimization. Immigrant couples are often more dependent on each other for emotional and financial support, creating a closed environment where conflict may escalate without external support (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2022). Also in many cultures, discussing family issues, particularly violence, is considered taboo, and seeking help outside the family may be seen as a betrayal. For instance, some immigrant women may hesitate to report abuse for fear of dishonoring their family or being ostracized by their communities (Thandi, 2012; Stewart & Power, 2014).

All these cultural particularities that surround the dynamics of an immigrant family underscore the importance of tailored intervention programs that can integrant these cultural

barriers and work to foster trust between immigrant communities and service providers. Tailoring the content to incorporate discussions on how traditional beliefs about gender roles may contribute to violence, while promoting positive role models and examples from within the community, could lead to more successful outcomes. Culturally homogenous group batterer programmes can indicate less dropouts, greater participation and engagement in what is discussed, and greater supportive relationships among participants (Thandi, 2012). Therefore, culturally sensitive programs are more likely to resonate with participants and address the specific challenges they face in managing relationships, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of the interventions.

Individuals' social position shapes their interactions with the state, and IPV as a phenomenon interconnected with the criminal justice system is part of this social analysis. It is therefore essential to highlight the concept of intersectionality in this study. Originally introduced by the work of Crenshaw in 1991, it explains how challenging it is to prioritize the concept of gender alone when it comes to understanding IPV scenarios (Lockhart & Mitchell, 2010). Intersectionality establishes the idea that various identities cannot be considered in isolation but are simultaneously involved in manifesting forms of privilege and oppression along the socially constructed structures of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and immigrant status (Crenshaw, 1991). Thus, all these factors that shape the ways in which individuals relate to each other in society must be considered in the cultural and social analysis of IPV, and particularly in the intervention programs implemented within immigrant communities.

Inadequacy of the Criminal Justice System

Studies argue that while men can be key players in the fight against IPV, the CJS lacks interventions for male offenders, and particularly those that address the specific needs of immigrant communities (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2022; Thandi, 2012). Researchers discuss structural and systemic barriers within the CJS that affect the implementation and effectiveness of IPV interventions. It was perceived a scenario of court delays in sentencing or to process IPV referrals that impact the IPV programs, causing dropouts and risks to the survivors (Giesbrecht, et al., 2023). The delays in court proceedings and the referral process often hinder timely access to intervention programs, which in turn affects their overall impact.

Additionally, Stewart and Power (2014), highlight the inadequacy of the CJS, affirming that there is a need for practices and policies that can better identify and respond the specific needs of IPV offenders and survivors, including cultural perspectives. Giesbrecht et al. (2023) emphasize the need for reforms in the court referral system to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of these programs. The CJS should adopt more holistic approaches that consider the specific needs of the immigrant communities and work closely with community-based professionals to address the complexities of all the parties involved in the IPV cases. This would ensure that interventions are not only timely but also tailored to address the underlying issues that contribute to the occurrence of IPV.

The cultural and social intersectional factors must be emphasized by the criminal justice system not only from the perspective of the male perpetrator of IPV who is inserted into the interventions offered by the state, but also in relation to the barriers faced by immigrant women from the initial moment of seeking help, whether by contacting the police/community service providers or their family/friends, to accessing protection services in the community, or even

facing the formalities of the criminal justice system. Immigrants have vulnerabilities and concerns related to their ability to remain in the country, social expectations of their country of origin, and structural barriers to their full integration into society that need to be considered for the implementation of the designed interventions or plans of action by the government.

Lack of Qualitative Research on Intimate Partner Violence Interventions

Several articles also identify the need for more comprehensive data on recidivism rates and the long-term results of male IPV intervention programs. Giesbrecht et al. (2023) and Emezue et al. (2021) emphasize that there is not enough research on whether these programs reduce the likelihood of recidivism in the long term. There is also a lack of qualitative research investigating the results of intervention/treatment models including the participants' specific needs (Stewart, et al, 2014; Stewart & Power, 2014). This data gap represents a lack of interest of policymakers on the subject and makes it difficult to evaluate the overall outcomes of these programs.

