Understanding How Migrants Leverage Online Spaces to Express, Evolve, and Enhance Their Cultural Identities

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Executive Summary

Background

Migration flows to OECD countries, including Canada, the United States, and Germany, have surged recently. While these destinations offer economic opportunities and established migrant communities, systemic barriers persist. Migrants frequently contend with wage inequality, language obstacles, and discrimination, hindering their ability to fully integrate and thrive (Agyekum et al., 2020; OHCHR, 2024; see also Berry, 1997). Refugees and undocumented migrants face even greater challenges, including legal uncertainties and heightened vulnerabilities (Miller & Rasmussen, 2017; Menjívar, 2016). In response, migrant-led online communities have emerged as vital resources, fostering resilience and solidarity in adversity (Kars-Unluoglu et al., 2022; Solmaz, 2020). These virtual spaces enable migrants to share essential resources, such as job opportunities, legal guidance, and healthcare information, while nurturing cultural connections that preserve their identities and traditions. Furthermore, online platforms serve as safe havens for advocacy and collective empowerment, allowing migrants to amplify their voices and challenge discrimination. Despite the growing importance of migrants' digital networks, the literature has yet to comprehensively examine how migrants utilize online platforms to express, evolve, and advance their cultural identities and classify the gaps in our understanding of this phenomenon.

Objectives

1. Identifying the migrant groups (i.e., immigrants, temporary migrants, refugees, undocumented migrants) forming online communities and the platforms used (e.g., social media, forums, blogs).
2. Exploring migrants' online activities and their role in expressing and evolving cultural identity.
3. Understanding how these online communities contribute to migrants' social advancement.
4. Highlighting research gaps in the study of online migrant communities (Munn et al., 2018).

Methodology

The scoping review used a systematic, iterative approach to analyze empirical studies on migrants' use of online platforms since 1993 when internet access broadened and enabled virtual communities to form.

Search Methods.

- **Databases**: Comprehensive searches were conducted in Sociological Abstracts, PsycINFO, CINAHL, ERIC, and the Web of Science Core Collection. Search terms included concepts related to migration (e.g., immigrants, refugees) and online communities (e.g., social media).
- **Iterative Refinement**: Initial searches were piloted and refined to broaden the focus from Canadian migrants to international populations, ensuring a broader literature representation.

Eligibility Criteria.

- **Population**: Studies focused on self-organized online communities formed and maintained by migrants, including immigrants, temporary migrants, refugees, and undocumented migrants.
- **Contexts**: Migrant communities using online mediums or platforms like social media, forums, blogs, and specialized websites where significant collaboration and resource-sharing occur.
- **Methodologies**: Empirical studies using qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approaches.

Data Collection and Screening.

- **Phases of Screening**: Articles were screened in multiple stages using Covidence software to remove duplicates, assess eligibility through abstracts, and evaluate full texts for inclusion.
- **Inter-Rater Agreement**: Disagreements between reviewers were resolved through discussion, with oversight by the principal investigator.

Data Extraction and Analysis.

- **Variables Extracted**: Information including article date, migrant categories, platforms used, cultural expression, cultural evolution, and social advancement.
- **Analysis Tools**: Visual data mapping (e.g., publication trend, platform usage) was performed using SPSS v29 and Excel, and qualitative themes were identified through content analysis.

Results

Descriptive Findings.

- **Source Dates:** Research on online migrant communities has grown steadily since the early 2000s.
- **Migrant Groups**: Immigrants (57.3%) and temporary migrants (30.6%) are the most frequently studied groups, while refugees (12.1%) and undocumented migrants remain underrepresented.
- **Online Platforms**: Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter dominate. Specialized websites (e.g., MissyUSA) and messaging apps (e.g., Telegram) also provide critical resources and connections, although emerging technologies like decentralized platforms (i.e., blockchain and peer-to-peer technologies) remain underexplored.
- **Cultural Expression**: Migrants express cultural identity online mainly by sharing visual and textual content, communicating in native languages, and promoting cultural traditions in their networks.
- **Cultural Evolution**: Migrants navigate transnational and hybrid identities, evidencing acculturation or integration while sometimes resisting assimilation to preserve their cultural heritages.
- **Social Advancement**: Online spaces foster social capital (e.g., jobs, relationships) and mobilize political activism (e.g., advocating for migrant rights and building networks that empower collective action), while sometimes supporting economic initiatives (e.g., fundraising for community projects).

Qualitative Findings.

- **Emergent Themes**: 1) social media and acculturation, 2) diaspora identity and activism, 3) digital resilience and social support, 4) transnational communication and networks, 5) cultural integration and digital spaces, and 6) empowerment through online communities.

Key Messages

- Online platforms enable migrants to maintain cultural ties and social connectivity, advocate for their rights, and build social capital (Ansar & Maitra, 2024).
- Digital exclusion, online misinformation, and surveillance are key challenges. Addressing these barriers requires collaborative efforts to create inclusive, secure digital ecosystems.
- **Policy and Practice Implications**
  - **Digital Access and Literacy**: Policymakers should prioritize affordable internet access, digital literacy training, and culturally relevant resources for underserved populations.
  - **Privacy Protections**: Robust data privacy laws and decentralized platforms are essential to shield migrants from surveillance and censorship, especially in authoritarian contexts.
  - **Community-Led Initiatives**: Programs should help empower migrants to co-create content and manage online spaces, ensuring platforms reflect their needs and aspirations.
- **Research Implications**
  - Future research should address the underrepresentation of vulnerable migrant groups, explore the role of emerging technologies (e.g., decentralized platforms), and examine the intersectional challenges of gender, socioeconomic status, and digital access.
  - Longitudinal studies on generational shifts in cultural identity within online spaces will offer deeper insights into transnational belonging.

Conclusion

This review underscores the critical role of migrant-led online spaces in empowering migrants to express and navigate their cultural identities and advance their social standings. While opportunities abound, challenges such as digital inequity and misinformation must be addressed through interdisciplinary approaches. Bridging policy, practice, and research will foster more inclusive and equitable digital ecosystems, supporting migrants' thriving in increasingly interconnected and digitalized societies.

Full Report

Background

The global number of refugees reached 43.4 million in 2024, the highest number ever recorded (USA for UNHCR, 2024). In 2023, migration flows to OECD countries also reached unprecedented levels, with approximately 6.5 million migrants obtaining permanent residency across member nations, including Canada, France, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom (OECD, 2024). These countries are prominent destinations for migrants, offering economic opportunities, political stability, and established migrant communities. Despite this, migrants across diverse statuses – from permanent or temporary residents to refugees and undocumented individuals – face significant hurdles (before and) during settlement, including barriers to employment, wage inequality, language difficulties, unfamiliar cultural norms, legal complexities, limited healthcare access, and experiences of discrimination (e.g., Agyekum et al., 2020; Berry, 1997; Berry & Hou, 2016; Canova et al., 2024; Goldring & Landolt, 2011; Gonzales, 2011; Kentikelenis et al., 2015; Lu et al., 2018; Menjívar, 2016; Miller & Rasmussen, 2017; OHCHR, 2024; Pérez et al., 2012; Phillimore, 2011; Weichselbaumer, 2016; Yu & Shandu, 2017). Such obstacles can impede migrants' belonging and well-being (e.g., Agudelo-Suárez et al., 2021; Berry, 1997; Drydakis, 2021; Esses et al., 2017; Hajak et al., 2021; OECD, 2024; Szaboova et al., 2021; Xia & Ma, 2020; Yarwood et al., 2021).

Various migrant communities have turned to online spaces to collectively mobilize to express, evolve, and enhance their cultural and social statuses. Not limited by geography, online platforms provide unique opportunities for migrants to mobilize as a collective. For instance, some Indian immigrants living in the United States have created online communities to share culture, politics, and news, helping them bridge the gap caused by physical separation from their home country (Skop & Adams, 2009). Additionally, online communities act as hubs for information and resource-sharing. For instance, Turkish migrants created an online community to share resources regarding navigating moving to their host country (England) and provide advice on childcare options and where to live (Kars-Unluoglu et al., 2022). These communities are indispensable for engagement and empowerment, amplifying migrant voices and fostering a shared sense of purpose (Solmaz, 2020). For instance, online communities like MissyUSA have become vital for building and maintaining social capital among female Korean immigrants. These women create collaborative environments by sharing their challenges and experiences to offer mutual guidance, share resources, and navigate their identities within host countries (Oh, 2016). At the same time, immigrant-led non-profits have leveraged online platforms to raise awareness and mobilize around important political causes (Brown, 2014).

Objectives

Despite the growing importance of online communities for migrants, the breadth and nature of the literature on how migrants use online platforms to express, evolve, and advance their cultural identities have yet to be comprehensively reviewed. This scoping review maps the literature, detailing the methodologies and key findings (Munn et al., 2018). Specifically, we examine:

1. The types of migrant groups (i.e., immigrants, temporary migrants, refugees, undocumented migrants) forming online communities and the platforms used (e.g., social media, forums, blogs).
2. Migrants' online activities and their role in expressing and evolving cultural identity.
3. How these online communities contribute to migrants' social advancement.
4. The research gaps and future directions in studying online migrant communities.

Methods

Phase 1: Eligibility Criteria

Preliminary searches were conducted in Sociological Abstracts, Web of Science, and Medline, and sets from each database were sent to the team to review and help inform the development of the eligibility criteria via an iterative process. For instance, one change was shifting our focus from Canadian immigrants to international migrants. Preliminary searches revealed a diversity of migrants utilizing online spaces, with only a few articles explicitly addressing Canadian immigrants. Many articles focused on diasporic communities without consistently specifying migrants' origin or host countries. In addition to immigrants, migrants with diverse statuses were represented in the literature, including temporary migrants, refugees, and undocumented migrants. These adjustments ensured that the scoping review remained relevant and representative of the available literature. The preliminary searches led to the following eligibility parameters:

Population: Migrants who chose to move to another country for permanent residence/settlement (i.e., immigrants), are temporarily residing in another country for reasons such as employment (e.g., migrant workers, expatriates) or education (e.g., international students), were forced to flee their countries (e.g., refugees, asylum-seekers), or have moved from another country and lack legal status.

