



Article

Social Intervention That Facilitates Recovery from Gender-Based Violence: Dialogic Reconstruction of Memory

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Abstract: Services for victims of gender-based violence are an interdisciplinary work space where the recovery of women and, thus, preventing their social exclusion are among the main objectives. Although previous scientific literature provides some indicators of the social impact of these services, that is, the improvements in the lives of these women, and allow them to advance in their recovery, it is necessary to deepen and broaden this knowledge. One of the objectives of the SOLNET R&D research was to more comprehensively identify the indicators of the social impact of these interventions. This objective was achieved by carrying out 8 case studies and a total of 56 interviews—32 of which involved women who were victims of violence—in third-sector organisations that tend to women victims in 7 different regions of Spain. The results of our research show that the dialogical reconstruction of the memory of violence contributes to overcoming one of the main barriers to women's recovery: emotional dependency. To achieve this impact, the dialogic reconstruction of memory should focus on changing the image these women have of the abuser and the conceptions of love associated with violence. These results have important implications for the design and evaluation of interventions carried out in services for women victims of gender-based violence. The application of these results can help these women successfully leave the situation of violence and build a violence-free future.

Keywords: violence against women; dialogical reconstruction of memory; recovery; intervention; preventive socialisation



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1. Introduction

The serious problem of gender-based violence implies the need to carry out interventions based on the needs of women victims and help them achieve a full recovery, increasing their wellbeing and reducing the likelihood of recidivism. In this way, the R+D+i Research Project that frames this article is SOL.NET: Solidarity Networks with Impact on the Recovery Processes of Women Victims of Gender-Based Violence (2019–2022). The results of this research provided knowledge on the definition of the concept of recovery of women in a situation of gender-based violence, specifying those indicators that contribute to a social impact in recovery, i.e., those that show an improvement in the lives of women.

When we refer to recovery in the context of gender-based violence, we must keep in mind that it is a nonlinear process in which women must cope with the aftermath of an experience marked by trauma (Mechanic et al. 2008). Thus, recovery is more than just surviving; it involves creating a life away from violence. For women, it involves a process of reflection on the meaning they give to their experiences. Recovery therefore entails important changes in the meaning women victims of gender-based violence give to their relationships and life, as well as the vision they have of themselves (Melgar et al. 2021).

Among the main obstacles identified in achieving this recovery are the nonidentification of violence and emotional dependence (Barnett 2000; Hoff 1990; Koch 1987; LaViolette and Barnett 2000; Puigvert et al. 2024). Different authors highlight that the identification or nonidentification of violent behaviours is especially conditioned by schemas, i.e., the networks of information that guide perceptions, representations and interpretations, as well as interactions with others. Therefore, the recognition of violence in its multiple expressions depends on many variables shaped by experience, such as age, education, socioeconomic status and exposure to violence (Chamberland et al. 2007; Fiske and Taylor 1991; Hamilton 2005). At other times, experiences of violence seem to have been erased or normalised through what is called the culture of pretence (Francis et al. 2017), so that this violence is not openly acknowledged until it has ceased (Goodkind et al. 2003; Thomas and Scott-Tilley 2017). This culture of pretence harbours various external and internal factors, such as self-blame, shame, humiliation and fear of others in the community observing the reality of the victimised woman's relationship (Francis et al. 2017).

Emotional dependence also stems from the learning that women acquire over their lives, specifically from socialisation into falling in love with violent models of attractiveness (Koegler et al. 2019; LaViolette and Barnett 2000; Puigvert et al. 2019; Torras-Gómez et al. 2020). The assumption of this socialisation implies the link between desire and/or attraction and people who reflect a model of traditional dominant masculinity that exercises violence. That is, instead of being rejected, people who show attitudes of domination, contempt, abuse, etc., are presented as desirable. In recent years, different studies, especially those from the social sciences, have highlighted the social dimension of attraction and desire. In turn, these studies identify the existence of a dominant coercive discourse that imposes a link between people with violent attitudes and behaviour and attraction and arousal. In contrast, people and relationships without violent behaviour are presented, from the language of ethics, as less exciting.

The learning of these models of attractiveness can be acquired through multiple interactions with different people in the direct environment (family or friends) but also through other sources such as the media (Duque et al. 2023; Valls et al. 2008). For this reason, maintaining relationships with people who exercise domination or abuse over a long period of time—whether in a single relationship that lasts over time or through different sporadic relationships—can, instead of leading to the rejection of this model of masculinity, in fact reinforce the desire to fall in love with those who embody this model. This situation leads some women to feel an emotional ambivalence in which they recognise that this type of person does not suit them, as having a relationship with such a person is harmful, but at the same time, the women say they feel in love (Duque et al. 2023; LaViolette and Barnett 2000).