According to the authors Stewart et al. (2014) and Stewart and Power (2014), there is a clear gap in research that explores the personal narratives of program participants, which could shed light on how offenders perceive the program, what specific elements of the intervention are effective or ineffective, and how they integrate learned strategies into their everyday lives. Without depth qualitative studies on IPV interventions, it is difficult to assess whether the programs are truly transformative or merely compliance based.

In addition, Stewart et al. (2014) also argue that current research does not adequately consider the diverse and often complex needs of participants, especially when dealing with different cultural, socio-economic, and psychological backgrounds. A recent study carried out by

Wathen et al. (2024) on existing research on IPV in Canada indicated that most of the studies are focused on IPV services and descriptions in relation to women survivors, with few on perpetrators, and not enough research investigating the effectiveness and implementation of theoretically grounded interventions that adopted cultural-based model.

Therefore, qualitative research is an urgent need on IPV studies, which can provide deeper insights into how to tailor programs to individual needs (more participant-centered qualitative studies) and reveal factors that influence recidivism rates. Expanding the research framework to include qualitative methods will allow for a more comprehensive evaluation of IPV interventions, ultimately improving their effectiveness and long-term results.

Methodology

My study is based on secondary research, involving critical analyse of the existing literature, and following all the ethical standards required. I conducted online searches through the Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC) library EBSCO system and its databases, being most of the articles reviewed from ERIC, APA PsycInfo, APA PsycArticles, Academic Search Complete, CINAHL Complete, and Criminal Justice Abstracts (CJA). I also carried out searches using Google Scholar and the Government of Canada Publications database. Additionally, I obtained relevant sources through personal email correspondence with professionals from the British Columbia Correctional Services, who recommended articles related to my research topic.

All the databases offered significant sources, allowing a literature review aligned with the nature of my research topic. To initiate the search process, I used the key concept “intimate partner violence interventions”. With the large number of studies generated, I noticed that it was

a very broad term and there was a need to narrow down the search process. I carried out the literature search strategy through a careful process of identifying and analyzing the keywords relevant to the core concepts of my research domain. This process helped narrow down the results and allowed for a more targeted and manageable review. My specific search process in the JIBC library database is detailed in Table 1 (see Appendix).

On Google Scholar, I used the term “court-mandated interventions on intimate partner violence in Canada”, getting 469 results for reviewing. I searched on Government of Canada Publications database, using the term “intimate partner violence”, and I got six results for analysis. Through email correspondence with BC Correctional Services professionals, I could collect recommendations for four peer-reviewed articles focusing on interventions within immigrant communities.

This research was conducted through a critical evaluation of secondary literature with a transformative worldview. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), the transformative worldview focuses on a critical analysis of literature and is present in research involving marginalized individuals or groups, aiming for social and political change to address their needs, as the case of this study. Therefore, a critical approach guided my analysis, and the related literature was organized with a focus on the issue (intimate partner violence) and population (immigrants) central to the research questions.

Regarding the inclusion and exclusion criteria, I selected peer-reviewed articles published in the last 24 years, focusing on Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom, along with Canadian governmental reports. This broader geographic and time frame was necessary due to the scarcity of research on intimate partner violence among immigrant communities in Canada.

Expanding these parameters ensured access to a more comprehensive range of relevant studies, provided up-to-date information, and strengthened the reliability of the research findings.

The abstract reading process involved selecting articles that demonstrated relevance to the research questions. I chose articles that addressed intimate partner violence, particularly those providing insights into how the judicial or correctional system responds to IPV. From this initial selection, I narrowed the focus to articles for through reading. At this stage, I prioritized studies that offered a deeper understanding of IPV intervention responses, with a particular focus on Canadian research and an examination on whether and how these interventions address the cultural context of immigrant populations. This step was crucial, as it allowed me to align the search with my research questions, given that many articles initially retrieved were more aligned with medical or psychological fields, offering clinical analyses of interventions, which were not the focus of this study.

Finally, it is important to emphasise that my research followed all the ethical standards required for obtaining secondary data. I ensured accurate citation of sources to uphold copyright and intellectual property rights. When providing credit to the original sources, I rigorously adhered to all ethical guidelines for citation and referencing.