Spaces/Contexts: A migrant group that has independently formed, managed, and directed its community online. The online communities are self-formed and self-governed, with much of their activity and organizing occurring in virtual (*vs*. offline) spaces.

Types of Sources: Empirical evidence (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods approaches) documenting the experiences, accounts, and communications of online migrant communities. Secondary sources (e.g., reviews and syntheses) relevant to our topic were not included.

Date Limit: 1993 to 2024 (not applied during the search but screened). In 1993, the internet became widely adopted by the public, enabling virtual communities to form. Thus, some research on online migrant communities (e.g., concerning websites, forums, blogs) could have been published as early as the 1990s.

See Table 1 for more details about the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Table 1

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Scoping Review

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Migrants who have moved from one country to another, *whether they chose to move to another country* for permanent residence/settlement (i.e., immigrants), are *temporarily residing in another country* for reasons such as employment (e.g., migrant workers) or education (e.g., international students), were *forced to flee their countries* (e.g., refugees, asylum-seekers), or *lack legal status*.	Exclude natives to a country. Exclude temporary residents who are tourists in other countries, travelling for business, or expatriates who have retired in another country.
Online communities that have been formed by and are run, organized, directed, or comprised of migrant group(s), whether hosted on social media, online forums, websites (including government-operated sites), blogs, etc. The key is that the group is self-governed and operates online in a collective/collaborative manner.	Exclude one-way announcements/communications (e.g., a blog run by a migrant member without commenting/community involvement); exclude if the virtual community is run and directed by an organization or members other than the migrant group (e.g., government employees, community health workers, not-for-profit leaders, educators); exclude groups that operate primarily in-person; exclude online gaming communities or gaming forums; exclude virtual reality communities; no instant messaging services or other one-on-one, non-collaborative

	communication contexts *unless* a messaging app is key to the virtual community's organization/collaboration efforts.
Contains empirical evidence (e.g., quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods).	Exclude non-empirical (e.g., opinion pieces, theoretical papers without data) or secondary sources (e.g., reviews, syntheses); exclude grey literature (e.g., actual websites, influencers' pages); exclude sources on programming or training (e.g., e-health, educational modules) unless BOTH developed and run by the migrant group; exclude sources where migrant group members are randomly assigned to experimental interventions that include virtual components (unless the migrant group has developed and runs the virtual components).
Articles/sources from 1993 to 2024 (i.e., present)	Exclude articles/sources before 1993 during screening.

Phase 2: Identifying Relevant Studies

Information/Data Sources. To identify the relevant literature, a structured search was conducted for the different migrant groups (e.g., immigrants, refugees, seasonal workers, etc.) and virtual/online communities in the following databases: Sociological Abstracts (ProQuest), CINAHL (EBSCO), PsycINFO (EBSCO), ERIC (ProQuest), as well as the multidisciplinary databases Web of Science Core Collection (Clarivate). Although initially proposed for inclusion, IEEE was removed due to institutional restrictions.

Search Strategy.

***Published Literature*[1]:** The search strategy used a combination of subject headings (when available) and other search fields, such as titles and abstracts, depending on the database. A librarian developed the search, informed by relevant terms from a set of articles identified by the team. For a draft search strategy, see our protocol on OSF (https://osf.io/7p9wu/).

Study Selection.

Citations were exported from databases into Covidence. Covidence removed duplicates, and reviewers removed duplicates that Covidence missed. Before beginning Phase 1 of screening, two reviewers plus the principal investigator piloted a set of 50 sources. The principal investigator resolved disagreements, ensuring consistent application of eligibility criteria among reviewers. Using Covidence, the reviewers completed Phase 1 of screening – the initial selection of relevant sources based on titles and abstracts. The reviewers independently screened the titles and abstracts to determine if they met the inclusion criteria. Studies that did not have enough information (e.g., title only) were separated and screened based on relevance to the topic and inclusion criteria. Reviewers kept detailed records explaining why they included and excluded sources. Upon completion of Phase 1, reviewers discussed disagreements to reach a consensus; where an agreement could not be reached, the principal investigator resolved the conflicts.

The reviewers then conducted Phase 2 of screening in Covidence, examining the full texts of the items that met the eligibility criteria in Phase 1. This involved full-text retrieval (obtaining the texts) and full-text review, that is, carefully reading the texts to confirm that they meet eligibility criteria, including assessing the methodology, population, outcomes, and relevance to research objectives. Reviewers discussed

[1] As part of the iterative review process, we decided not to conduct a grey literature search due to the extensive number of articles (N = 124) extracted during the review. However, supplemental searching will be conducted during the journal write-up phase to ensure comprehensive coverage.

disagreements to reach a consensus; again, where an agreement could not be reached, the principal investigator resolved the conflicts. Reviewers kept detailed records of the reasons for excluding items.

Phase 3: The Final Selection of Sources

During Phase 3, or the final selection of sources, two reviewers completed extraction for each article, with disagreements resolved by consensus. Part 1 of the extraction process included collecting information regarding migrant status, country of origin, country of residence, online platforms used by the community and primary purpose of the community, type of data collection (i.e., quantitative or qualitative), and source date. Part 2 of the extraction process included collecting information regarding expressions of cultural identity, evolutions of cultural identity, and advancements in social status for the migrant communities. Details on specific variables can be found in our protocol, which is publicly available on OSF at https://osf.io/7p9wu/.

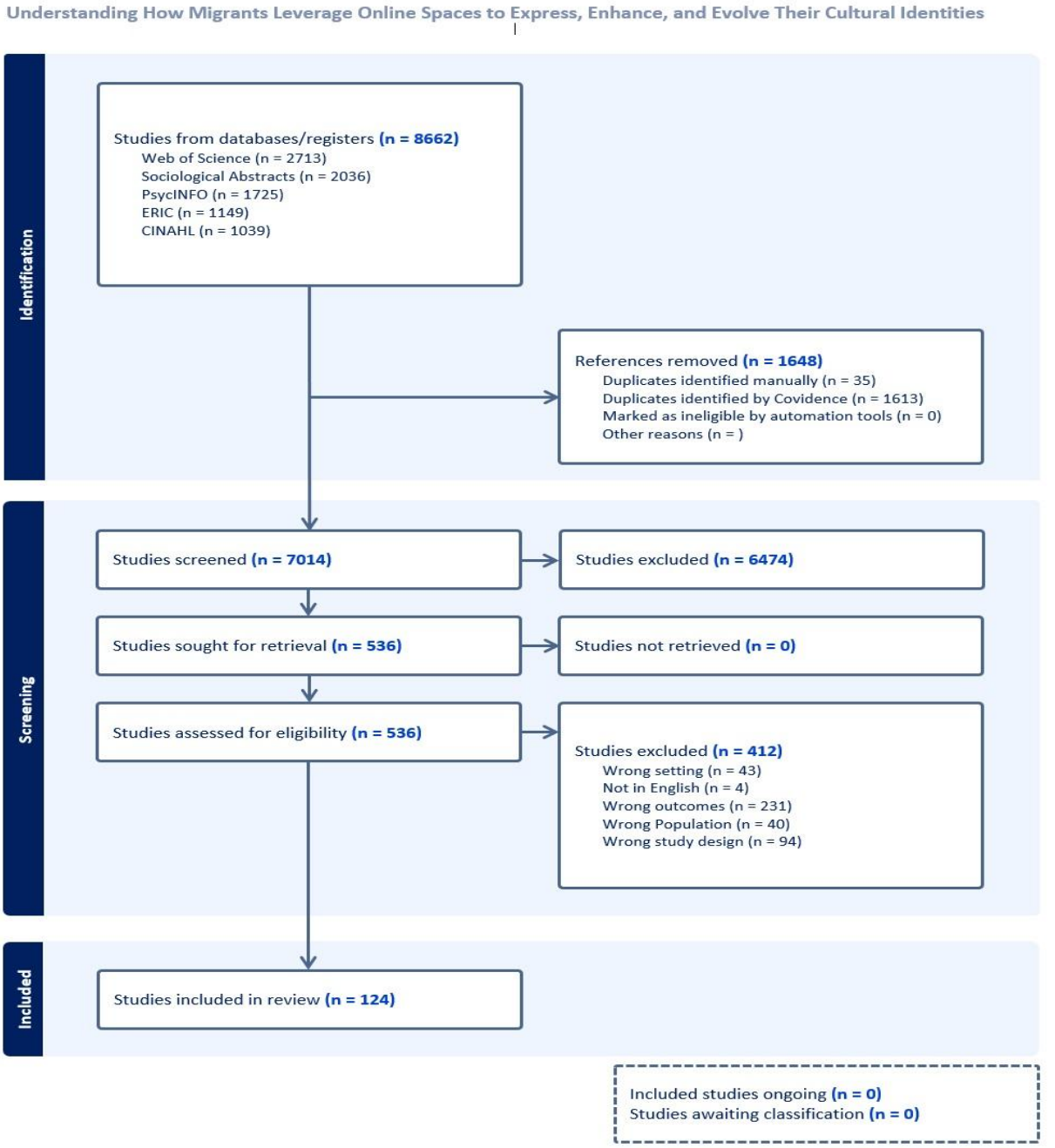
Figure 1 provides a detailed breakdown of source identification, screening, and extraction, including the number of sources removed at each stage and the number of sources advancing to the next stage.