In this sense, providing knowledge about socialisation can facilitate its impact on sex-affective relationships and can contribute to the awareness of violent relationships and the self-identification of these relationships (Puigvert et al. 2024). Specifically, several studies highlight the importance of working to enhance critical analysis of memories. This work facilitates women's understanding of the past and coping with the future (Klein et al. 2010). This work has been carried out, for example, in the MEMO4LOVE project (Racionero-Plaza et al. 2020), where, through a programme for the preventive socialisation of gender-based violence and through awareness-raising interventions of submission to the dominant coercive discourse, participants were able to recognise the violent attitudes and behaviours they had experienced in the past. Similar work was carried out through the reading of the book "Radical Love" (Gómez 2015), where the girls, through their participation in a dialogic feminist discussion (Ruíz-Eugenio et al. 2020), connected the theoretical knowledge related therein with their experiences, thus bringing to the surface their memories regarding the relationships they maintained or had maintained with profiles that responded to traditional dominant masculinity and their consequences (Racionero-Plaza et al. 2020).

To support the identification of violence, it is also important to understand and be aware of gender-based violence in a broad sense to contribute to identifying behaviours

beyond physical violence, enabling women to recognise themselves as victims of such situations and to avoid the normalisation of certain nonphysical or sexual violence behaviours (Bradbury-Jones et al. 2016; Gómez-González et al. 2023; Ohnishi et al. 2011; Stöckl and Penhale 2015). Thus, understanding the specificity and phenomenology of gender-based violence can help women resignify their experiences, minimising their feelings of guilt and shame (Habigzang et al. 2018).

In the process of identifying the violence experienced and overcoming emotional dependency, interventions carried out by women's services are important, as their efficiency determines the chances of success (Ballan and Freyer 2019; Ekström 2015). Additionally, informal networks, i.e., other nonprofessionals in the environment, play decisive roles (Botija et al. 2024; Melgar et al. 2021; Pantoja et al. 2023; Schucan Bird et al. 2022). Such interventions, both from formal services and from informal networks, must be based on scientific evidence and must have an impact on recovery and maintenance over time (Anderson et al. 2012; Goodman et al. 2003; Soler-Gallart and Flecha 2022), breaking with the idealisation of abusive relationships, the internalisation of alternative conceptions of attraction and the modification of patriarchal cultural narratives (De la Mata et al. 2022; Francis et al. 2017).

The results of our research presented in this article provide knowledge about those elements that contribute to identifying violence and breaking the emotional dependence of women who have experienced gender-based violence (Melgar 2019–2021; Melgar et al. 2021). The validity of these elements is confirmed through the presentation of evidence on their impact on the wellbeing of women's lives and, thus, on their recovery process. Specifically, the mode of intervention that supports women's ability to identify violence and overcome emotional dependence, which has not been considered thus far in previous scientific literature, is the dialogic reconstruction of memory (López de Aguilera et al. 2021; McAdams and McLean 2013; Puigvert et al. 2024).

2. Materials and Methods

For the development of the R&D&I SOL.NET (Melgar 2019–2021) research, we have used a communicative methodology (Puigvert 2014), which is characterised by its capacity to influence social realities with the aim of transforming them. This methodology incorporates the voice of the groups under investigation, not as an objective in itself but as a way to overcome the situations of inequality and exclusion that they experience (Valls and Padrós 2011). To make this methodology operational, an analysis is carried out, on the one hand, of the factors that lead to inequality and social exclusion and, on the other hand, of those that contribute to transforming these conditions. This approach also allows the evaluation of the social impact of the research to be taken into account both during and after the research (Flecha and Soler 2013). In all cases, the people in charge of conducting and supervising the fieldwork were people with proven experience in research as well as in professional interventions with victims of gender-based violence.

2.1. Information Extraction Techniques

The information was obtained by carrying out 8 case studies of associations that provided assistance to women victims of gender-based violence, in which 4 different information-gathering techniques were applied. First, for each of the organisations, a documentary analysis was carried out on the organisation, which included its history and qualitative and/or quantitative information on the social and political impact achieved. The achievement of this impact was evaluated using the recovery indicators identified in an earlier phase of the research, as mentioned in the introduction of this article (Melgar et al. 2021). Subsequently, 8 in-depth interviews were carried out with a representative of each organisation or a professional working in the organisation, 1 from each organisation. Eight in-depth interviews were conducted with family members, friends or other people in the community of a user who had played a relevant role in the woman's recovery process, 1 from each organisation. Eight discussion groups were carried out with people

collaborating with the organisation, group, or institution and who had been actively participating in the victim support actions, 1 from each organisation. Finally, 32 communicative life stories were recorded with users, half of whom had started their recovery process recently (in the previous 6 months) and the other half who had been in contact with the association for at least one year, with 4 women from each entity. A total of 56 techniques (communicative life stories, communicative focus groups and interviews) were applied in organisations serving women in situations of gender-based violence in 7 different regions of Spain. Thirty-two of these techniques involved the use of communicative life stories with victims of gender-based violence.

In conducting the communicative life stories, special emphasis was placed on identifying the presence or absence of a dialogic reconstruction of memory within the dialogues the woman had with others throughout her life. It is important to note that the communicative life stories were not, in themselves, the intervention through which the dialogic reconstruction of memory was carried out. Instead, these communicative life stories served as a technique to gather information about the participant's interactions, wherein this dialogic reconstruction occurred, and to assess its impact on her recovery process from gender-based violence.

