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Social Psychology

Reflective groups for men who commit domestic violence: A comparative study based on three Brazilian programs

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Abstract

Brazil still has few programs that assist men who commit violence, even though these are provided by the law. Based on this, a comparative study was designed focusing on the theoretical/methodological approach adopted by different programs that work with reflective groups for male perpetrators of violence in Brazil. Thus, a total of seven facilitators from three different programs were interviewed. The data were categorized and presented as the main results: the need to reinforce the importance of initial training for facilitators, screening as an important tool in the insertion of participants, and the importance of a reflective-accountable approach. It is emphasized that the groups should not be isolated, but integrated into the network against violence against women and in conjunction with social movements for social transformation. This study can contribute to the reflection on new intervention models and to create guidelines for the realization of reflective groups in Brazil.

Keywords: accountability; change; domestic violence; groups; social transformation.

GRUPOS REFLEXIVOS PARA HOMENS AUTORES DE VIOLÊNCIA DOMÉSTICA: ESTUDO COMPARATIVO A PARTIR DE TRÊS PROGRAMAS BRASILEIROS

Resumo

O Brasil ainda possui poucos programas que atendem homens autores de violência, apesar desses estarem previstos em Lei. Pensando nisso, delineou-se um estudo comparativo com foco na abordagem teórico/metodológica adotada por diferentes programas que trabalham com grupos reflexivos para homens autores de violência no Brasil. Assim, entrevistou-se um total de sete facilitadoras pertencentes a três diferentes programas. Os dados foram categorizados e apresentaram como principais resultados: a necessidade de se reforçar a importância de capacitações iniciais para facilitadores, a triagem como importante instrumento de trabalho na inserção de participantes e a importância da abordagem reflexivo-responsabilizante. Ressalta-se que os grupos não devem ocorrer de forma isolada, e sim integrados à rede de enfrentamento a violência contra a mulher e de forma conjunta aos movimentos sociais em prol da transformação social. Este estudo pode contribuir para reflexão sobre novos modelos de intervenção e na criação de diretrizes para a realização de grupos reflexivos no país.

Palavras-chave: grupos; mudança; responsabilização; transformação social; violência doméstica.

GRUPOS REFLEXIVOS PARA HOMBRES QUE COMETEN VIOLENCIA DOMÉSTICA: UN ESTUDIO COMPARATIVO BASADO EN TRES PROGRAMAS BRASILEÑOS

Resumen

El Brasil todavía tiene pocos programas que trabajen con hombres que cometen violencia, a pesar de que están previstos por la ley. Con esto en mente, se diseñó un estudio comparativo centrado en el enfoque teórico/metodológico adoptado por diferentes programas que trabajan con grupos reflexivos para los hombres que cometen violencia doméstica en Brasil. Por lo tanto, se entrevistó a un total de siete facilitadores de tres programas diferentes. Los datos se clasificaron y presentaron como los resultados principales: la necesidad de reforzar la importancia de la capacitación inicial para los facilitadores, la detección como una herramienta de trabajo importante en la inserción de los participantes y la importancia del enfoque reflexivo-receptivo. Se enfatiza que los grupos no deben ocurrir de forma aislada, sino integrados en la red de confrontación de la violencia contra las mujeres y en conjunto con los movimientos sociales a favor de la transformación social. Este estudio puede contribuir a la reflexión sobre nuevos modelos de intervención y la creación de pautas para la realización de grupos reflexivos en el país.

Palabras clave: violencia doméstica, grupos, responsabilidad, cambio, transformación social.

1. Introduction

Assistance to men who committed violence (MWCV) emerged in the United States in the late 1970s. The first programs were called Emerge (in Boston), Amend (in Denver), Raven (in Saint Louis), and the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP) in the following decade, better known as the Duluth Model, becoming the most widespread model worldwide. A few years later, such programs began to spread to other countries, more precisely in the 1980s and 1990s. The first programs outside the United States were implemented in Canada and, later, they spread across Europe, Latin America, and Africa (Rothman, Butchart, & Cerdá, 2003).

In Brazil, services for assisting men who committed violence started in the late 1990s and early 2000s, related to third sector organizations that worked together with the State and the judicial system (Amado, 2014). According to Beiras, Nascimento, and Incrocci (2019), who provided an overview of existing interventions for male perpetrators of violence in Brazil, the first program emerged, more

specifically in 1999, at the Noos Institute, after that, there was the citywide program in Blumenau, a city in the State of Santa Catarina, which started interventions with men in 2004 and, later, the Programa Albam, of the Instituto Mineiro de Saúde Mental e Social (Minas Gerais Institute of Mental and Social Health), in the city of Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais state, with interventions starting in 2005. According to the overview, which presents a mapping of programs for MWCVs in Brazil carried out between 2015 and 2016, most of the programs that emerged in Brazil started between 2003 and 2011, with a significant number of programs that started in 2012 (Beiras et al., 2019).