Phase 4: Preliminary Synthesis and Outcomes

Phase 4 involved a comprehensive synthesis of the extracted data, visually mapping the findings using descriptive statistics and analyses performed in SPSS v29. This process enabled a clear representation of the data, facilitating a deeper understanding of the overall context of migrants' experiences within online communities. The visual mapping highlighted trends and patterns, laying the groundwork for a preliminary content analysis. Key article information—study objectives, methodologies, population, and outcomes—was systematically categorized into emerging themes. Building on these insights, the phase concluded with a reflective synthesis, critically examining inconsistencies in the literature, identifying significant gaps, and specifying recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

Figure 1

Identification, Screening, and Extraction of Articles for Scoping Review



Results

Extracted Items. Of the 124 articles sent for extraction and included in our scoping review (see Appendix for the complete list of articles), 57.3% were qualitative, 12.1% were quantitative, and 30.6% were mixed methods.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of articles by publication year, illustrating a clear trend over time. Specifically, articles published on this topic have gradually increased since the early 2000s, with a notable rise from 2013 onwards. The number of articles peaks sharply in 2019, followed by a slight decline, but remains relatively high through 2020–2023. The year 2024 shows a drop in articles, likely reflecting incomplete data for the current year. This pattern suggests growing research interest in the topic over the past decade, with a concentration of studies published in recent years.

Figure 2

Publication Dates for Articles Included in Scoping Review

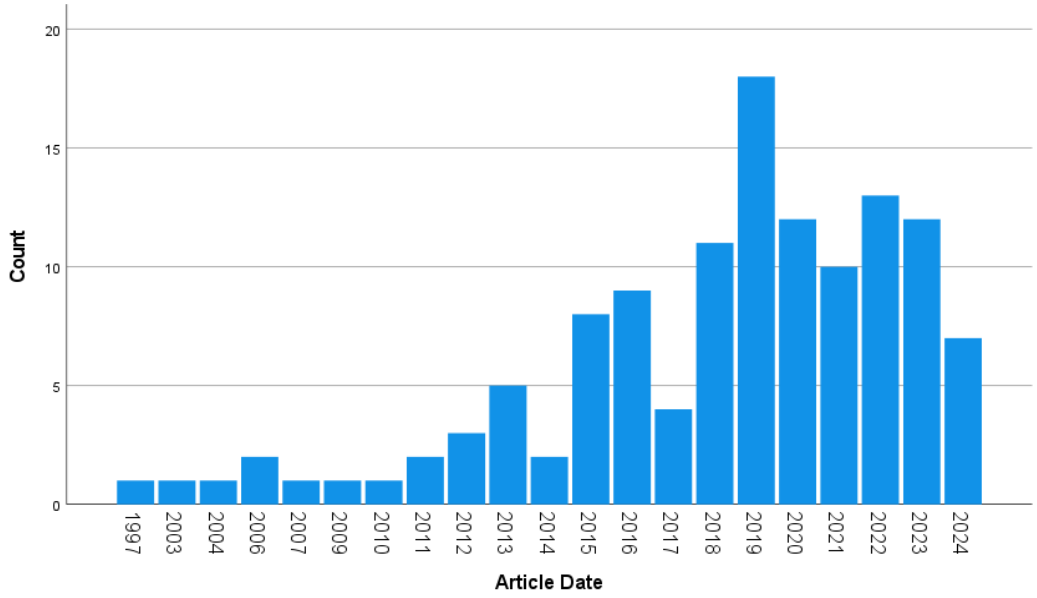
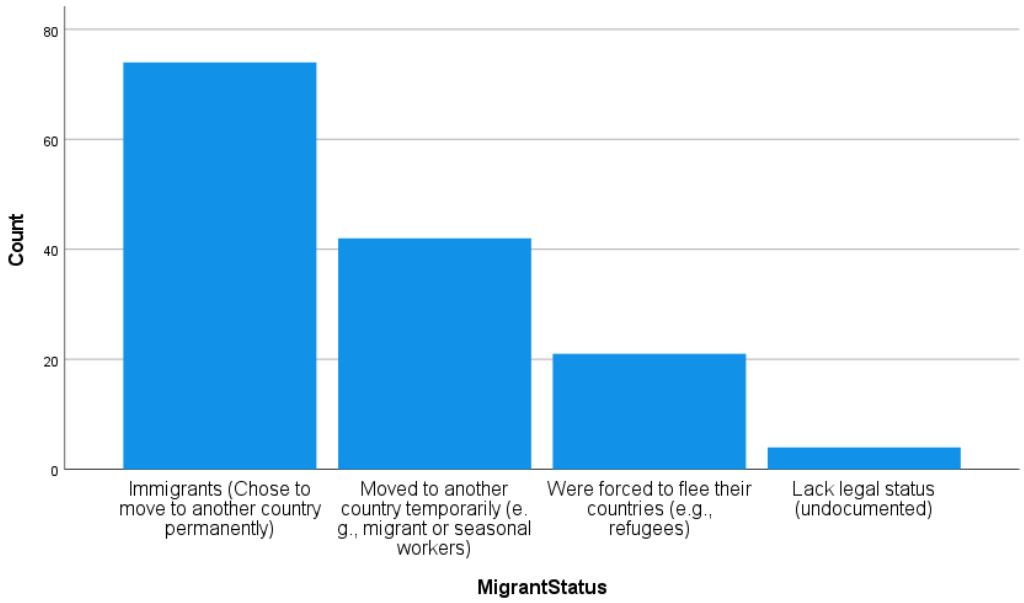


Figure 3 displays the distribution of articles based on migrant status. The most frequently studied group is immigrants, with a count of approximately 80. This is followed by studies focusing on temporary migrants, such as seasonal workers or international students, with a count of around 60. Refugees forced to flee their countries are the third most studied group, represented in approximately 30 articles. The least represented group in the literature is those who lack legal status (undocumented migrants), with fewer than 10 articles. This pattern suggests a primary focus on permanent and temporary migration in the literature, with less attention to undocumented migrants and refugees. Reasons could include the challenges of accessing these populations due to their precarious legal status and fear of exposure and ethical complexities in conducting such research. Additionally, the complexity and diversity of refugees' and undocumented migrants' experiences likely make them harder to study systematically.

Figure 3

Status of Migrants Represented in Online Communities Across Articles

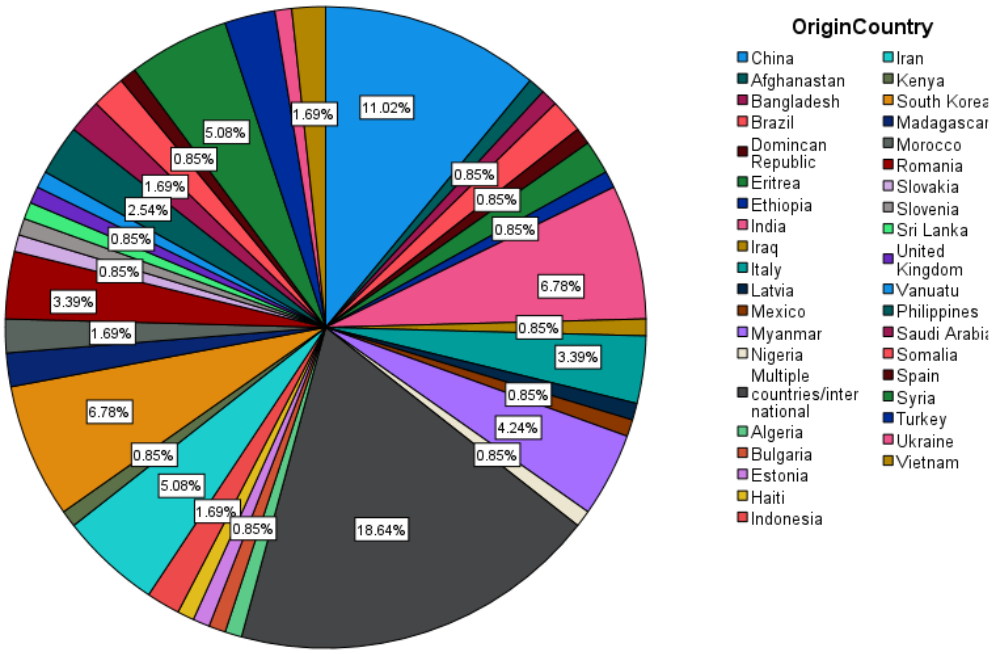


Note. Values represent frequencies or counts across articles (*N* = 124).

The pie chart in Figure 4 illustrates the countries of origin for migrants in online communities. The largest category, comprising 18.64%, represents studies focusing on online migrant communities comprised of ethnically similar migrants living in multiple countries worldwide. The rest of the studies focus on online migrant communities living in the same host country but who have emigrated specifically from China (11.02%), India (6.80%), and South Korea (6.80%), followed by Syria (5.10%), Iran (5.10%), and Myanmar (4.20%). Less research focuses on migrants from Italy, Romania, Morocco, Eritrea, Brazil, Madagascar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and the Philippines. Additionally, many countries, including Nigeria, Estonia, Iraq, Haiti, Slovakia, and Kenya, each account for less than 1% of the total. This distribution underscores the interconnected nature of migration studies and highlights the underrepresentation of migrants from smaller or less frequently studied countries.

