

# Interpreting gender-based violence against women and sex trafficking. A scoping literature review of community interpreting and transcultural mediation with survivors of violence

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## Abstract

*Community interpreters and transcultural mediators working with survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) against women and sex trafficking are called to work in contexts that require specific knowledge, a gender perspective, and specialised training to deal with complex emotions and accounts of trauma. Despite the importance of these professionals in every service that survivors encounter on their way out of violence, not many systematic studies have been dedicated to this topic, nor does a literature review of relevant research on these issues exist. With the aim of collecting existing studies and identifying research gaps, this paper proposes a scoping literature review of contributions dedicated to interpreting in GBV and sex trafficking contexts, thematically divided and analysed in four subtopics: development and characteristics of the subdiscipline and interpreters' specific skills; interpreter's role in relation to neutrality and impartiality vs active involvement; exposure to trauma and risk of vicarious traumatisation; training needs and available training materials for interpreters.*

## Keywords

Community interpreting, transcultural mediation, gender-based violence, sex trafficking, interpreter's role, extreme interpreting, trauma-informed interpreting, feminist interpreting, interpreter training.

Migrant women who survive gender-based violence (GBV) and sex trafficking<sup>1</sup> face multiple barriers, including isolation, lack of social support, economic dependency on their partners, and irregular administrative status (Arnosó *et al.* 2012). Language barriers further hinder their access to healthcare, psychological support, legal aid or anti-violence centres and shelters (Toledano Buendía 2022; Tinti *et al.* 2024). These barriers often become frustrating and disempowering obstacles that contribute to a victim's feeling of isolation and impotence (Toledano Buendía *et al.* 2015) and create a dead end on the path to social services (Lee 2013). While language barriers affect migrants' autonomy in general (Gutiérrez Palacios *et al.* 2010), they aggravate the vulnerability of abused women (Relaño Pastor/Soriano Miras 2006). Without professional interpreting, communication between service providers and users can lead to inadequate assessment of the seriousness of the situation, stereotyping, and mutual distrust (Marey-Castro/Del Pozo-Triviño 2020).

Community interpreting and mediation<sup>2</sup> in GBV contexts has emerged as a sub-discipline (Toledano Buendía 2015) which presents specific characteristics, spanning healthcare, police, court, psychosocial settings (Toledano Buendía/Del Pozo-Triviño 2015), where counselling is offered through psychological support, information on women's rights, and assistance in fulfilling everyday needs (Lilja 2019). Interpreters accompany survivors during interviews with healthcare workers, police officers, court staff, therapists, and case workers in anti-violence centres and during every step needed to break the cycle of violence. Given the diversity of these settings, interpreters require specific knowledge about applying protocols in different contexts, existing legislation against GBV, and a gender perspective (Abril Martí *et al.* 2015), that recognises GBV as a systemic phenomenon rooted in a patriarchal system that enables

- 1 Violence against women is defined by the Istanbul Convention (promulgated by the Council of Europe in 2011) as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women. The expression violence against women covers various forms of gender-based violence against women and refers to violence directed against women because they are women or violence affecting them disproportionately, including domestic violence. Trafficking in human beings is defined by the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (2005) as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, for the purpose of exploitation. Sex trafficking includes the exploitation of prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation.
- 2 In the Italian context, the term *mediazione*, mediation, refers to practices that, in Anglophone and Northern European contexts, fall under the expressions 'community interpreting' and 'public service interpreting' (Baraldi/Gavioli 2012). Mediation can either be qualified as *mediazione linguistica e culturale* ("language and cultural mediation") *mediazione inter-culturale* ("inter-cultural mediation") or as *mediazione transculturale* ("transcultural mediation"). Mediators play an intermediary role between institutions and non-Italian speakers which closely resembles the role of the community interpreter (Rudvin/Spinzi 2014), but are also called to perform a proactive role of preventing conflict and misunderstandings (Rudvin/Tomassini 2008; Merlini 2009; Baraldi/Gavioli 2012; Rudvin/Pesare 2015).

men to maintain positions of power over women (Hourani *et al.* 2021). To avoid re-traumatisation of survivors, interpreters must be aware of internalised biases and avoid blaming survivors (Toledano Buendía 2019).

Although language barriers have been recognised as crucial in shaping people's access to services (Lee 2013), there is limited empirical research exploring experiences of interpreted communication, specifically within domestic and GBV service delivery (Tipton 2018) and no comprehensive literature review to date. This article therefore proposes a scoping review of interpreting with survivors of GBV and sex trafficking in community contexts, with the aim of collecting existing empirical studies and theoretical contributions and identifying research gaps. After describing data and methods used to conduct the review, main topics emerging from the collected literature will be thematically divided in four subtopics and analysed. Finally, preliminary reflections and conclusions will be drawn.