The data presented by the report show that, even before Law 11.340/2006 (known as Lei Maria da Penha), there was already a service in Brazil for MWCVs. However, Law no. 11.340/2006 expanded actions aimed at tackling violence against women, recognizing and incorporating the assistance to MWCVs. In view of such efforts to expand this type of action, Law 13.984 was sanctioned on April 3, 2020, which amended the Lei Maria da Penha (LMP, Maria da Penha Law) to establish MWCV attendance at an education and rehabilitation center and psychosocial follow-up through individual and/or support group assistance as an emergency protective measure.

Therefore, the assistance to men was already included in LMP, more specifically in its articles 35 and 45, being reinforced in a proposed amendment in the year 2020, through Law 13.984. However, despite LMP not describing how services should be organized and conducted, their implementation has become possible, including by encouraging interventions from public services (Beiras et al., 2019; Lima & Büchele, 2011; Toneli, 2007).

Prominent authors are already advocating the implementation of MWCV assistance in the area (Beiras & Bronz, 2016; Beiras et al., 2019; Lima & Büchele, 2011; Saffioti, 2004; Toneli, 2007). Saffioti (2004), for example, believes that it is only through working with both parties involved in the situation of domestic violence that satisfactory effects in coping and fighting the phenomenon can be achieved. However, although public policies are mainly aimed at assisting women in violence situations, there is still resistance and little incentive from public policies that include assistance to men.

It is worth emphasizing the importance of assisting men, since it arose from a demand of women in situations of violence, assistance services professionals who

worked with them, and the recognition of the insufficiency of criminal and preventive responses in situations of violence against women. Such actions were expanded from the first experiments, which were disseminated and provided greater visibility on the set of factors involved in violence against women (Amado, 2014).

According to Acosta, Andrade Filho, and Bronz (2004), the contribution of reflective groups in confronting violence consists of promoting dialogues between the components, favoring the understanding of violence situations, and the construction of more equitable gender relations. In this sense, the differential of reflective groups in relation to other types of assistance groups lies in the performance of reflective actions in an interactive space in which men share their pains, fears, and the silence about their public and private life. Therefore, the reflective group works as a welcoming space and facilitator of changes through dialogue and the sharing of experiences between men who have lived similar situations (Acosta et al., 2004).

It should be noted that there are different intervention formats based on reflective groups. According to Veloso and Natividade (2013), the type of approach adopted in this type of assistance determines how it will be possible to change violent behaviors. Antezana (2012) goes further, emphasizing that the theoretical-practical approach used in the intervention will be defined according to the epistemological perspective adopted. Thus, discussing intervention programs' assumptions with men makes it possible to improve interventions and the potential for transformation (Antezana, 2012).

According to the aforementioned author, there are different working methodologies with reflective groups and it is necessary to understand the main models and their specificities: the psychopathological model; the pro-feminist psychoeducational approach; the cognitive-behavioral approach; and the constructivist-narrative approach with a gender perspective. Briefly, the psychopathological model considers the problem of gender violence as psychopathological and of personality. Thus, this type of model assumes a clinical and psychotherapeutic perspective of intervention. The pro-feminist psychoeducational approach considers the problem of gender violence as originating from the relations of power and control of men over women. As it has an educational bias, it emphasizes the importance of denaturalizing certain behaviors, differentiating them from what is culturally produced. In turn, the cognitive-

behavioral approach has a therapeutic basis, considering the phenomenon as originating from men's thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors. In this sense, the intervention is directed, for example, to cognitive restructuring techniques, confrontation of irrational ideas, or anger control techniques. Finally, the constructivist-narrative approach with a gender perspective considers men's subjectivity as an expression of the different social and political aspects intertwined with gender. This type of intervention seeks to establish collaborative dialogues with MWCVs, relating them to their experiences, perceptions, feelings, and meanings, in a construction process of a more empathetic and less coercive way (Antezana, 2012).

With this in mind, this study aims to compare and problematize the theoretical/methodological approach used in three different programs for assisting men who commit domestic violence in Brazil, based on the structural analysis of material determinations grounded in Marxist feminism as proposed by Heleieth Saffioti. However, it is noteworthy that different authors with diverse theoretical approaches will be used to compose this study, considering the various contributions brought by them in the analysis of the phenomenon of violence against women.