Results

The framework for intimate partner violence (IPV) interventions within immigrant communities in Canada is shaped by several key elements, including federal legal mandates and community-based programs, which involve court-mandated or voluntary participation in IPV intervention programs. These programs are designed to help offenders to understand the dynamics of power and control in relationships, develop healthier communication skills, and take

responsibility for their actions (Wilson et al., 2021), and survivors to overcome the abusive relationships or preserved them, according to their social and cultural perspective and values, but ending the violence (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2022; Ashbourne & Baobaid, 2019). The unique challenges immigrants face, such as post-migration stressors, shifts in gender roles, and isolation from family or community support networks, are often not fully addressed by standard interventions.

Throughout my study, one of the findings was that culturally integrative and tailored interventions are essential in Canada, particularly because many immigrant communities in Canada have deeply ingrained beliefs about gender roles and familial patriarchal structures, which influences the effectiveness of the interventions within male immigrant offenders (Jin & Keat, 2010; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2022), and the immigrant women's reluctance to disclose or report their abusive relationship (Couture-Carron et al., 2019; Alaggia & Rishchynski, 2009). Furthermore, immigrant women in Canada face additional barriers due to immigration policies, their limited options for seeking help, language fluency, and availability of resources (Alaggia & Rishchynski, 2009), which, in turn, increases their risk of experiencing IPV after migration (Mose & Gillum, 2016).

Family members' experience and responses to IPV are likely to differ across the spectrum of individualist or collectivist roots. In North American societies, including non-indigenous populations, individualism is the dominant social framework, whereas many immigrant groups settling in these countries come from collectivist societies, where family and community ties play central role as a core social principle (Ashbourne & Baobaid, 2019). In this sense, studies done with justice-linked programs tailored to immigrant men from collectivist societies focus on

reconciling traditional beliefs with a non-violence approach in their relationships, and addressing issues like cultural shame, family honor, and substance abuse showed better engagement and less drop-out rates than standardized programs with heterogeneous groups (Thandi, 2012).

On the other hand, Ashbourne & Baobaid (2019) also drew attention to the fact that the barriers to seeking help for a woman from collectivist societies are similar to those faced by women in the dominant society. However, for immigrant women with very strong cultural ties and a deep commitment to preserving their family unit, by staying with the abuser, may withdraw after finally seeking support, as mainstream intervention models are based on the idea of removing them from their family (Ashbourne & Baobaid, 2019).

According to Ashbourne & Baobaid (2019), there are some interventions that address the cultural and community context, such as the Cultural Context Model (CCM), developed by Rhea Almeida at the Institute for Family Services, in New Jersey, United States. This model adopts a social justice approach, incorporating men's and women's culture circles and cultural mentors to engage family members. It emphasizes men's accountability while supporting survivors, recognizing the social influences shaping family dynamics within both local and broader communities (Ashbourne & Baobaid, 2019). However, research has shown that this model yields weak to moderate outcomes, with reports of abuse recurrence by partners (Ashbourne & Baobaid, 2019).

In Canada, the existing literature also revealed that culturally responsive IPV intervention models remain limited. However, a few projects focusing on immigrant communities that need to be highlighted in this paper. Ashbourne and Baobaid (2019) examines the Culturally Integrative Family Safety Response (CIFSR), a model designed for IPV prevention and intervention among

families at risk. This approach not only provides culturally sensitive responses to affected families but also educates service providers on ethno-cultural contexts of the communities they serve. While the studies of its outcomes remain scarce, CIFSR represents an advance in implementing models of interventions that address IPV in collectivist immigrant communities, as the mainstream individualistic interventions models established for IPV in North America are not sufficient to combat this violence (Ashbourne & Baobaid, 2019).

Despite this, another finding of this study is that the CJS in Canada presents a structural and organizational inadequacy in addressing the IPV and the specific needs of immigrant male offenders during the IPV interventions. There are delays in court proceedings and the referral process, which hinder timely access to intervention programs (Giesbrecht et al., 2023). Moreover, it was found that the structural issues within the Canadian CJS are not an isolated but rather form a consistent framework that affects the planning and delivery of IPV interventions across its regions (Stewart & Power, 2014). Systemic barriers, such as the lack of specialized training, including cultural sensitivity training, limit the overall effectiveness of the IPV interventions (Stewart & Power, 2014).