Figure 4

Migrants' Countries of Origin Represented Across Articles

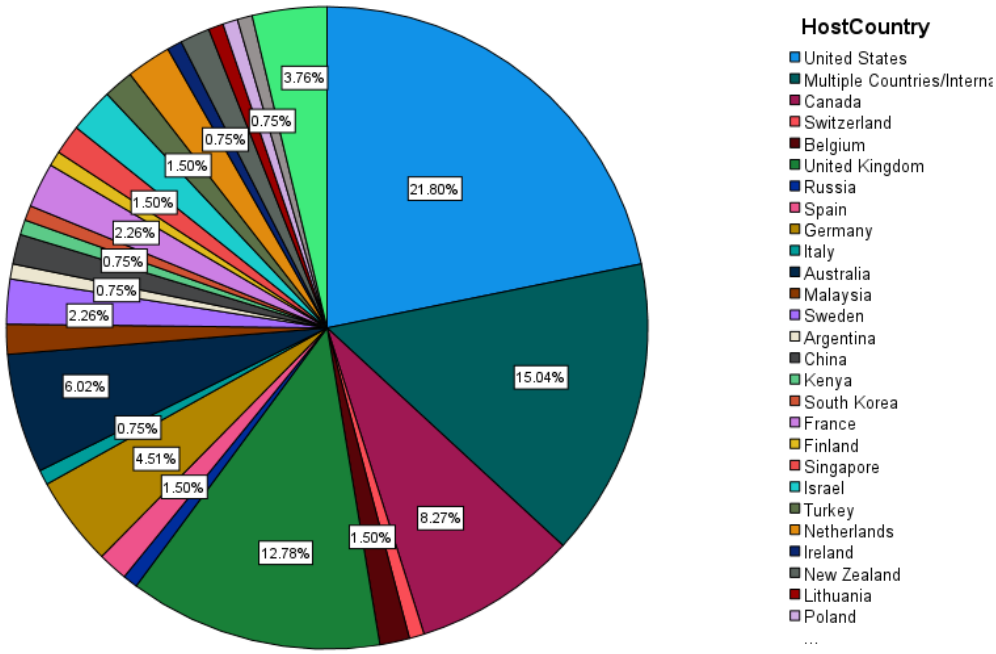


Note. Values represent frequencies or counts across articles (*N* = 124).

The pie chart in Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of migrants' host countries in the literature. The United States is the most common host country, accounting for 21.80% of the studies, reflecting its role as a significant destination for migrants and its prominence in migration research. This is followed by international online migrant communities represented by multiple countries worldwide, making up 15.04% of the studies. Other frequently studied host countries in the context of online migrant communities include the United Kingdom (12.78%), Canada (8.27%), and Australia (6.02%), each highlighting their importance as key destinations for migrants. Smaller proportions of studies focused on countries such as Germany, France, Israel, Netherlands, and Sweden, each contributing 2–5% of the total. Other host countries, including Russia, South Korea, China, Spain, Switzerland, Italy, and Ireland, represent less than 2% each. This pattern underscores the dominance of Western, English-speaking countries in migration studies and the growing recognition of global and international online migrant communities as significant contexts for understanding migration dynamics.

Figure 5

Host Countries for Migrants Across Articles



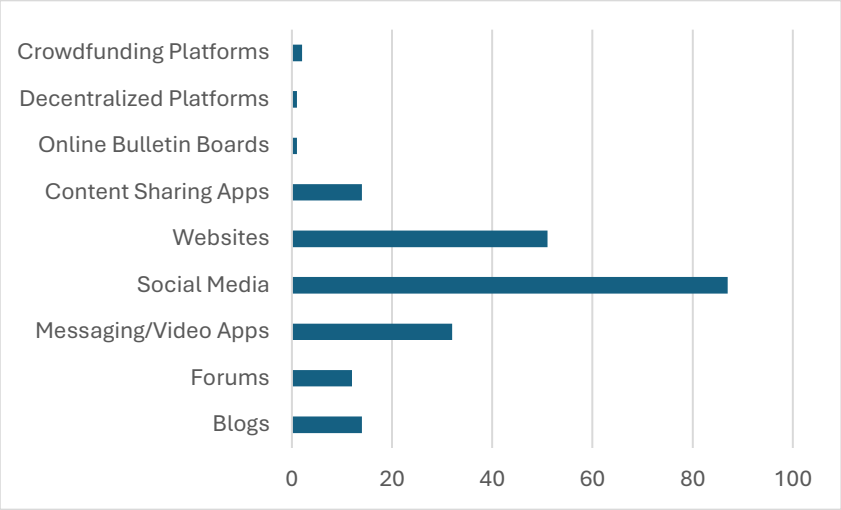
Note. Values represent frequencies or counts across articles (*N* = 124).

Figure 6 illustrates the various online mediums migrants utilize, as highlighted in the literature. Social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) are the most used, owing to their accessibility, broad reach, and ability to connect users across diverse geographic locations. These were followed by specific website domains (e.g., MissyUSA, Romaniancommunity.net), which often serve as central hubs for organizing, sharing information, and fostering community bonds within specific migrant groups. Messaging and video apps (e.g., WhatsApp, Google Hangouts, Viber, Telegram, Skype) ranked third in usage, emphasizing their utility for real-time communication and maintaining connections with both local and distant networks. Other platforms, such as blogs, content-sharing apps (e.g., YouTube), and forums, were less frequently used but provided valuable tools for storytelling, multimedia sharing, and expanding reach to wider audiences. Online bulletin boards and crowdfunding platforms were even more niche, serving specialized purposes within migrant communities.

Decentralized platforms, the least represented category, highlight the limited adoption of emerging technologies such as blockchain-based apps or peer-to-peer networks within migrant communities. Unlike centralized platforms, which a single organization controls, decentralized platforms operate on distributed networks, providing users greater control over their data and enhanced privacy (The Investopedia Team, 2024). These platforms can reduce dependency on third-party intermediaries, potentially lowering costs and increasing resilience against censorship or outages (The Investopedia Team, 2024). However, their limited use suggests that barriers such as technological unfamiliarity, accessibility, and scalability may impede their integration into the digital ecosystems of migrant communities. Overall, the pattern in Figure 6 reflects a preference for established, user-friendly platforms like social media and messaging apps over niche or emerging technologies.

Figure 6

Online Mediums Used by Migrant Communities as Specified in Articles

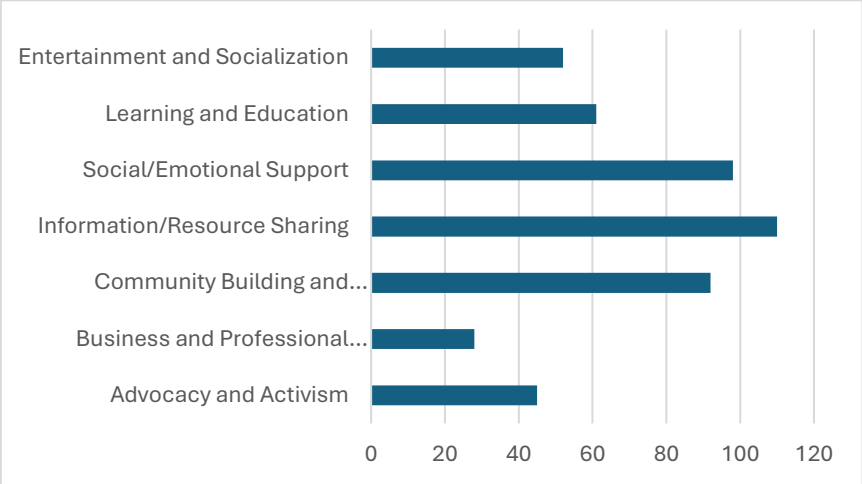


Note. Values represent frequencies or counts across articles (*N* = 124).

Figure 7 highlights the primary purposes of migrants' online communities, showcasing their multifaceted roles. The most common purpose was information and resource sharing, illustrating how these platforms enable migrants to exchange practical insights and assistance, mainly related to navigating life in their host countries. Closely following this was social and emotional support, as migrants often turn to these communities before and after immigration to seek encouragement, share experiences, and build meaningful connections (e.g., Zaher, 2022). Other prominent purposes included community building and engagement, underscoring the importance of online spaces in fostering a sense of belonging and shared identity, and learning and education, where platforms serve as hubs for international students seeking academic assistance, collaboration, and the sharing of educational resources (e.g., Guo, 2024). Less frequent, but still significant, were purposes related to entertainment and socialization, such as organizing and promoting offline events (e.g., Asante, 2018; Guma et al., 2023), and advocacy and activism, where these communities mobilize support for political or social causes affecting their members (e.g., Brooten, 2015). The least represented purpose was business and professional development, including crowdfunding for entrepreneurial ventures and career growth (e.g., Arshad & Berndt, 2023). Overall, this pattern underscores the central role of online migrant communities in providing practical support and fostering social connectivity, complemented by secondary roles in education, recreation, and activism.

Figure 7

Primary Purposes of Migrants' Online Community Organizations as Specified in Articles

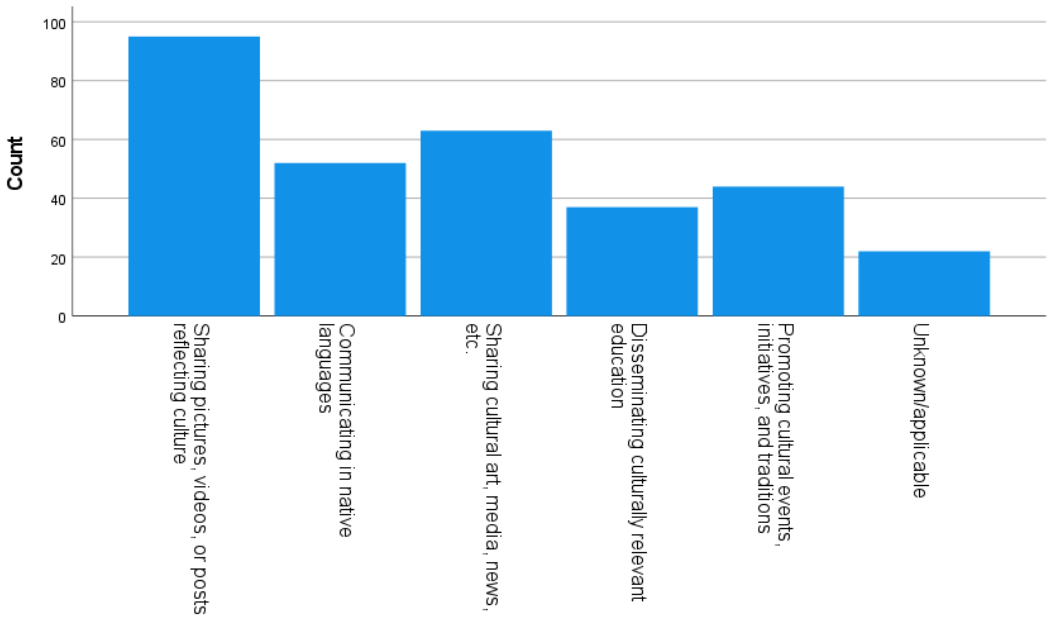


Note. Values represent frequencies or counts across articles (*N* = 124).