The analyzed programs are located in different regions of the country, more specifically in the Southern, Northeastern, and Midwestern regions of Brazil, and are part of the network of protection for women in violence situations, more specifically they are government agencies linked to the Justice System of the studied cities. These cities, which make up the research universe, are part of the *Programa de Cooperação Acadêmica* (Procad, Academic Cooperation Program), a program that one of the authors of this study is a member of.

The Procad consists of an academic-scientific cooperation agreement, developed at national level, between three Graduate Programs in Psychology from different public universities in Brazil. This partnership was approved and financed by the *Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior* (CAPES, Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel) and sought to establish a research network focused on the role of the psychologist in the field of social policies. Among the different studies carried out through the project, this study made an excerpt of the Social Assistance axis, more specifically regarding assistance, through reflexive groups, to women in situations of violence and to men who commit domestic violence.

It is noteworthy that this study is based on Scott's thesis (2018), which includes data from one of the three cities participating in the Procad project. The other two cities participating in the study had their data collected in 2019, making up this study's totality for comparative purposes.

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

The sample consisted of seven facilitators of reflective groups for men who committed violence in three cities in the Southern, Northeastern, and Midwestern regions of Brazil covered by the Procad project. Female-gender facilitators were designated, since most interviewees are women, with only one male-gender facilitator composing the sample. Thus, the study participants were named P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, and P7.

2.2 Instrument

The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews based on a script elaborated and adapted from Scott's study (2018) to obtain information on a theoretical/methodological basis and through the practice and performance with reflective groups. According to (Gray, 2012), semi-structured interviews have an exploratory character and involve examining feelings and attitudes, allowing the researcher to go deeper into the questions, searching for more detailed answers that provide greater clarification by the respondent.

2.3 Ethical procedures

The research was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of a public university located in one of the cities participating in the study, with the Certificado de Apresentação para Apreciação Ética (CAAE, Presentation Certificate for Ethical Appreciation) No. 07990719.7.0000.5537. After the approval of the study, data collection was performed. The participants were also invited to participate in the research upon all clarifications and after signing the Informed Consent Form (ICF) and the Term of Authorization for voice recording. All precepts that govern ethics in research with human beings were contemplated, as recommended by Resolution 510/2016 of the *Conselho Nacional de Saúde* (CNS, National Health Council, 2016).

2.4 Data collection procedure

The categorization of the data was performed through the transcription of the recorded interviews. The data were categorized and analyzed using the Marxist theoretical and methodological framework, inspired by historical dialectical materialism. According to Cisne and Santos (2018), the Marxist framework, built on the methodological perspective of historical dialectical materialism, demonstrates the concrete bases of the determinations of explorations and oppressions interwoven in the patriarchal-racist-capitalist mode of production, assisting in the construction of an emancipatory societal project.

It should be noted that the categorization of the data consisted of four distinct stages, which are close to an analysis of thematic content, as follows: the first stage of the analysis consisted of an initial reading of the material generated by the interviews. This reading enabled the participants of this stage to have the first impressions of the material and its content. In the second stage, the material was read in a more detailed and meticulous way. Thus, it was sought to extract the main contents and subjects covered from the text, separating them from the totality, looking for the particularities present in the content. In addition, the relationship between the entire content and the existing particularities was observed. The third stage consisted of a new reading of the material, this time in order to more deeply explore the subjects and contents found in the previous stage, verifying the particularities, approaches, and similarities existing between the contents, organizing them based on thematic affinities. Finally, the last stage consisted of organizing the content into categories, enabling a better understanding of the content, based on the comparison between the three programs investigated.

Thus, data analysis gave rise to three major categories that considered the importance, centrality, and complexity that the methodology has in the practice of reflective groups, with these being subdivided into subcategories. The categorization of this study was inspired by Beiras and Bronz's (2016) provisions, whose proposed methodology, used to assist MWCVs through gender reflective groups, is carried out in three stages: the constitution of the group, the conduction of reflective meetings, and study assessment. However, in this study, the aforementioned model disseminated by the authors was adapted, being denominated as *pre-group phase*, *group phase*, and *post-group phase*. Therefore, it was sought to describe and

problematize the three phases throughout the presentation of the results, aiming to better understand their contents.

3. Results and discussion

The study data were arranged in three major categories – *Pre-group phase*, *group phase*, and *post-group phase* – which will be described below. It should be noted that the first two categories originated, in turn, subcategories that made it possible to expand the comparison and to problematize the data, according to the objective of this study. In addition, it was sought to bring a minimum of three lines in each category/subcategory to represent the comparison between the programs investigated, interspersing the lines of the different professionals interviewed with the subsequent analysis problematization of the content. It should be noted that the different programs had already been operating at the time of data collection for approximately one year, three years, and eight years, respectively.