Addressing the sub-research question, the outcomes of IPV interventions within immigrant communities vary. Across the articles, there was evidence suggesting that IPV intervention programs generally lead to improvements for male offenders, whether they are court- or non-court-mandated (Tutty et al., 2020), but questions remain regarding the long-term effectiveness and recidivism rates (Emezue et al, 2021; Stewart & Power, 2014; Stewart et al., 2014). There is no follow-up after the completion of the interventions, having a need for creating

new models of evaluation, as well as reforms in the referrals sent by the courts (Giesbrecht, et al., 2023; Thandi, 2012).

There are still significant gaps and challenges in assessing the long-term effectiveness of these programs, particularly in terms of preventing recidivism. Emezue et al. (2021) and Stewart et al. (2014) draw attention to the lack of research on whether these programs result in long-term behavioural improvements or only short-term compliance. The probability of offenders returning to harmful behaviours towards their intimate partners is still a main concern. Culturally sensitive programs are more likely to resonate with participants from diverse backgrounds and address the specific challenges they face in managing relationships, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of the interventions.

A key issue in assessing the outcomes of these interventions is the lack of follow-up with the offenders after the completion of IPV interventions. Most programs do not offer long-term monitoring or support after completion, and most of the offenders, especially if it is a court-mandated referral, do not come back to be accessed or to provide any information. This scenario leaves a gap in understanding how offenders integrate what they have learned throughout the programs into their daily lives (Giesbrecht et al., 2023). It is particularly problematic for immigrant men, who may continue to face cultural and socio-economic stressors that exacerbate their risk of IPV perpetration. Post-migration issues, such as financial pressures, shifts in family dynamics, and social isolation, as explained before, can continue to influence behavior after the intervention has ended (Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2022).

Moreover, it is important to highlight that the cultural relevance of these programs directly impacts their effectiveness. IPV interventions that fail to address the cultural and

psychological needs of immigrant men may result in low engagement and high dropout rates (Thandi, 2012; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2022). On the other hand, culturally sensitive programs that addressed the participants' cultural beliefs about gender roles and power dynamics, while promoting positive role models from within the community, have been shown to achieve better outcomes. These tailored interventions can help participants internalize non-violent communication and relationship-building strategies more effectively, leading to more sustained behavioral change (Thandi, 2012; Tutty et al., 2020).

Despite these promising insights, there is a significant lack of comprehensive data on the long-term outcomes of IPV interventions within immigrant communities. Most research focuses on IPV's epidemiology and descriptions of service use, and there is not enough research analyzing the effectiveness and implementation of a structured, tested, and easily replicated cultural-based model of interventions (Wathen, 2024). This data gap makes it difficult to evaluate the overall success of these programs and highlights the need for more qualitative research that captures the lived experiences of participants (Stewart et al., 2014; Stewart & Power, 2014). Without this, it remains unclear whether these programs are genuinely transformative, meaning, whether they foster lasting changes that lead to the end of the violence.

Discussion

This research involved a systematic review of existing literature, focusing on peer-reviewed articles to ensure the use of accurate, reliable and up-to-date information. During the research process, I encountered limitations that significantly shaped the direction of my study. Initially, the focus of my research plan was to examine interventions for immigrant male perpetrators of intimate partner violence (IPV) in Canada. However, the great scarcity of

research with this specific focus, especially within the field of criminal justice and law enforcement studies, represented a major obstacle that prevented the task of meaningful data collection.

Despite expanding the search to include international studies, particularly from countries with similar social structures to Canada, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, the literature on this topic remained limited. Thus, this gap in the literature required me to broaden my research approach by changing the topic to examine existing intimate partner violence interventions in Canada and their effectiveness in meeting the specific needs of immigrant populations. In this way, I continued with the extended geographical analysis described above, and the time frame used was also extended to cover a significant number of relevant articles on the research topic. With this search strategy, I was able to guarantee a complete review and gather enough quality material to provide a well-supported answer to my proposed research questions, even within the limitations encountered and respecting the time allotted for carrying out this research.