Figure 8 illustrates how migrants express their cultural identity through their online platforms. The most common method was sharing content such as pictures, videos, and posts that reflected their culture, highlighting the use of visual and textual media to maintain and showcase cultural heritage. This was followed by sharing cultural art, media, and news, which emphasizes the role of online platforms in circulating culturally significant information and creative expressions. Another frequent practice was communicating in native languages, which allowed migrants to connect with others from their home countries, reinforcing linguistic and cultural ties. Promoting cultural events, initiatives, and traditions was also common, such as organizing or attending social gatherings tied to holidays or festivals in their home country (e.g., Lin et al., 2023). Additionally, migrants engaged in disseminating culturally relevant education, which included sharing resources to inform others about their traditions, history, and values. For instance, some migrants reported that they enjoyed using social media to share information regarding their culture with other migrants in their home country and from other countries (Mao & Qian, 2015). The least common category was unknown or inapplicable cases, representing instances where cultural expression through online mediums was either not observed or not explicitly reported in the studies. This pattern underscores the versatility of online platforms in enabling migrants to preserve, share, and celebrate their cultural identity while fostering connections with others with similar cultural backgrounds.

Figure 8

Migrants' Expressions of Cultural Identity as Specified in Articles



Note. Values represent frequencies or counts across articles (*N* = 124).

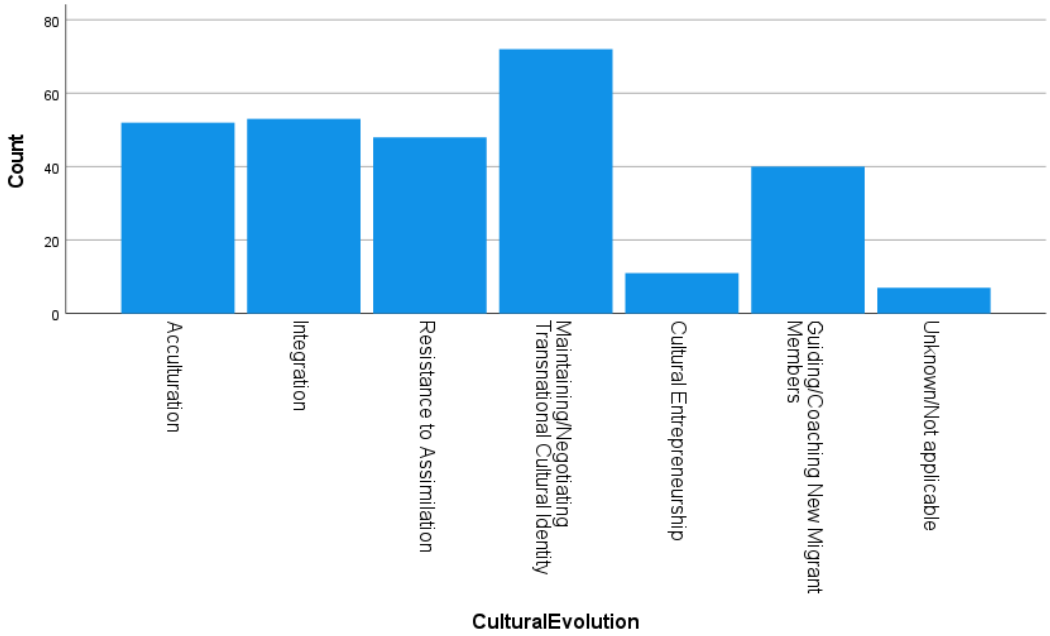
Figure 9 illustrates how migrants' cultural identities evolve within their online communities, showcasing a range of transformative processes. The most common evolution observed was maintaining or negotiating a transnational cultural identity, where migrants simultaneously navigate multiple national and cultural contexts. For instance, Bernal (2006) describes how the Eritrean diaspora, dispersed across various countries, utilizes virtual spaces to preserve their shared Eritrean identity while adapting to their roles as citizens in their host nations. Another frequent phenomenon was integration, or cultural blending, where migrants combined new cultural practices with their existing traditions to create hybrid identities. For instance, migrants in the United Kingdom used social media to manage relationships in their host country while simultaneously maintaining their cultural identity from their home country and presenting it online (Yau et al., 2019). Similarly, acculturation, which involves adopting practices and values from the host culture, was a common theme, reflecting a more profound adaptation to the norms of their new society. Specifically, online communities can foster feelings of belongingness within the country of residence, and migrants report utilizing these communities to feel supported and accepted in their host countries (Mitra & Evansluong, 2019). In contrast, some migrant groups resisted assimilation, actively rejecting aspects of the host culture to preserve and promote their cultural identities. For example, the Rohingya—a stateless ethnic group subjected to genocide—have leveraged online platforms to resist cultural assimilation and maintain their distinct identity (e.g., Brooten, 2015).

Less commonly, migrants engage in cultural entrepreneurship, using virtual communities to promote and preserve their cultural heritage while generating economic value. For instance, Guma et al. (2023) highlight an online migrant community designed explicitly to promote businesses and income generation, where members share job opportunities, advertise one another's ventures, and seek advice on financial and entrepreneurial matters to support each other's endeavours. Migrants also use online platforms to address practical concerns, such as sending remittances, navigating business ownership, and securing housing (Kim, 2023). Another notable theme was guiding and coaching new migrant members. Experienced community participants offer support and advice to help newcomers adapt while fostering a shared cultural vision. New members often seek guidance on financial management, political matters, citizenship processes, travel

logistics, and cultural traditions (Kim, 2023). Lastly, the category of unknown or inapplicable represented cases where cultural identity evolution was not explicitly addressed or did not apply to the study context. The distribution, reflected in Figure 9, underscores the multifaceted roles of virtual communities in shaping migrants' cultural identities. These spaces preserve and adapt cultural heritage and serve as platforms for innovation, providing a vital nexus for cultural resilience and transformation in the digital age.

Figure 9

Migrants' Evolutions of Cultural Identity as Specified in Articles



Note. Values represent frequencies or counts across articles (*N* = 124).

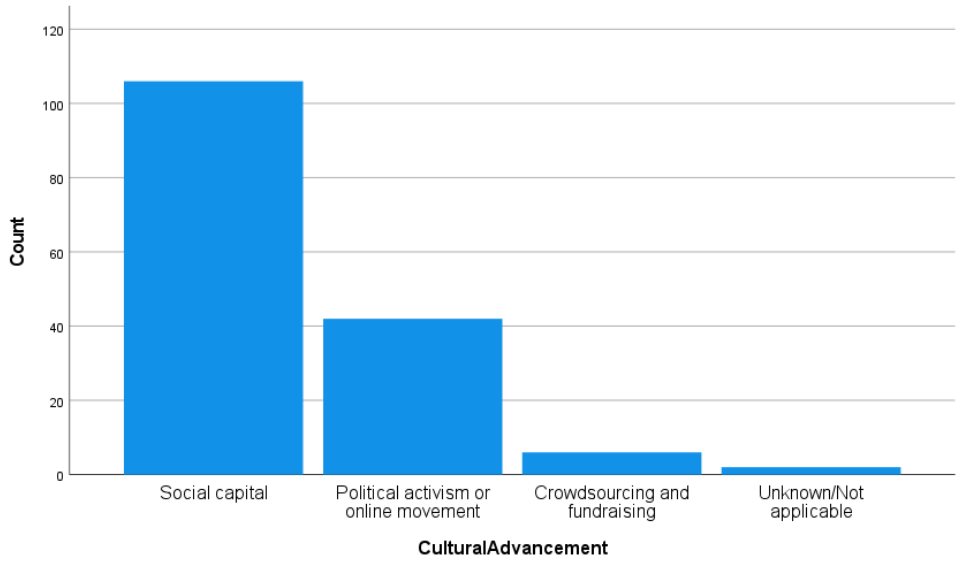
Figure 10 illustrates how online communities contribute to migrants' social advancement, highlighting their pivotal role in fostering connections and empowering members. The most common contribution was providing social capital, with virtual communities acting as vital hubs for accessing resources, support, and opportunities. For example, Somali refugees have emphasized the value of social media and online platforms in achieving educational goals by offering access to essential resources and encouragement (Dahya & Dryden-Peterson, 2017). Additionally, these virtual spaces reduce relocation anxiety by providing safe, inclusive environments where migrants can comfortably express and participate in their cultural traditions (Hafkin, 2006). Such exchanges strengthen interpersonal bonds and enhance migrants' ability to thrive in their host societies (e.g., Macri, 2013). The second most frequent contribution was political activism and online movements, where migrant communities mobilized to raise awareness of critical issues and advocate for their rights. These efforts often involved campaigns addressing challenges such as political unrest in home countries or advocating for cultural competency and policy changes in host nations (e.g., Cogo, 2019). Some groups also focused on maintaining and securing rights, such as citizenship or voting privileges, in their home countries (Hafkin, 2006).