## 1. Data and methods used to conduct the scoping review

To conduct this scoping review, papers, book chapters and handbooks on interpreting in contexts of GBV and sex trafficking in English, French, Italian, and Spanish were collected. First, T&I journals were selected from the *Riviste di Classe A* (A class peer-reviewed scientific journals) list, published on the Anvur (Italian national agency for the evaluation of university and research) website in November 2024. These journals are: *Interpres*; *Interpreting*; *Intralingua Online Translation Journal*; *MediAzioni*; *Meta Journal des Traducteurs*; *Monografías de Traducción e Interpretación*; *The Interpreter and Translator Trainer*; *Translation and Interpreting Studies*; *Translation Studies*.

The online databases of these journals were systematically searched. Whenever possible, the online search tool was used to search for the terms 'violence', 'gender', 'trafficking'; otherwise, articles dealing with the topics of interpreting, GBV and sex trafficking were manually searched. For *Meta*, which publishes mostly in French other than English, the term *genre* was searched for. For *MediAzioni*, which also publishes in Italian, the terms *interpretazione*, *mediazione*, *violenza*, *tratta* were added to the search.

The same search in English was done on the online repositories of the following journals: *Target: International Journal of Translation Studies*; *The International Journal of Interpreter Education*; *Perspectives, Studies in Translation Theory and Practice*; *The Journal of Interpretation*. These journals "provide a large number of studies for the search and are reliable in terms of the quality of publications" (Acosta Vicente 2023: 44). Finally, I searched through the issues of: *Bulletin - Institute of Translation/Interpreting*; *International Journal of Translation, Interpretation, and Applied Linguistics*; *Language and Intercultural Communication*; *New Voices in Translation Studies*; *Sendebarr: Revista de Traducción e Interpretación*<sup>3</sup>; *The Interpreters' Newsletter*, classified by Anvur as scientific journals.

3 In Spanish, the expression *interpretación en los servicios públicos* refers to a form of communication between public services and people who don't speak the language, migrants, tourists, and deaf people (Abril Martí 2006).

For more contributions in Italian, the terms *interpretazione, mediazione, violenza, tratta* were searched for on Google Scholar. A second search in English was done on Google Scholar, for articles containing the words ‘interpreting’, ‘violence’, ‘trafficking’. A third search was done by adding ‘public service interpreting’ and ‘community interpreting’. This resulted in articles, chapters and handbooks from related fields (medicine, nursing, social work), which were selected if ‘interpreting’ or ‘interpreter’ were mentioned in the body of the text, even if interpreting was not the focus of the article. More contributions were collected by reading through the references cited in other papers.

Inclusion criteria for the review were:

1. Study population was comprised of community interpreters/mediators with experience working with survivors of GBV, sex trafficking and trauma;
2. Study population was comprised of service providers with experience working with interpreters and survivors of GBV, sex trafficking and trauma;
3. The study was published in English, French, Italian or Spanish;
4. Articles provided theoretical contributions on the role of interpreters in facilitating access to services.

Contributions were collected between January and March 2025. Most focus on interpreters working in GBV contexts with migrant and refugee women; a few on interpreters working with deaf survivors; others on interpreting with migrant women survivors of sex trafficking.

## 2. Analysis of results

In this section the results of the literature review will be analysed, by dividing the collected theoretical contributions and empirical research by main topics covered in different sub-sections. There is of course some overlap, as collected literature deals with more than one topic at a time. The main themes covered in relation to interpreting with survivors are: specific characteristics of interpreting in contexts of GBV and sex trafficking (section 2.1); interpreter’s role, namely in relation to the concepts of neutrality and impartiality vs empathetic engagement (section 2.2); exposure to trauma and risk of vicarious traumatising (section 2.3); specialised training in interpreting for survivors of GBV and sex trafficking (section 2.4).