However, I observe that one of the strengths of my study was precisely the challenge posed by this lack of articles produced in Canada on the proposed topic. As well as honing my research skills, it allowed me to produce research that generated more comprehensive and complete results on the topic in question. Thus, I believe that this research makes a meaningful contribution to the academic debate on intimate partner violence (IPV) interventions within immigrant communities in Canada, by highlighting critical gaps and advocating for culturally responsive approaches. The journey was not without its challenges, but it was very rewarding to explore and bring attention to issues that have the potential to drive social and policy changes.

The time constraints of the academic program also played a crucial role in the development of this study. Due to the limited time available for collecting and analyzing data for this study, I focused on providing a review of the existing literature that, although more comprehensive and exploratory, could add relevant and quality content to the academic production on the subject, and fulfill its objective of addressing the research questions. And although I didn't carry out primary research or collect empirical data, I believe that the results I have brought forward offer a significant contribution to the academic discussion, especially given the existing gap in this area of study on the need to implement culturally sensitive approaches in IPV interventions with the immigrant community in Canada.

Furthermore, reflecting on the writing process, I realized that the gaps in the available literature pushed me to critically examine the underlying reasons for these shortcomings, especially regarding the effectiveness of existing intervention programs. This process led me to consider not only why there was a lack of studies exploring the effectiveness of interventions and their relation to the cultural context of IPV, but how this may represent a consequence of the structural social barriers analyzed in this paper. Barriers that show and exemplify the difficulty in understanding the problem of intimate partner violence through an intersectional lens by the government, which is then reflected in the interventions offered to survivors and abusers, in the researchers' interest, as well as in the funding for academic production on this subject.

Thus, I believe that, despite the challenges, this research has significant value. It contributes to the growing body of work on IPV interventions from a critical perspective within the criminal justice framework and provides a comprehensive and quality exploratory framework for better understanding the importance of integrating cultural sensitivity into court-required

programs and correctional practices. In this way, this work provides an opening to foster debate on the topic studied with the hope that policymakers and practitioners will seek to create more effective and inclusive systems for dealing with IPV that take into account the complex needs and contexts of immigrant populations.

I therefore trust that it will serve as a starting point or complementary tool for future research into intimate partner violence and the importance of adapting interventions and responses to this type of violence to the diverse communities that live in Canada. I also expect more studies such as this one to encourage critical thinking about the implementation of systems based on social justice and inclusion.

Recommendations

Despite progress in IPV research in Canada, certain groups remain under-represented, leaving significant gaps in understanding how IPV affects immigrant communities. This limited representation is concerning, as research showed that the immigrant population is just growing over the years globally, and especially in Canada. The lack of data on this topic restricts the ability of the government to develop tailored interventions that effectively address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of its diverse population.

Moreover, there is an urgent need to expand research into the IPV experiences of men offenders. While much of the existing literature focuses on female survivors, men's experiences of IPV regarding the services provided to attend this population is scarce. Further research is also needed to explore the experiences of immigrant and marginalized communities in Canada. These populations face unique barriers, such as language fluency, cultural differences, and systemic

discrimination, which can limit their access to emergency services and supporting. Without specific studies focusing on these communities, policymakers and practitioners may struggle to develop programs that address the distinct challenges they face, thereby perpetuating gaps in service provision.

Another significant finding from the literature review is the scarcity of articles that examine IPV policies and their impacts. The study of regulations, policies, and strategies surrounding IPV interventions in Canada is essential for assessing their effectiveness, determining funding needs—especially at the provincial level, where community-based agencies and government efforts are interconnected—and refining public health strategies. It highlights the importance of culturally sensitive training for professionals, enabling them to work with survivors and provide affective referrals to available service and resources, ultimately aiming to end IPV. This gap in the literature leaves decision-makers without adequate evidence to make informed adjustments to current policies or to design new initiatives that effectively prevent IPV and support survivors.