Less commonly, migrants utilized online communities for crowdsourcing and fundraising, pooling resources to support community initiatives, or aid members in need. For instance, one group organized fundraising efforts to provide unhoused Algerian migrants with medical care during the COVID-19 pandemic (Guemar et al., 2022). Although less frequent, these activities demonstrate the potential of online platforms to mobilize collective financial support for humanitarian assistance, cultural preservation, and entrepreneurial endeavours. Lastly, the unknown or not applicable category captures instances where

contributions to social advancement were either not explicitly addressed or irrelevant to the study context. Overall, the distribution in Figure 10 underscores the central role of online communities in providing social support, fostering upward mobility, and empowering migrants. These platforms enhance social capital and political engagement and are powerful tools for advocacy, collective action, and resource mobilization.

Figure 10

Migrants' Advancements in Social Status as Specified in Articles



Note. Values represent frequencies or counts across articles (*N* = 124).

Summary. Figures 2–10 collectively illustrate online spaces' pivotal and evolving role in supporting migrants across diverse contexts. Research on online migrant communities has grown steadily since 2000, peaking in 2019, with studies predominantly focusing on immigrants (57.3%) and temporary migrants (30.6%), while refugees (12.1%) and undocumented migrants (<10%) remain notably underrepresented. Migrants in online communities primarily originate from multiple countries (18.64%), with China (11.02%) and India (6.8%) leading among specific origin countries. The United States (21.8%) and international communities (15.04%) are host contexts most frequently studied. Social media platforms (60%) dominate as the primary digital medium, enabling migrants to share information, access emotional support, and foster community connections. However, niche and emerging technologies remain significantly underutilized. These online spaces play a crucial role in helping migrants express their cultural identities by sharing media, promoting traditions, and communicating in their native languages. They also facilitate the evolution of cultural identity through processes such as transnational connections, acculturation, and integration. Online communities primarily contribute to social advancement by building social capital and supporting political activism, while entrepreneurship and economic initiatives are less emphasized. Overall, these findings underscore the essential role of digital spaces in empowering migrants, offering practical support, and fostering cultural and social integration. At the same time, they highlight gaps, particularly in addressing underrepresented migrant groups and leveraging emerging technologies (e.g., decentralized platforms) to create secure spaces for political activism and innovative tools for financial empowerment.

Preliminary Content Analysis. Key article information—including study objectives, methodologies, populations, and outcomes—was systematically categorized into emerging themes. This thematic organization laid the foundation for a reflective synthesis that identified critical challenges, uncovered research gaps, and outlined actionable policy, practice, and future study recommendations. For a detailed summary of the emergent themes, refer to Table 2.

Table 2

Categories and Emergent Themes

Theme	Key Aspects	Notable Examples	Methods
Social Media and Acculturation	How social media aids in adapting to new cultures and maintaining cultural identity.	Acculturation among international students using Facebook (Omori, 2022).	Mixed methods: surveys and interviews.
Diaspora Identity and Activism	How diaspora groups use digital platforms for activism and maintaining identity.	Rohingya diaspora activism on Facebook (Ansar & Maitra, 2024).	Qualitative analysis of online content.
Digital Resilience and Social Support	How digital tools provide support and coping mechanisms for migrants.	Social media as a tool for emotional well-being among Syrian refugees (Udwan et al., 2020).	Netnography[2] and ethnographic methods.
Transnational Communication and Networks	The role of online networks in facilitating communication across borders.	Online networks connecting diaspora communities (Paplexakis & Dogruoz, 2015).	Social network analysis and case studies.
Cultural Integration and Digital Spaces	The use of virtual platforms to aid migrants' cultural integration in host societies.	Integration via digital platforms among Gen Z Ukrainian refugees (Palomo-DomÃnguez et al., 2024).	Qualitative focus on online interactions.
Empowerment Through Online Communities	How migrants and refugees gain empowerment through participation in digital spaces.	Empowerment of Indonesian domestic workers in online communities (Wijaya et al., 2023).	Exploratory and ethnographic studies.

[2] Ethnographic research methods rely on participant observation to better understand a particular group or culture. Netnography is an ethnographic method that utilizes online or digital data to gather information.

Theme 1: Social Media and Acculturation. Migrants frequently turn to social media platforms like Facebook and WeChat as vital tools for bridging the cultural gap between their home and host societies. These platforms allow migrants to connect with their cultural heritage while adapting to new social norms and practices (Omori, 2022; Ju et al., 2021). Beyond preserving cultural ties, many migrants actively construct bicultural identities, blending elements of their home culture with those of the host culture. For example, one migrant group described retaining their cultural identity through familiar foods, drinks, and traditions from their home country while forming new connections, learning the host language, and engaging with local customs (Jung, 2013). This blending is often reflected in digital content creation, online interactions, and the adoption of hybrid cultural practices (e.g., Golan & Babis, 2019). For international students, social media offers a dual purpose as a coping mechanism and a tool for personal growth—connecting with peers and accessing culturally relevant resources mitigate feelings of homesickness while developing essential intercultural competencies critical for successful adaptation (Schwartz & Omori, 2024).

Despite its many benefits, the literature also highlights challenges associated with social media use for acculturation. Overreliance on digital platforms can reduce opportunities for meaningful face-to-face interactions, potentially hindering deeper cultural integration (Omori, 2022; Schwartz & Omori, 2024). Moreover, the formation of echo chambers—where engagement is limited to co-ethnic groups—can reinforce cultural silos and diminish exposure to the host culture, limiting opportunities for intercultural exchange (Sepehr et al., 2023; Paplexakis & Dogruoz, 2015). These findings reveal the dual-edged nature of social media in the acculturation process. While it provides valuable opportunities for cultural preservation, social connection, and adaptive growth, it also presents obstacles that migrants must navigate to achieve meaningful cultural integration (Ju et al., 2021; Guo, 2024).

Theme 2: Diaspora Identity and Activism. Migrant diaspora communities increasingly leverage digital platforms as powerful tools for activism and political engagement, using online spaces to amplify their voices and advocate for change. For example, Rohingya diaspora groups utilize Facebook to mobilize political action, raise awareness of human rights abuses, and highlight the ongoing crises impacting their communities (Ansar & Maitra, 2024; Aziz, 2022). These platforms act as virtual safe havens, fostering cultural and political discourse while strengthening collective identity and solidarity among members (Brooten et al., 2015; NurMuhammad et al., 2016). Similarly, platforms like Twitter and Instagram play a critical role in amplifying marginalized voices, enabling diaspora groups to challenge dominant narratives, counter misinformation, and advocate for their rights on a global stage (Bahri, 2022). These platforms open the door to grassroots activism and transnational collaboration by bypassing traditional media gatekeepers.

However, online migrant activists often face significant challenges, particularly in surveillance and censorship by authoritarian regimes determined to suppress dissent and control the narratives surrounding diaspora movements (Ansar & Maitra, 2024; Bahri, 2022). Additionally, the digital divide—disparities in access to technology and the internet—hinders full participation in online advocacy for specific community members (Mintarsih, 2019; Zaher, 2020). These challenges highlight the urgent need for greater digital equity and protective measures for diaspora groups engaging in online political activism. Ensuring equal access to digital tools and safeguarding freedom of expression are essential to supporting these communities to maintain identity, mobilize for justice, and enact meaningful change (Lin et al., 2023; Stead & Petrou, 2023).

Theme 3: Digital Resilience and Social Support. Online communities have emerged as vital lifelines for migrants, offering crucial emotional and practical support. Refugees and migrant workers frequently turn to digital platforms to build social support networks, significantly alleviating feelings of isolation and disconnection from their home cultures (Udwan et al., 2020; Zaher, 2020). These platforms also play a critical role in disseminating essential health information, particularly during global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. In such instances, access to digital resources fosters resilience, ensuring that vulnerable populations remain informed, connected, and supported (Shetty et al., 2021). Beyond addressing immediate needs, digital spaces also serve as "home-like" environments where migrants can engage in shared cultural practices, traditions, and storytelling. These virtual gathering places act as reservoirs of cultural strength,

fostering a sense of belonging and collective resilience that helps migrants navigate the challenges of displacement (Neag & Marketa, 2020; Mintarsih, 2019).

However, economic and infrastructural disparities often limit access to digital tools, perpetuating a digital divide that excludes many migrants from these supportive spaces (Stead & Petrou, 2023; Lin et al., 2023). Additionally, the prevalence of online misinformation poses a serious risk, potentially misleading migrants about critical resources such as health services or legal rights (Zaher, 2020; Shetty et al., 2021). Addressing these challenges requires a dual approach: ensuring equitable access to digital technologies and fostering digital literacy among migrant populations. These steps are essential for maximizing the supportive potential of digital tools and helping empower migrants to build resilience (Wijaya et al., 2023; Marino, 2015).

Theme 4. Transnational Communication and Networks. A defining characteristic of many online migrant communities is their ability to sustain and maintain transnational ties, enabling individuals to stay deeply connected across borders. Social media platforms serve as bridges, fostering relationships with family and friends abroad and creating a sense of a "networked home" that transcends geographic boundaries (Paplexakis & Dogruoz, 2015; Marino, 2015). These virtual connections promote transnational solidarity, encouraging migrants to share resources, provide mutual support, and collectively navigate the challenges of displacement (Stead & Petrou, 2023). In addition to emotional support, online platforms play a vital role in facilitating multilingual communication and helping migrants overcome linguistic barriers in their host and home countries. Many diaspora networks offer translation tools, cultural education, and bilingual content creation, empowering migrants to stay connected to their roots while meeting the linguistic demands of their new environments (Prinsen et al., 2015; Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009). These features enhance migrants' ability to maintain cultural ties while navigating the complexities of cross-cultural communication.