### 2.1 Interpreting gender-based violence and sex trafficking: specific skills and development of the subdiscipline

Between 2012 and 2014, the SOS VICS (Speak out for Support) project (Del Pozo-Triviño *et al.* 2014; Del Pozo-Triviño *et al.* 2015; Del Pozo-Triviño 2017; Del Pozo-Triviño/Fernandes Del Pozo 2018) assessed the availability of interpreters working with migrant women survivors of GBV in Spain, by carrying out interviews with survivors, agents, and experts from legal, police, healthcare, and social settings, and distributing a survey to

interpreters. The survey analysis showed that the presence of interpreters is not guaranteed at all stages and in all settings (Del Pozo-Triviño/Toledano Buendía 2016). Moreover, interpreters are not required to be qualified or have specific training to assist survivors (Del Pozo-Triviño/Blasco Mayor 2015). Service providers stated that interpreters intervene in meetings with comments or advice, speak with survivors without then translating, or don't know the specific terminology (Del Pozo-Triviño/Toledano Buendía 2016). The study also revealed a lack of separate spaces for interviewing survivors, the use of multiple interpreters along the way, and a general lack of adherence to ethical principles (*Ibid.*). Many of the professionals interviewed were unaware of what the role of the interpreter was (Valero-Garcés/Lázaro Gutiérrez 2016), claimed that they don't inform the interpreters about the interviews they will participate in (Borja Albi 2015; Valero-Garcés *et al.* 2015), and had different, even conflicting expectations regarding the training they need. As for the strategies used by interpreters, the study found that interpreters summarise users' words or select parts of speech, which may indicate a lack of preparation, especially if the interpreter avoids translating specialised terms. The study highlighted many shortcomings in providing adequate language assistance to survivors of violence, with solutions such as employing non-professional interpreters or asking the victim to bring their own interpreter. Interviews with 12 survivors confirmed that institutional resources allocated to cover their linguistic needs were scarce and non-professionalised, with women having to bring a person they trusted to act as the interpreter, which had repercussions on their ability to express themselves and access information. Women reported feeling re-victimised because interpreters lacked a gender perspective and blamed them for what had happened. Toledano Buendía (2021) highlights that re-victimisation also happens when women are not informed about their rights and options, are forced to communicate in a language they haven't mastered and if they are poorly treated by interpreters and case workers.

Lázaro Gutiérrez (2018a, 2018b) analysed conversations in medical consultations related to GBV, to reflect on the training of interpreters. Findings suggest that interpreters lack training about specific terminology and the tools to face the emotional impact of working in these settings. The study "Linguistic mediation for development cooperation" (Del Pozo-Triviño *et al.* 2020) was conducted in Spain with the aim of identifying linguistic and cultural barriers between Spanish NGO staff and migrant users, observing good practices, possible violations of human rights and highlighting training needs for language mediation. Results show that there are not enough interpreters to meet the linguistic needs of NGOs; interpreters complained that they don't know how to handle emotionally charged interviews, while case workers perceive that their message is not adequately conveyed. The study highlighted that NGOs often resort to the use of volunteers to act as interpreters, which aggravates the situation of survivors and can result in a violation of their rights. Interpreters and other professionals claimed that proper training focussed on managing emotions, codes of ethics, and interpreting technique would help in providing a better response.

McWilliams/Yarnell (2013) researched support provided to Black and Minority Ethnic women in the context of domestic violence in Northern Ireland, and observed that women often face isolation, language barriers, unfamiliarity with laws and services, and institutional racism, which act as barriers in help-seeking. Moreover, interpretation is not always available at first points of contact for domestic violence.

The "ASPIRE" project (Sullivan *et al.* 2023) conducted in Australia between 2015 and 2016 included interviews with 57 service providers, 46 refugee and migrant wom-

en who had experienced family violence, and a focus group discussion with 4 interpreters. The study found few interpreters trained about GBV and a lack of interpreters available for languages of lesser diffusion. Case workers perceived a conflict of interest when interpreters were called to interpret both for the victim and the perpetrator. Service providers reported being stressed about interpreter scarcity, which can negatively impact service delivery, confidentiality and women's safety. Moreover, a lack of female interpreters caused difficulties for survivors to talk about physical violence, while male interpreters reported difficulties in referring content that they perceived to be inappropriate or sensitive. Women also described difficulties in talking about their experience to culturally insensitive services (Murray *et al.* 2019).