3.1 Pre-group phase

The pre-group phase covers the group's constitution and *involves Training for the facilitators, Types of referral for groups and Screening and selection of participants*. The content found in the interviews pointed out that this initial phase was carried out differently in the different programs, as described in the subcategories:

3.1.1 Training for the facilitators

I did some training and got to know some existing projects in Brazil, like *Instituto Albam's* and other projects that I searched on the internet, and some I went there personally to check, to bring a more experiential way, to bring and implement these groups here. So, taking a little bit from here, a little bit from there [...] (P6).

[...] a course was offered, promoted by the state court of justice, for training facilitators of groups with men, of gender-based violence groups. So, it was distance training that we did at the end of last year (2018). I received this training here, and the rest we have to look for on our own, because they did not offer us any more resources (P3).

They (the trainers) brought their practice. They just came to bring their practice, and we would have the autonomy to set up our group. They did not even allow us to have their presentation slides or anything like that. So, we built this group that is here in a certain way. In training, they gave us a direction (P2).

Not all facilitators received some form of training for working with reflective groups. The interviewees described different forms: one of the programs, for example, did not offer any training for facilitators, making them look for some form of instrumentation. In another case, it was an online training, after the beginning of activities with the groups. In only one of the programs, training took place before the groups started. The programs that received training were quick and superficial, making the facilitators look for further knowledge by themselves and devoid of institutional resources.

According to Atallah, Amado, and Gaudioso (2013), there is a consensus among the programs' methodologies on the importance of initial training for the technical team. According to the guidelines for the implementation of the Accountability and Education Services for Aggressors (*Secretaria de Políticas para Mulheres* [SPM, Secretariat of Policies for Women], 2011), it is necessary to go beyond the initial training, since only multidisciplinary, continuous training can guarantee the quality of the assistance provided. However, it is noticed that continued training becomes inaccessible in some cases due to the lack of financial resources or incentives from the institutions.

Another point, highlighted by Beiras and Bronz (2016), is the importance of facilitators, before exercising their function, to submit to a reflective gender group in order to question their values and ideas related to gender relations. This fact did not occur with any of the facilitators interviewed, which can compromise their performance because, according to the authors, this type of experience allows a familiarization with the process and the reflective posture that are essential to this type of program.

Therefore, it is suggested that the programs seek to train professionals before working with reflective groups, aiming at a higher quality, and reaching the reflection/accountability objectives for MWCVs. It is argued that the training also takes place during the study with reflective groups for a higher quality of the service provided and improvement of the participants' reflection and accountability

objectives. In addition, according to Novaes, Freitas, and Beiras (2018), the importance of the State is highlighted in supporting programs through public policies and spaces for training and production of teaching materials for professionals and programs, as well as technical support and supervision of projects aimed at optimizing and quality control of programs.

3.1.2 Types of referral to reflective groups

Each judge has a way of referring people, so there is no standardization of referrals because each judge has a different understanding of the law. We have magistrates who refer people practically doing free ads for the group, convincing the alleged aggressor that the group will be important to him. It is a suggestion from the judge, but it is a voluntary decision. Another type of referral is a conditional suspension of the suit or trial. They are obliged to go and attend sessions, once they accept the conditional suspension of the suit, then they enter as petitioners. Other judges refer to it as a protective measure. So, there are several forms of referral (P6).

[...] it has five doors, the strongest one being the suspension (conditional suspension of the suit). [...] what other doors do I have? Other alternatives? Protective Measure, Suspension of the sentence, Alternative measure to incarceration, and the last is as an accessory, Accessory penalty, so there are five doors (P1).

We are volunteers, come if you want, if you don't want to, that's fine. [...] So, after this invitation, they either come or not. Many do not attend sessions (P4).

The results showed that judiciary members generally perform referrals in most cases of Domestic Violence Courts (DVC), voluntarily or through the option for the Conditional Suspension of the suit, which originates from an agreement with the conditionalities that the MWCV must meet. The referral can also be performed by invitation, requiring voluntary acceptance from the possible group participant.

According to Novaes et al. (2018), who carried out a bibliographic survey of the main productions on MWCV, the investigated studies showed that the Judiciary

predominantly performs the way of referring men to interventions, that is, in a compulsory way. In addition, the authors stressed that the referral of men to intervention programs ends up being precarious due to the lack of a specific policy on the issue.