Despite these advantages, challenges persist. An over-reliance on virtual connections can weaken migrants' engagement with local social networks in their host countries, potentially hindering integration and reducing their sense of belonging (Guo, 2024; Omori, 2022). Additionally, digital exclusion remains a significant barrier, particularly for older or less tech-savvy migrants who lack the skills or resources to participate fully in online communities (Binsahl et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2023). To address these challenges, it is crucial to foster digital inclusivity by designing platforms that accommodate diverse needs and technological capabilities. Such efforts are essential to ensure that all migrants can benefit from the opportunities offered by transnational communication and networks (Mintarsih, 2019; Zaher, 2020).

Theme 5. Cultural Integration and Digital Spaces. Digital platforms such as Facebook facilitate migrants' cultural integration by providing spaces for shared experiences, group discussions, and intercultural exchanges (Guo, 2024; Zhang, 2012). These platforms empower migrants to explore and understand the host culture, build connections with local and diasporic communities, and participate in conversations that foster mutual understanding and a sense of belonging. Younger migrants, in particular, creatively leverage these tools to blend their cultural identities, experimenting with hybrid practices and finding dynamic ways to express themselves in virtual spaces (Bahfen, 2018; Veronis et al., 2018). For instance, Syrian migrants reported utilizing online spaces to speak to other migrants in Canada about Syrian news, as well as discussing Canadian holidays and offline events (Veronis et al., 2018). The role of digital literacy is critical in this process. Equipping migrants with the skills to critically assess online content, navigate misinformation, and engage effectively in digital environments will foster successful integration. Digital literacy ensures access to reliable resources and social networks, empowering migrants to navigate their new cultural landscape more confidently (Lin et al., 2023).

Despite these opportunities, integration through digital spaces is not without challenges. Cultural alienation can occur when online communities become insular, restricting exposure to diverse perspectives and reinforcing cultural silos (Marino, 2015; Paplexakis & Dogruoz, 2015). Structural barriers, such as xenophobia and systemic discrimination, often originate from societal biases that migrate into online spaces, manifesting as exclusionary practices, hate speech, and biased algorithms that limit migrants' access to resources or amplify discriminatory narratives (Cao & Li, 2018; Shuva, 2021). Restricted digital freedoms

imposed by some host governments further compound these challenges with policies limiting access to critical platforms or censoring content that could facilitate integration or advocacy (Cao & Li, 2018). Additionally, digital surveillance in certain host countries creates an atmosphere of vulnerability, where migrants fear their activities are being monitored or feel pressured to self-censor to avoid scrutiny or retaliation (Ansar & Maitra, 2024; Bahri, 2022). Addressing these challenges requires fostering inclusive digital ecosystems, encouraging open dialogue, intercultural interaction, and equitable participation. Creating safe, accessible, and supportive virtual environments can ensure that digital platforms remain powerful tools for aiding migrants' cultural integration and fostering their sense of belonging (Lin et al., 2023; Mintarsih, 2019).

Theme 6. Empowerment Through Online Communities. Empowerment emerged as a central theme across the studies, demonstrating how digital platforms enable migrants and refugees to assert their agency, build solidarity, and challenge systemic barriers. For instance, Indonesian domestic workers in Singapore utilized online communities to create supportive networks to share resources, voice grievances, and advocate for improved labour rights, fostering a collective sense of empowerment (Wijaya et al., 2023; Mintarsih, 2019). Similarly, digital spaces provide refugees with avenues to renegotiate their identities, share personal narratives, and counter negative stereotypes, offering platforms for self-expression and resilience in the face of adversity (Zimmerman, 2016; Sreenivasan, 2017). Empowerment through online communities also extends to economic initiatives. Crowdfunding and entrepreneurial ventures have gained prominence, with migrants increasingly leveraging these platforms to secure funding for small businesses and community projects. These efforts drive economic independence and spark innovation within diasporic communities. By democratizing access to financial resources and fostering transnational support networks, digital spaces create opportunities for sustainable growth and collective advancement (Arshad & Berndt, 2021).

However, empowerment within online communities is not experienced equitably, as systemic barriers and structural dynamics often marginalize certain groups. For example, less tech-savvy individuals or members of vulnerable subgroups, such as older migrants or those with limited digital literacy, might struggle to fully engage in these spaces, leaving their voices underrepresented (Bahri, 2022; Wijaya et al., 2023). Additionally, hierarchical structures within online communities can reinforce pre-existing power dynamics, allowing dominant voices to suppress dissent or sideline minority perspectives. This dynamic is particularly evident in settings where social hierarchies are mirrored online, perpetuating inequalities instead of dismantling them (Hafkin, 2006; Mintarsih, 2019). Furthermore, limited access to digital tools and resources poses a significant barrier to participation, particularly for women in patriarchal societies and individuals from low-income groups. These populations often face compounded challenges, such as restricted internet access, inadequate devices, and societal constraints that limit their engagement in digital spaces. As a result, their ability to fully participate in and benefit from these empowering platforms remains constrained (Zaher, 2020; Lin et al., 2023). These findings underscore the dual-edged nature of online communities. While they hold transformative potential for empowering migrants and refugees, they also highlight the urgent need to address digital inequities and foster inclusive, equitable spaces that enable participation for all.

Other Notable Insights. We also observed compelling cross-cultural insights into how migrants engage with digital platforms, revealing variations influenced by cultural norms and regional contexts. For instance, Western migrants frequently rely on global platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, broadly accessible and widely adopted across diverse regions. In contrast, migrants from non-Western countries often gravitate toward region-specific tools tailored to their cultural and linguistic needs, such as WeChat for Chinese communities or Line for Japanese users. These platform preferences reflect not only technological accessibility but also the cultural resonance of tools designed with localized features. Cultural norms further shape the type of content shared within these digital spaces. For instance, Indian and Korean migrants frequently use online platforms to celebrate and showcase their cultural heritage, often sharing content related to traditional festivals, family rituals, and artistic expressions. This emphasis on cultural preservation underscores the role of digital tools in maintaining connections to their roots and fostering a sense of identity within diasporic communities. By contrast, refugees often focus their digital engagement on advocacy and survival strategies. Their online activities might center on raising awareness of human rights issues, sharing resources for immediate needs, or navigating legal and bureaucratic systems in host countries. These

insights highlight the interplay between cultural norms, regional contexts, and digital engagement, emphasizing the need for nuanced approaches to understanding and supporting diverse migrant experiences in online spaces. This cross-cultural perspective underscores the adaptability of digital tools to varying needs and priorities, reflecting the diverse ways migrants utilize online platforms to navigate their unique journeys.

Research Gaps and Future Directions. This scoping review has illuminated the evolving role of digital platforms in supporting migrants while highlighting critical gaps that present opportunities for future research. The following areas merit deeper exploration:

The Underrepresentation of Certain Migrant Groups. The existing literature disproportionately focuses on permanent and temporary migrants, leaving refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants underrepresented. These groups face challenges such as legal precarity, systemic marginalization, and heightened vulnerability, yet their unique ways of navigating online spaces to overcome barriers and build resilience remain understudied. Future research could prioritize ethically inclusive methods to better understand how these populations leverage virtual environments for community building and advocacy.

Diversity in Online Platforms. Mainstream platforms like Facebook and Twitter dominate the literature, with limited exploration of niche or emerging technologies such as decentralized platforms or region-specific networks. Investigating how migrants utilize lesser-known tools—such as blockchain-based applications or culturally resonant platforms like WeChat or Line—could reveal innovative strategies for cultural expression, advocacy, and resource sharing, particularly in non-Western contexts.

Intersectionality and Power Dynamics. More attention could be paid to the intersectional challenges migrants face within online spaces. In our review, twelve articles included virtual communities for women or focused on female migrants. Factors such as gender, socioeconomic status, and digital literacy significantly shape access and engagement for migrants. For example, women in patriarchal societies, older migrants with limited technical skills, and migrants with young children often experience barriers to full participation (Andrianimanana, 2023; Dahya & Dryden-Peterson, 2017; Cao et al., 2018). Future studies could explore these dynamics further, identifying strategies to promote inclusivity and equitable representation.

Impact of Misinformation and Digital Surveillance. Misinformation and digital surveillance pose critical challenges for migrants engaging in online spaces. Few studies have explored how misinformation affects trust in digital communities or the willingness to participate in online activism. Additionally, the fear of surveillance, particularly in authoritarian contexts, could deter migrants from leveraging these platforms effectively. Future research could focus on combating misinformation and ensuring privacy protections to foster safer, more trustworthy online environments.

Evolving Cultural Identities. While cultural preservation and hybridization are well-documented, the long-term evolution of cultural identity within digital spaces remains underexplored. Examining how sustained engagement with online communities influences generational shifts in identity, belonging, and cultural practices could provide a richer understanding of transnational cultural dynamics.

Emerging Digital Technologies. Rapid technological advancements present untapped potential for enhancing online migrant communities. For instance, decentralized platforms can offer increased privacy and resilience against censorship, artificial intelligence tools can facilitate language translation, and virtual reality can enable immersive cultural experiences. Future studies could investigate the integration of such technologies, focusing on their impact on communication, advocacy, and cultural preservation.

These research directions underscore the need for a holistic, inclusive, and forward-looking approach to studying the interplay between migrants and digital spaces. By addressing these gaps, scholars can

contribute to a nuanced understanding of how technology shapes and empowers migrant communities.