Gender symmetry between interpreter and survivors is a disputed point in literature. Määttä (2022) used data collected by the European project “Co-creating a Counselling Method for Refugee Women GBV Survivors” (Lilja 2019; Lilja *et al.* 2020) aimed at 7 NGOs providing counselling to migrant and refugee women in six EU member states. The study showed that female interpreters are not always available, even though they are preferred by clients, especially for medical examinations or when the woman is suspected to be a victim of trafficking. In the study, the interpreter's gender is only specified when recounting problems—that is, when the interpreter is a man. As shown by Bodzer (2015) the relevance of gender when interpreting for survivors of GBV depends on each specific work context. Bodzer collected data through interviews, questionnaires aimed at interpreters, social workers, lawyers, psychologists, coordinators of emergency centres and shelters, and survivors, and carried out observations in the Court of GBV of Madrid. The results confirm that gender shapes the interpreting process. A study conducted by Baroni (2022) on 6 female mediators working with survivors of violence and sex trafficking in Italy, showed that mediators think that gender symmetry must be respected when working with survivors, as a way of building empathy and trust and disclosing sensitive topics more easily (Baroni/Torresi 2025). Conversely, gender is not a salient factor for the 12 women interviewed in the framework of the SOS-VICS project (Toledano Buendía 2022). According to the “Samira” project conducted in 2017 in Italy with 72 participants who work in healthcare services, NGOs, anti-violence centres, anti-trafficking networks, and the reception system, female mediators play a key role in helping women receive information and support, voice their needs and trauma (Pasquero/Palladino 2017). The ongoing research project conducted in Italy since 2018 by Rete D.i.Re and UNHCR highlights the importance of including female mediators among the staff of anti-violence centres to foster mutual understanding and trust (D.i.Re/UNHCR 2020).

Difficulties in accessing support services with adequate linguistic assistance have also been reported by deaf women survivors of GBV. Mastrocinque *et al.* (2017) interviewed 14 deaf survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV) in the US. Participants reported a lack of information regarding IPV and lack of access to specialised services. The absence of sign language interpreters resulted in obstacles for survivors in expressing themselves, especially if a family member or the perpetrator acted as the interpreter.

## 2.2 Between restrained empathy and detached impartiality: interpreters' role negotiation amid conflicting expectations

The issue of impartiality vs active engagement of the community interpreter is a crucial one in contexts of GBV and sex trafficking, where the position of the interpreter is possibly aggravated by the emotional burden of dealing with traumatic events. In community contexts, especially those characterised by extreme situations, interpreters must juggle institutions' claims, training standards, human values, and service users' expectations (Rudvin 2014). Although expectations of complete impartiality have been proved unattainable, interpreters should also refrain from taking sides or taking on an advocacy role (Rudvin 2002).

In the context of GBV, it is the contention of some scholars that community interpreters should favour a more engaged positioning, rooted in feminism. According to Norma/Garcia-Caro (2016) interpreting with survivors of violence requires a stance against violence, which can be facilitated by a feminist education. In this view, community interpreters mainly fulfil a social function (Anderson 2002), whose effectiveness relies more on cooperation and integration between interpreters and other professionals, rather than on exercises of impartiality or neutrality, as also suggested by Tipton (2010, 2017). This view is supported by feminist literature which proposes an understanding of the interpreter's role as "relational" and is based on Eighinger/Karlin (2011: 46), who believe that "the system that best accommodates the diverse factors that interpreters must weigh and manage, including their own ethics and values, is a feminist-relational one". Lucero García (2015) argues that interpreters working with survivors can benefit from applying an intersectional perspective<sup>4</sup> to their work. Intersectional interpreting conceived from an ethical reflection can facilitate women's access to justice, by ensuring that the interpreter is conscious of the multitude of factors at play in GBV, and is working responsibly and ethically.

Interpreters move on the fine line between restrained empathy and detached impartiality: lack of empathy, commitment, or neutrality can cause re-victimisation of women. Conversely, intense involvement – which happens especially when interpreters take on functions that don't correspond to them or take providers' responsibility (Bancroft 2017) – can raise mistaken expectations in survivors and generate new relations of dependency, hindering their empowerment and agency (Toledano Buendía 2019). According to Toledano Buendía (2019), interpreters must then strike a balance between distancing and lacking empathy vs intense involvement, which makes interpreters activists who intervene on behalf of the victims. Empathic engagement is necessary to work with survivors, however, if enacted unconsciously in emotionally charged situations, can become draining over long periods of time (Costa 2024).

Literature collected for this review shows different expectations on the role of the interpreter by service providers and users. Määttä (2022) highlights that interpreters often perform roles outside their professional boundaries. The same emerged

4 The concept of intersectionality, coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in the field of legal studies, explains how multiple factors intersect and cause discrimination. For migrant and refugee women victims of violence, discrimination stems from their gender, migrant status and victimisation (Lucero García 2015).

from Sullivan *et al.* (2023: 5): service providers defined interpreters as “cultural and institutional brokers” (but criticised them for being too “steeped in cultural norms” or “entrenched in community” when they overstepped professional standards), while interpreters seemed to prefer a more impartial role. A study by Tipton (2023) highlights that interpreters who work in charity services for survivors of domestic abuse in England report feeling vulnerable when their impartiality is challenged, for example when they are asked to perform roles outside their professional mandate, or when they feel physically at risk (e.g. in the presence of an abuser).