In this sense, it is necessary to invest in other forms of referral to reflective groups, different from those that are formally compulsory, investing in a State policy of clarification and awareness of the need for gender discussion through reflection and accountability of those involved. In the case of compulsory referrals, these must be performed based on permanent communication between the organs of the protection network for women victims of violence and the MWCV assistance programs so that there is more effective monitoring of domestic violence cases.

According to the guidelines for the implementation of the Accountability and Education Services for Aggressors, produced by the *Secretaria de Políticas para Mulheres* (SPM, Secretariat of Policies for Women, 2011), the center or agency responsible for the reflective groups must organize and permanently update the database of the activities carried out, with a view to accountability, whoever is accountable for them, including the judiciary member that made the referral, demonstrating the importance of communications between the agencies.

Therefore, in addition to the responsibility attributed to referrals, one must invest in diversified ways of doing so, highlighting the need to always communicate between program members and different network institutions in order to monitor the accountability process and reflection of men, as well as assessing intervention programs and the potential of reflective groups as a transforming agent in favor of ending violence and gender equality.

3.1.3 Screening and selection of participants

Because screening, it happens, right where does the invitation come from? It follows the protective measure. They either attend it or not. For those who attend, we do something more like a free speech session, to understand how the process went, we assess whether the person has a profile that they want to participate in the group or not. [...] what are the requirements? Having a marital relationship, being in a marital relationship with the victim; not

having any mental disorders or cognitive deficits; and not bringing up this issue of alcoholism and drug addiction (P4).

[...] there is no screening within our group structure, the one who does these screenings is the judge himself, it is the judge's perception that the MWCV has to be referred, it is the profile, huh? The judge himself assesses the profile of this aggressor. When the MWCV arrives at the group, we welcome him. [...] this referral is in the judge's sentence (P6).

[...] it is like a screening. So, the MWCV cannot be criminally charged on any other type of legal process, he needs to be in full mental health conditions, and not abuse of alcohol and/or other drugs. But each case is examined separately, and the possibility of insertion is verified. [...] he (the MWCV) is not dismissed right away, he has to come here, we do this screening and try to understand what his level of commitment is at that moment (P2).

Two of the three programs carry out screening, which follow some criteria. In only one of the programs there is no screening, the selection takes place directly by the DVC judge. The criteria for screening vary from being in a marital relationship, not being criminally charged, to the most common ones: not having a mental disorder, alcoholism, or drug addiction.

The studies on this type of intervention indicate that most MWCV services provide group and individual activities. These consist mostly of initial assessments or group referrals (Álvarez & Montero, 2009). According to Beiras and Bronz (2016), initial interviews are important for the candidate to assess whether the proposal really interests him. For this, the facilitators need to describe the proposal's objective and the way the groups work, helping them adhere to the proposal. At that moment, to include the participant, he can even suggest themes to be worked on in the reflective meetings, increasing the possibility of commitment and adherence to the group. Thus, screening can be an important tool for working with reflective groups, while not excluding potential participants but rather checking the best time for them to participate in the group.

Therefore, screening can be an important tool for the construction of reflective groups, helping men join the group and in shared and collaborative

construction. Thus, from the first moment, MWCVs can experience a space of welcoming and belonging, far from preconceived judgments that label men due to their previous act of violence.

3.2 Group phase

The second category describes the group phase and involves the stage of conducting reflective meetings based on the methodology adopted by the team. This category is subdivided into Group functioning, Group conduction, and Group configuration, as follows.

3.2.1 Group functioning

Regarding group functioning, the following statements stand out:

But in relation to the group's management, it is something that we do by experiencing each day, each meeting. [...] we have a guest who helps us, we invite him to make a speech about the Maria da Penha Law because he has the legal support, which we do not. But something we noticed, how complicated it is for us, to be two women group coordinators (facilitators), to see that the male voice is more respected. When he comes, we realize this group has another constitution, another dynamic, which I believe is still very much in respect of that male voice. [...] unfortunately, we realize that the male voice is much more heard (P4).

[...] I realize that it is easier to deal with some issues, with some conflicts that may appear, that may arise because I am a man. [...] there is the handling of the objection, the gender issue, no doubt: because it is a woman, then I will destabilize her, I will ask her questions, and this affects the other participants of the group, you know? (P6).

[...] this (conducting the group) is something that causes discussions here, if it makes a difference whether you are a facilitating man or a facilitating woman. This is a discussion. My impression is that certain things make a lot of difference if you hear them from another man (P5).

According to the interviewees' report, the gender issue promoted differences in the group's progress in two of the programs. In other words, the gender difference present in the figure of facilitators caused reverberations in the group, as described in the reports.