Strengths and Limitations. This scoping review offers significant strengths, including its comprehensive coverage of studies examining various migrant types, host locations, and digital engagement patterns across three decades (1993–2024). The expansive timeframe captures the evolution of internet-based communities and highlights their growing importance in migrants' cultural, social, and economic experiences. However, the review also has notable limitations that present opportunities for future research. One major limitation is excluding non-English articles due to the unavailability of translations. This restriction might have led to the underrepresentation of insights from non-English-speaking regions, particularly those where culturally specific platforms or regional networks play a pivotal role in migrant communities. Another limitation lies in the inherent challenge of capturing the rapidly evolving nature of digital technologies. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic changed communication processes and how people interact and restricted freedom of movement. Thus, future research needs to consider these impacts on immigration and communication processes between migrants. Emerging platforms and tools, such as decentralized networks, AI-driven resources, and virtual reality environments, will likely reshape how migrants engage with online spaces in ways not fully reflected in this review. Future studies could adopt dynamic methodologies that integrate qualitative and quantitative approaches to remain relevant, enabling a nuanced exploration of the complexities in migrants' digital lives. By broadening the scope to include non-English studies and adapting to technological advancements, researchers can contribute to a deeper understanding of migrants' online experiences. This forward-thinking approach will address existing gaps and foster inclusive and empowering digital ecosystems that reflect the diverse needs and realities of migrant populations worldwide.

Implications

The findings from this scoping review emphasize the transformative potential of online platforms in supporting migrants' social, cultural, and political integration. At the same time, they underscore critical areas for improvement and engagement across policy, practice, and research.

Policy Implications. Policymakers are pivotal in shaping equitable and inclusive digital ecosystems that empower migrants. To address the challenges highlighted in this review, policies could prioritize equitable access to digital infrastructure, such as affordable internet connectivity and devices and regionally relevant platforms, especially for underserved and vulnerable migrant populations. Tailored digital literacy programs could also be developed to reflect diverse cultural and linguistic contexts, enabling migrants to navigate online spaces effectively and safely. Additionally, robust data privacy and security policies are critical to protecting migrants from surveillance, censorship, and exploitation, particularly in authoritarian regimes where digital activities might expose them to significant risks. Policymakers must advocate for and enforce privacy laws safeguarding migrants' online interactions, ensuring that digital platforms remain safe for connection and advocacy.

To promote inclusivity and reduce digital inequities, governments and institutions should support the development of accessible, user-friendly platforms designed to address the needs of low-literacy and low-income migrant groups. This can be achieved through public-private partnerships that bring together governments, NGOs, technology companies, and migrants. Policies could also encourage platforms to integrate features that foster intercultural dialogue, counter misinformation, and amplify marginalized voices. Finally, policymakers could consider funding research initiatives focused on understanding region-specific online behaviours, using decentralized platforms, and the long-term cultural and social impacts of migrants' digital engagement. This evidence-based approach will support the development of more effective, inclusive policies and programs empowering migrants to leverage digital tools for integration, resilience, and advocacy.

By prioritizing equitable access, privacy protections, and support for inclusive technologies, policymakers can play a central role in fostering digital environments that reflect the diverse needs of migrant populations while enhancing their social, cultural, and political integration.

Practice Implications. Organizations working with migrant communities, particularly non-governmental organizations (NGOs), are pivotal in leveraging digital tools to enhance social support, advocacy, and resource sharing. To maximize the potential of these platforms, NGOs could partner with technology companies to design accessible and user-friendly platforms tailored to migrants with low digital literacy. These platforms could feature intuitive interfaces, multilingual options, and tools that address the specific needs of diverse migrant populations, such as secure communication channels and resources for navigating host country systems. Additionally, NGOs can empower migrants by facilitating workshops that teach them how to navigate online spaces safely and effectively. These workshops could focus on recognizing misinformation, protecting personal data, and accessing trusted resources, equipping migrants with the confidence and skills to engage meaningfully in digital environments.

Incorporating digital tools into support programs can enhance resource sharing and social connectivity. For example, virtual networks can be established where migrants can seek advice, share experiences, and access services, reducing isolation and fostering community. Digital platforms also present opportunities for advocacy campaigns, enabling migrants to connect with policymakers and broader audiences to amplify their voices and advocate for systemic change. Moreover, promoting community-led initiatives, where migrants co-create and manage online spaces, ensures that these platforms reflect their unique needs and aspirations. Such initiatives would foster empowerment and inclusivity, allowing migrants to actively shape digital ecosystems that support cultural preservation, social advancement, and resilience.

By integrating these strategies, NGOs and other organizations can ensure that digital platforms are accessible, empowering, and safe for all migrants, particularly those with limited digital experience or access. This inclusive and proactive approach has the potential to significantly enhance the role of online spaces in fostering resilience, integration, and advocacy for migrant communities worldwide.

Research Implications. This scoping review highlights several avenues for future research to deepen understanding of how migrants engage with digital platforms and address critical literature gaps. Researchers could prioritize the study of underrepresented groups, such as refugees, asylum seekers, and undocumented migrants, whose unique challenges and online behaviours remain insufficiently explored. These populations often face legal precarity, systemic marginalization, and heightened vulnerability, which shape their interactions with online spaces in distinct ways. Additionally, region-specific online behaviour patterns could be examined to understand how cultural norms, local platforms, and regional contexts influence digital engagement. For example, exploring culturally resonant platforms like WeChat in China or Line in Japan can reveal innovative strategies for advocacy, cultural expression, and community building.

Another critical area for exploration is the impact of decentralized and niche platforms on migrant engagement. These platforms, such as blockchain-based networks, offer enhanced privacy and resilience against censorship, which could be particularly valuable for migrants in authoritarian contexts or those engaging in advocacy and activism. Understanding how these emerging tools are utilized can inform strategies to support vulnerable populations and foster secure, inclusive online spaces. Further, intersectional research examining how gender, socioeconomic status, and digital literacy intersect to shape migrants' access to and engagement with digital communities is vital. For instance, more research could explore the barriers women face in patriarchal societies or older migrants with limited digital skills.

Longitudinal studies are also essential to capture the long-term evolution of cultural identities within online spaces. Investigating how sustained online engagement influences generational shifts in identity, belonging, and cultural preservation will deepen our understanding of transnational cultural dynamics and adaptation processes. Finally, researchers could examine how misinformation and digital surveillance impact migrants' trust in online communities and willingness to participate in digital activism. Developing strategies to combat these issues and ensure safer, more trustworthy online environments is crucial for supporting migrants' digital engagement.

Conclusion

This scoping review underscores online spaces' critical role in enabling migrants to navigate cultural identities, access social support, and engage in advocacy. Digital platforms have emerged as transformative tools for fostering social capital, cultural expression, and community building among diverse migrant populations. At the same time, this review reveals persistent challenges, including digital exclusion, surveillance, and misinformation, which hinder the full potential of these platforms. Addressing these issues requires an interdisciplinary approach integrating policy, practice, and research insights.

To advance understanding and foster more inclusive digital ecosystems, future studies should prioritize ethical and inclusive research focusing on vulnerable and underrepresented migrant groups, such as undocumented migrants and refugees. Investigating emerging platforms and technologies, including decentralized networks, can shed light on their potential to reshape digital migration dynamics, offering enhanced privacy and tools for advocacy. Longitudinal studies exploring the impact of sustained online engagement on cultural identity evolution across generations are crucial for understanding transnational cultural dynamics. Addressing misinformation and enhancing privacy mechanisms are vital to building safer, more trustworthy digital environments.

By addressing these gaps, stakeholders can cultivate digital ecosystems that support resilience, integration, and thriving for migrant populations globally. Such efforts will empower migrants to leverage online spaces for cultural preservation, social connectivity, and advocacy, fostering a more inclusive and interconnected global society.

Knowledge Mobilization Activities

Three key knowledge mobilization activities are planned to ensure the findings from this scoping review reach a diverse audience and foster meaningful engagement: an infographic, a webinar, and a peer-reviewed journal manuscript. These initiatives aim to bridge the gap between research and practice by translating the review's insights into actionable recommendations for policymakers, community organizations, researchers, and migrant groups. Our knowledge mobilization activities will be posted on OSF (https://osf.io/7p9wu/).

1. Infographic Development: A visually engaging and accessible infographic will be created to summarize the key findings and insights from the review. It will highlight significant themes, such as the role of online platforms in cultural identity navigation, social support, and advocacy, as well as the challenges migrants face, including digital exclusion and misinformation. The infographic will emphasize actionable recommendations tailored for different stakeholder groups, including policymakers, NGOs, and tech developers. To maximize outreach, it will be distributed through social media platforms, institutional websites, mailing lists, and migrant networks.

2. Interactive Webinar: An interactive webinar will be organized to share the findings with stakeholders, including community leaders, NGOs, educators, policymakers, and migrant advocates. This session will provide an overview of the review's findings, discuss their implications for practice and policy, and facilitate discussions on best practices for supporting migrants in digital spaces. To encourage active engagement, the webinar will include breakout discussions, live polls, and Q&A segments. Stakeholders will also be invited to collaboratively brainstorm strategies for fostering inclusive and empowering digital ecosystems. Recordings of the webinar and supplementary materials, such as presentation slides and key takeaways, will be made publicly available online to ensure accessibility for a wider audience, including those unable to attend live.

3. Peer-Reviewed Journal Manuscript: A detailed manuscript will be prepared and submitted to a high-impact, peer-reviewed journal with open access. This publication will comprehensively document the review's methodology, findings, and implications, contributing to academic discourse on migration, digital

inclusion, and transnational engagement. The manuscript will serve as a valuable resource for scholars and practitioners, offering insights into underexplored areas such as emerging platforms, region-specific behaviours, and the long-term impact of online engagement on cultural identity evolution.

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