Conflicting expectations, lack of role definition and scarcity of resources leave interpreters to be exposed to pressure to perform a variety of tasks while working in emotionally demanding contexts, often leading to exposure to vicarious trauma (Määttä 2022).

### 2.3 Interpreters exposure to trauma and risk of vicarious traumatisation

Interpreting in contexts of GBV and sex trafficking can be defined as *extreme interpreting* (Bambarén-Call *et al.* 2012): interpreting in events involving survivors of torture, trauma, and sexual violence, which can push interpreters to be more empathic and emotionally involved (González Campanella 2023a). Interpreting for survivors poses specific challenges, such as controlling emotions and developing strategies to avoid re-traumatising survivors (Bancroft *et al.* 2016). Interpreters can face psychological contamination or excessive emotional implication, feeling disturbed and frustrated or over-identifying with survivors, which leads to making inadequate decisions (Aguilera Ávila 2015), or rejecting survivors, which results in inaccuracy when interpreting incoherent descriptions, contradictory statements or rude utterances, all frequent in survivors’ discourse (Del Pozo-Triviño/Toledano Buendía 2016). If an empathic bond can help the interpreter establish a relationship of trust, especially when dealing with intense emotions or physical danger, unregulated empathy can be a cause of distress if the other person’s pain is internalised (Rudvin/Carfagnini 2020), possibly leading to vicarious trauma (British Medical Association 2024). Interpreters translating distress narratives of survivors of trauma and abuse can suffer from psychological, emotional, physical, and professional trauma (Valero-Garcés 2005; Ndongo-Keller 2015). Since interpreters occupy a central position in the communication between survivors and service providers, often an emotionally intense relationship between them and the service user is established (Valero-Garcés 2005). This leads to feeling that the intervention depends solely on them, a responsibility that can be perceived as a burden (Aguilera Ávila 2015). Past exposure to trauma can also cause excessive emotional involvement of the interpreter, which, together with the absence of psychological support, can impact the quality of their work. Sullivan *et al.* (2023) highlight that structural shortcomings and lack of training increase emotional and psychological strain on interpreters. The study confirms previous findings about lack of consideration of the impact of sensitive content on interpreters (Bontempo/Malcolm 2012; Lai *et al.* 2015; Mehus/Becher 2016).

Butler (2008) interviewed 3 female medical interpreters working with rape survivors. Interpreters received no preparation nor psychological support, leading to

overidentification with the women or distancing, and repercussions on interpreting quality and interpreters' wellbeing. Guo (2024) conducted semi-structured interviews and document analysis to study public service interpreting practice with survivors in Australia. Interviewees reported post-interview trauma and flashbacks that sometimes developed into burnout for repeated exposure to traumatic content. Women interpreters reported empathising more easily with women survivors. Some interpreters reported compassion fatigue and physical and mental exhaustion. However, some also reported professional and posttraumatic growth after working with challenging cases. The same emerged from the interpreters working with Ukrainian refugees in Italy interviewed by Polidoro (2025). After their 2022 study about female Nigerian cultural mediators working in the anti-trafficking field in Italy, Tessitore *et al.* (2022) advocate for the creation of thinking spaces for mediators, to protect them from vicarious traumatisation and promote awareness about the complexities of their work. Interviews revealed that: mediators find difficulties in separating their private life from their work life; difficulties may be increased by working with compatriots because the relationship can assume a sort of mother-daughter form. Similar results emerged from data collected by Pesare in a detention centre for undocumented migrants in Italy, through interviews with mediators, recorded interactions, and observations (Rudvin/Pesare 2015). Data highlighted that the Nigerian mediator working with survivors of sex trafficking struggled with professional fatigue, due to the difficulty of striking a balance between private identity and professional identity and considering both users' and institutions' expectations. In Italy, mediators are encouraged to be pro-active in the interactions, which—together with the fact that often mediators and service users belong to the same ethnic group—increases the likelihood of bonding and identification, which becomes a stressor for the mediator (Rudvin/Carfagnini 2020).