This fact points to the importance of considering this aspect in structuring groups, always carrying them out with a pair of facilitators and preferably from both genders. According to Beiras and Bronz (2016), group dynamics produce a lot of information happening simultaneously, which can be easily overlooked if there is only one facilitator. In addition, both can talk to each other about what they hear in the group, facilitating analysis and conduct.

In addition, the aforementioned authors state that women should be included in the MWCV groups, in the role of facilitators, forming mixed pairs of facilitators, if possible. According to the authors, this fact is seen as positive by men, making gender discussions more present throughout the meetings. Lima, Medrado, Carolo, and Nascimento (2007) believe that mixed pairs of facilitators bring contributions to projects with groups of men, as they demonstrate the cooperation of men and women in the construction of gender equity and mutual respect.

Bernardes and Mayorga (2017, p. 11) also reinforce this issue, as the results of their research with intervention services with men in the State of Minas Gerais indicated that facilitation by a man and a woman has the "function of projecting the image of an equitable and respectful relationship, thus, enhancing a vicarious sense of learning". Therefore, according to the findings of this study and the literature, it is recommended to use mixed pairs to conduct the reflective groups of men to enhance the group's reflections, promoting gender equality.

3.2.2 Group conduction

Regarding group conduction, the statements of facilitators P4, P5, and P6 are highlighted:

I work a lot with questions to turn statements into questions. We work in a non-lecture format, a format of construction of the theme. [...] in the group, I take the direction of the thematic reflection and build it with the participants, and this construction gives rise to examples, and we work within the-

se examples, which they present themselves. [...] we start to work with them within what they present (P6).

A key aspect is this focus on questions. We know what goals we want to achieve with each meeting and what the questions are, which we call guiding questions, to achieve each of these goals, that is the point! [...] So, by reinforcing them, we can change these men's beliefs, behaviors, and change them based on questions that can make them rethink their view of the world and why they are having certain attitudes (P5).

[...] from each group, we adapt ideas, there is no fixed thing. [...] it is something that we leave open, that we encourage everyone to participate in, sometimes we talk about all issues on the same day. Thus, we are increasing so that they reach new central beliefs. [...] and then we deconstruct them, always playing for the group (P4).

From the content brought by the statements, it is clear that, in the group facilitated by P6, elements of the constructivist approach are brought up, which suggest an intervention based on a construction shared with MWCVs, suggesting a deconstruction of any type of hierarchy in the intervention. Antezana (2012) argues that, in this type of approach, violence is the result of the interaction between the social sphere and the subjectivity of the individual, making it necessary for the participants to understand this process so that they gain more autonomy in their relationships. In this sense, the subject's collaboration is essential for the success of the reflective process.

The facilitators P4 and P5, in turn, demonstrated a more cognitive-behavioral approach, as they address the need for a process of changing beliefs (central) that incite men to violent behavior and that, therefore, need to be modified for behavioral change to take place. According to Antezana (2012), the cognitive-behavioral approach ends up individualizing the phenomenon of violence, understanding it as a resource used by men to reduce tensions and frustrations. It is reinforced that individualizing approaches must be avoided since violence against women is a multi-causal and multi-determined phenomenon.

Reflective groups, according to Atallah et al. (2013), need to be based on a reflective-accountable model that provides group reflections, constituting a place for exchanging experiences and producing meanings based on discussions that happen in the interaction between the participants, such as in personal narratives, general events, and judgments that often indicate sexist, chauvinist, prejudiced, homophobic, and hierarchical ideologies. Thus, there may be an important exchange of values, concepts, and affections between the group members and the possibility of deconstructing violent masculinities.

In this sense, Beiras et al. (2019) suggest that the programs have a more reflective character “to avoid a psychologizing or pathologizing perspective of violence” (p. 272) and that they use the perspective of gender and contemporary feminist theories with a critical and reflective approach. Therefore, it is suggested that the programs adopt a type of approach that raises the reflective and accountable process in men.

Therefore, each program must adapt the chosen methodology to its operating context, bringing the group closer to the reality in which it is inserted, increasing the chances of success. The functioning of the group must, therefore, take place in a flexible way, with varied subjects, respecting the demand of the participants, using guiding questions that instigate reflection and/or dynamics, and themes that adapt to the demand of men, favoring belonging, as well as the reflective process.

Another aspect that is worth mentioning refers to the conduct of the group through questions. For Beiras and Bronz (2016), the questions deserve special attention, as they promote openness to conversations that can bring new meanings. They can both provoke conversations related to the theme being worked on and instigate participants to say what they think about what is being proposed and promote the exchange of different views, which are the basis of the reflective process.