Finally, less than 6% of the existing studies indicate direct federal government funding specifically for violence-related research (Wathen, 2024). This signals a broader issue: the lack of interest of the government in funding initiatives that prioritize IPV research. Federal funding is essential for conducting large-scale, longitudinal studies that can track the long-term impacts of interventions and policy changes, as well as for ensuring the sustainability of community-based programs (Wathen, 2024).

The scarcity of funding limits the scope and depth of IPV research, particularly in relation to immigrant communities, and makes it difficult to translate findings into effective, evidence-

based policy reforms. Expanding the focus of IPV research to include the immigrant communities is essential for creating a more inclusive and effective approach to preventing and addressing IPV in Canada. Furthermore, there is a need for more research to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of these programs, especially in terms of reducing recidivism and promoting sustainable behavioral changes that stop the continuation of violence.

Conclusion

This research set out to address a critical gap in the existing literature on intimate partner violence (IPV) interventions, specifically concerning the cultural context of immigrant populations in Canada. By exploring this theme, I aimed not only to contribute to the academic discourse but also to inspire further research and practical discussions on the need for culturally responsive approaches to IPV interventions. The findings emphasize that addressing IPV within immigrant communities requires interventions that go beyond traditional models, incorporating cultural competence and acknowledging the unique social and familial dynamics these populations face.

Through this study, it became evident that IPV interventions must be tailored to the realities of immigrant families, considering challenges such as shifting gender roles, isolation, cultural stigmas, and language barriers. By adapting IPV programs to the specific needs and cultural contexts of diverse communities, service providers can develop more effective responses that reduce violence and promote healthier family dynamics. In turn, this contributes to broader societal well-being by fostering inclusive, supportive systems that empower both survivors and those at risk.

Beyond its academic contributions, this research has been incredibly enlightening both personally and professionally experience. It has not only broadened my understanding of IPV interventions but has also reinforced my commitment to advocating for inclusive policies and evidence-based practices in this field. Engaging with this topic allowed me to critically reflect on the gaps in existing interventions and the structural barriers that prevent immigrant communities from accessing effective support systems. It also deepened my awareness of how systemic inequalities, policy shortcomings, and funding limitations shape the availability and quality of services designed to address IPV.

As I move forward in my academic and professional journey, I hope this study serves as a foundation for future research, encouraging scholars, policymakers, and practitioners to prioritize culturally sensitive interventions in their work. More importantly, I believe that continued research in this area can lead to meaningful policy changes, ensuring that IPV interventions are not only inclusive but also effective for diverse populations. I trust that this work will contribute to ongoing discussions on how justice systems, community services, and government agencies can collaborate to build a more inclusive and effective framework for addressing IPV.

Ultimately, this research has strengthened my interest in working within this area, reaffirming my dedication to contributing to meaningful social change through academic inquiry and practical engagement. It has provided me with a clearer vision of how I can use my skills and expertise to advocate for vulnerable populations and drive systemic improvements. I look forward to further exploring how IPV interventions can be enhanced through research, policy development, and collaborative community efforts, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their cultural background, have access to the support and protection they need.

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Appendix

Table 1

Literature Review Strategy

Database	Search Term(s)	Search Results	
Initial Search			
JIBC Library Database (EBSCO)	Intimate partner violence interventions	23,898	
Revised Searches			
JIBC Library Database (EBSCO)	intimate partner violence or domestic violence or partner abuse AND Canada	10,367	Removed 'interventions' Added synonyms for intimate partner violence. Added keywords 'Canada', 'Canadian', and 'in Canada'. Reviewed articles.
JIBC Library Database (EBSCO)	intimate partner violence or domestic violence or partner abuse AND Canada AND interventions or strategies or program	4,694	Added keywords 'interventions', 'strategies', and 'program'. Reviewed articles.
JIBC Library Database (EBSCO)	intimate partner violence or domestic violence or partner abuse AND Canada AND interventions or strategies or program AND immigrant or immigration or refugee	209	Added keywords 'immigrant', 'immigration', and 'refugee' Reviewed articles

Note: The table above illustrates the literature search process and shows how search results change depending on the search terms used.