To better serve the needs of clients who have experienced trauma, some scholars suggest deploying a trauma-informed approach (Bancroft 2017; González Campanella 2022, 2023a, 2023b). Trauma-informed interpreting combines elements that seek to empower survivors of trauma and protect interpreters from experiencing adverse psycho-emotional reactions (Crezee *et al.* 2011; Valero-Garcés 2015). By being aware of traumatised clients' specific needs, using controlled empathy and self-care techniques, interpreters can ensure a non-judgemental and unbiased attitude and better serve the client needs (González Campanella 2023a).

#### 2.4 Specialised training in interpreting for survivors of GBV and sex trafficking: best practices and resources

Specialised training is crucial to adequately support survivors of GBV and sex trafficking. Thanks to training, interpreters can learn specific terminology (Sullivan *et al.* 2023), acquire knowledge about GBV, and better manage the psychological and emotional impact of interpreting violence. To competently assist survivors, interpreters must understand GBV as rooted in a heteropatriarchal context that discriminates against women, recognising the common signs of violence, learning how violence is (re)produced (Abril Martí 2015; Pérez Freire/Casado Neira 2015). It is therefore imperative that interpreters have adequate training so as not to further harm migrant

women, especially if they find themselves in stigmatised contexts such as GBV or prostitution (Naredo Molero 2015). Without training in gender perspectives, interpreters will not be able to reach their goal: communication under equal conditions (Reimóndez Meilán 2017; Toledano Buendía 2019).

Several specialised training sources have been created over the years. Among the first, a pilot project launched in Canada in the 1990s to train specialised interpreters for two domestic violence courts and the Women's College Hospital in Toronto (Abraham/Oda 2000). This project was accompanied by another to train interpreters working with male perpetrators of violence (Oda/Joyette 2003). The training course aimed to make interpreters aware of their role and responsibilities within the program, understand the objectives of support programs for abusive men and apply a feminist view to the phenomenon of GBV by becoming aware of the attitudes that may belittle or justify violence. The course recommended the application of stricter guidelines to define interpreters' responsibilities, role, and code of ethics.

“Breaking through the language barrier: Empowering refugee and immigrant women to combat domestic and family violence through cultural and language training” is a training course designed in 2010 in Australia (Hale 2011), which included language and cultural training on women's rights and GBV and on interpreting in domestic violence contexts. With the SOS-VICS project, the training needs of interpreters working on GBV were highlighted and resources for interpreters' and service providers' training were created (Borja Albi/Del Pozo-Triviño 2015), focussing on specific terminology, GBV, counselling, risk assessment, procedures followed in legal contexts, and the healthcare system.

The handbook “Breaking Silence. Interpreting for victim services, a training manual” (Bancroft *et al.* 2016) focusses on a trauma-oriented approach for interpreters. Tipton (2020) addresses issues such as the definition of violence, emotion management in mediated interviewing, and techniques to prevent re-traumatisation of survivors. More training resources were created as an output of the JUSTSIGNS2 project, focussing on language services for deaf women and minority language speaking survivors (Cabeza-Pereiro *et al.* 2024).

### 3. Discussion and conclusions

Papers, chapters and handbooks collected for this literature review highlight that interpreting in GBV and sex trafficking contexts entails working in an array of environments, with different professionals and communicative settings. To familiarise themselves with the concepts of GBV and sex trafficking, master specific terminology, and handle complex emotions, community interpreters need specialised training. Some scholars suggest such training be informed by a feminist intersectional perspective (Lucero García 2015; Norma/Garcia-Caro 2016), to fully comprehend what surviving violence entails. Feminist interpreting (Susam-Saraeva *et al.* 2023) has been suggested by some scholars as a viable solution to support migrant women accessing services (Marey-Castro/Del Pozo-Triviño 2020). Even though not all studies agree on the importance of gender symmetry between interpreters and survivors, most report a preference for female interpreters to better understand the needs of women survivors.

A trauma-informed approach is also recommended by literature, to avoid re-traumatisation in survivors and protect interpreters from vicarious trauma (Bancroft 2017). Training also helps interpreters deal with conflicting expectations about their role and professional boundaries, managing their positioning between impartiality and controlled empathy, with the aim of offering the best support and give voice to survivors.

Unfortunately, literature shows that the provision of language support services in GBV and sex trafficking contexts seems to be scattered and not always professionalised, leaving survivors to deal with ad hoc solutions, which end up depriving them of their voice and rights. Community interpreters employed in services and spaces that provide support are often confronted with inadequate working conditions (Del Pozo-Triviño *et al.* 2023), performing precarious and underpaid work, which compromises the smooth running of their work and ongoing training.

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