Therefore, the reflective-accountable model proves to be more appropriate, since it allows reflections to be fostered based on the participants' freedom of expression, in a co-participatory and bonding process instead of passive and observant attitudes (Acosta et al., 2004; Beiras & Bronz, 2016), being the most indicated in interventions.

3.2.3 Group configuration

It would be impossible to have closed groups, and it would be terribly difficult. So, they are open groups with five themes, five meetings: we start talking about the Maria da Penha Law; on the second theme, we talk about the belief system; on the third one, we talk about relational skills, and they love it; the fourth theme, myths and truths about domestic violence; and the last one is self-accountability. As a rule, group meetings last about an hour and a half, two hours. [...] we have interaction rules, but the main ones are in relation to the arrival time, not coming drunk to the sessions, the history of absences, and how one will respect the other in these exchanges. [...] So, they (the rules) are presented on the first day of the LMP but are remembered on the other days, for they are an open group (P5).

We have six meetings with them, weekly meetings, lasting about an hour, an hour and a half. In these meetings, we work on various themes, such as the Maria da Penha Law, the protective measures. At the first meeting, we have something more open because it is their first moment. So, it is a moment more of an open speech, of welcoming. In the second meeting, we bring some dynamics, gender roles, strategies for conflict resolution. [...] but we don't have anything fixed, in the second meeting, it will be this, in the third that ... we have some ideas that we will work on, and from what comes in the group we will adapt them. [...] we are starting, it is a closed group and a tidy group. Whoever starts usually ends with us (P4).

[...] the different themes are worked out in a structured way throughout the ten meetings and follow a pre-determined order, namely: introduction of gender discussions, reflections on the forms of violence against women, the role of communication and conflict resolution based on dialogue, identification of aggressive behavior: preventing violence and how to control anger, history of the Law 11.340 / 2006 and its enforcement, considerations on human rights, abuse of alcohol and other drugs, men's health. [...] following a pre-determined schedule of themes that must be executed in a given time (20 hours, since the program is in the format of ten meetings with two hours each) (P1).

The investigated programs follow different formats, mostly weekly and closed, with a minimum of five meetings and a maximum of ten, and with different themes. Although the groups have a pre-determined order of themes to be worked on at the meetings, they have certain flexibility in the discussion of the issues. This last aspect is of paramount importance to achieving reflection and accountability objectives, as, according to Atallah et al. (2013), groups with closed contents and themes, previously established by the team, tend to make participants more passive and observant, bringing a punitive model, which should be avoided. Therefore, the authors recommend that reflection takes place in a space for the creation and active participation of men.

In this sense, Beiras and Bronz (2016) establish that the number of meetings does not need to be previously defined by the facilitators. However, they emphasize that the international literature indicates a minimum of ten meetings, and a smaller number of meetings can be detrimental to the discussions, since the inclusion of individual issues, as well as further exploring the discussed themes, becomes more limited due to the concern with the effectiveness of the scheduled themes.

Beiras et al. (2019) defend a minimum number between 12 and 15 meetings in order to guarantee the quality of the reflection. In addition, it is emphasized that, in addition to the adopted format, the focus on accountability must be maintained through participatory methodologies, reflective questions, and activities that cause changes in these men's masculinities. Therefore, it is suggested that teams reflect on the configuration of the groups, making the process more participatory and collaborative, including men in the choice of themes, the number of meetings, the time of each meeting, the opening hours of the group, and other demands that may occasionally arise and/or that are part of the location, context, and/or institution in which the study/program is inserted.

In addition to the essential issues discussed in this category, the importance of analyzing groups and their insertion in the current social structure, which Saffioti (2004) calls a patriarchal-racist-capitalist structure or system, is emphasized. In this sense, the aforementioned author argues that, while there is no radical change in the patriarchal-racist-capitalist system, inequalities and violence (especially those directed at women and minorities) tend to thrive. That is, while there is no transformation of the social structure in which we live, violence against women will continue to thrive, mainly due to the aspects of domination/oppression/exploitation that exist in this structure (Saffioti, 2004).

Therefore, the assistance for MWCVs must be carried out in an integrated and collective way, with social movements, feminist collectives, public policies, and state actions to protect women, favoring the expansion of the capacity of health and social assistance services so that they act in a communal and preventive way, expanding the discussions around gender equality in schools, community centers, and neighborhood associations, for example. Therefore, the action around violence against women requires joint actions in favor of the deconstruction of violent masculinity and the exploitation/domination/oppression expressed by the inherent contradictions in the patriarchal/racist/capitalist system.

3.3 Post-group phase

The third category encompasses the description of the post-group phase and involves the program assessment stage, as well as the monitoring of men after the program, as follows:

[...] we had an idea, which has not been implemented yet, we haven't yet, which is to do home visits after 30 days, some states do that. [...] we don't do this today due to lack of human resources, we don't have the staff to do this, right? (P6).

[...] we, after about 90/120 days after ending the group, do a reassessment interview, where we call these men to find out how they are doing now? What happened after the group? (sic) What did the group add? [...] so we give them a few months to make sure that many have already been through their hearing, many have already finished their legal suit, or not, but that things may be more organized, a little different than they were before (P4).

[...] a six-month follow-up of these men, to really see the impact of this program for the families: What impacted in this program? Was there any significance of this program? (P1).

According to the reports, only one of the programs monitors the graduates, for up to six months after the end of the groups, through home visits. However, all programs carry out some type of assessment of the reflective groups with the

MWCVs, most of them at the end of the group cycle, or after 90/120 days, according to one of the studied programs.

According to Atallah et al. (2013), the services' monitoring and assessment activities have few experiences and incipient instruments and a low capacity to obtain results. In this sense, Beiras and Bronz (2016) indicate the production of a final report containing all the information generated by the assessment instrument(s) to verify if the program was satisfactory or if there is a need to continue with it, if possible.

In addition, Acosta et al. (2004) indicate follow-up groups, also known as post-group follow-up. According to the authors, the follow-up should take place for a one-year period, with a total of five meetings with increased the interval throughout the process. The meetings should start 40 days after the end of the reflective group, serving to monitor and support these post-group men in order to continue the assessment of the impact of the program in their lives, as well as to verify the recurrence or not of situations of violence (Acosta et al., 2004). However, the studied programs demonstrated that they still fall short of an ideal assessment or monitoring methodology due to the lack of human and financial resources, lack of institutional support, lack of a specific public policy, among other challenges already described in the results of this program.

Therefore, it can be seen that assessment is an activity that needs to be further investigated by the programs, since the strategies used to assess these men based only on their recidivism and re-entry in the justice court do not cover the complexity of the violence phenomenon. Therefore, it is necessary to carry out an assessment that considers a longer time follow-up with these men after the end of group consultations, in a more in-depth and representative way.

4. Closing remarks

The attendance of men who commit domestic violence has expanded in Brazil. However, it still tends to expand, given the country's dimensions and demands. Therefore, this study sought to compare and discuss the methodologies used in three MWCV assistance programs located in Brazil's different regions.

This study's main results demonstrated a need for investment in training and continuing training for group facilitators to qualify group practices and enhance the reflective and accountable space. In addition, group service through a mixed

pair of facilitators is recommended, enhancing men's learning, reflection, and accountability.

With regard to the operation of the programs and approaches adopted, it is suggested that approaches that encourage the reflective and accountable process be adopted, to avoid psychologizing or pathologizing perspectives of violence (Beiras et al., 2019). The programs must also adapt the chosen methodology to their context, bringing the group closer to the reality in which it operates, increasing the chances of success. For this, group functioning must take place flexibly, with varied subjects, respecting the demand of the participants, using guiding questions that instigate reflection and/or dynamics and subjects that adapt to the demand of men, favoring belonging well as the reflective process.

In addition to problematizing the methodology, it is worth emphasizing the importance of analyzing groups and their insertion in the current social structure, which Saffioti (2004) calls a patriarchal-racist-capitalist structure or system. In this sense, the aforementioned author argues that, while there is no radical change in this system, inequalities and violence (especially those directed at women and minorities) tend to thrive. That is, while there is no transformation of the social structure in which we live, violence against women will continue to thrive, mainly due to the aspects of domination/oppression/exploitation that are inherent to the structure (Saffioti, 2004).

In this sense, it is necessary to foster mental assistance for MWCVs in a collective and integrated way with social movements, feminist collectives, public policies, and state actions to protect women, favoring the expansion of the capacity of health and social assistance services, so that they act in a communal and preventive way, and not only after the occurrence of violence, expanding the discussions around gender equity in schools, community centers, and neighborhood associations, for example. Therefore, the action around violence against women requires joint actions in favor of the deconstruction of violent masculinity and the exploitation/domination/oppression expressed by patriarchy/racism/capitalism.

To conclude, it is worth emphasizing the need for specific public policies to assist MWCVs, financial and institutional support for the expansion of programs, and the need for integration of the different institutions in the network of protection for women. It should be noted that this study has limitations in terms of the

number of investigated programs and interviewed facilitators. In this sense, new studies are indicated, which may cover a greater number of programs and/or facilitators based on different analyzes and theoretical contributions, providing the expansion of discussions and the dissemination of the importance of mental assistance for men who commit violence against women.

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