Previous research indicates that changes in autobiographical memories are primarily influenced by social interventions and emotional states. Therefore, these memories are likely altered through a dialogic environment that fosters discussion (López de Aguilera et al. 2021). Such an environment should facilitate the sharing and discussion of ideas related to the experiences and knowledge of others. The social intervention should promote an egalitarian discourse that encourages reflection during and after the interaction. In the development of the process, what the woman remembers from the very beginning should be recorded.

The person offering help progressively introduces evidence that provides additional information to the woman's narrative, enabling her to recognize and critically analyze the reality of her experiences. Furthermore, prioritizing the participant's well-being and autonomy is crucial, allowing her to express her memories without judgment, thus enabling these memories to be reoriented (López de Aguilera et al. 2021).

Consequently, in developing these communicative life stories, we aimed to identify the dialogic conditions that facilitated the women's ability to overcome emotional dependence, and how these conditions corresponded with those previously described.

Therefore, in the development of these communicative life stories, we identify, in cases of women who had managed to break free from emotional dependence, the dialogue conditions that facilitated this achievement and their alignment with those previously described.

2.2. Participants

The women participating in the communicative life stories were selected from among the women who served in the 8 entities on which a case study was carried out. Four women from each of the entities participated.

First, the research team compiled a database with associations throughout Spain that provide services to women victims of gender-based violence. A total of 147 associations were identified. Very few of these entities have published information that allows for an assessment of their social impact based on the recovery indicators mentioned earlier. Typically, the available information is descriptive, focusing on their objectives and the services they offer. Consequently, it was necessary to contact these entities directly to obtain the required information. Through this process, we determined that 18 of them had indeed achieved a measurable social impact. The remaining 129 organizations either did not supply the requested information or only provided data on the number of individuals served, without detailing the outcomes or changes resulting from their interventions. The associations themselves acknowledged that they do not conduct assessments of their social impact.

For the selection of the case studies, among all these associations, a series of criteria were established based on the information obtained in the previous phase of the review of the scientific literature. Thus, the selected organisations had to show evidence of the impact achieved in the recovery process of the women victims of gender-based violence. Therefore, the greater or lesser impact of an organisation was not determined by the number of women they attended to but by the improvements that these women achieved through their intervention in the following areas: health, employment, education, safety, social participation and/or social relations and housing. Table A2 in the Appendix A provides information about the selected associations.

From among all those associations that showed evidence of social impact, the research team, by consensus, selected 8 associations to be investigated, taking into account geographical diversity, the funding of the entities, their size and that they catered to women of different profiles, paying special attention to the inclusion of vulnerable groups. Table A1 in the Appendix A provides information on the profiles of the women interviewed.

All participants were informed about the purpose of the research, their right to refuse or withdraw participation at any time, and their right to receive further information about the conduct of the study as well as the results obtained. This information was communicated orally and supplemented with a written document. The document provided to the participants included the contact information of the research team.

2.3. Analysis

The analysis of the information was carried out on the basis of two dimensions: exclusionary and transformative. All information that exposed elements that would have hindered the process of recovery from gender-based violence against women was identified as exclusionary; in contrast, information that revealed elements that would have facilitated this process was identified as transformative. With regard to the categories of analysis, we established 5 large blocks that referred to the focus of the action that had had an impact on recovery: the women's care association studied, other institutional or third-sector services, the environment and community (family, friends...), the woman herself and others who were not included in the previous categories. Table A2 in the Appendix A presents the analysis table used as well as the different subsections of each category of analysis. These subcategories focus on the characteristics of the interventions and the impact achieved in the recovery process. In the case of the "environment and community" category, it is worth noting that information was collected regarding their reactions to being made aware of the situation of violence and their role in the woman's recovery process. In the case of the category "woman survivor", no subcategories were established, so the information was analysed on the basis of the role the woman played in her own process, according to the two dimensions indicated above.

3. Results

The results show that the participating women's breaking with their emotional dependence involves a process of dialogic reconstruction of memory in the process of recovering from gender-based violence. This process entails establishing an egalitarian dialogue through which to recover forgotten memories by transferring them from unconsciousness to consciousness; at the same time, it requires working on memories that have been distorted, that is, that entail a modification of what actually happened. Throughout this process, the people around the women (family members, friends, other victims, women's services, health and social services professionals, etc.) can play a facilitating role in recovering these memories and in the construction of alternatives to the narratives that legitimise violence.

3.1. Dialogic Reconstruction of Memory: Dialogues That Break Emotional Dependence

The results obtained in our research show that the narratives that women victims of gender-based violence present about their experiences are the result of a construction

that goes beyond individual thought. In this construction, the interactions with people in the environment and/or service professionals who attend to the women can guide these narratives towards transformation and, as a result, helping them to overcome their emotional dependence or, on the contrary, making the violence invisible, reducing its severity or supporting the woman's falling in love with the man who mistreats her.

In the case of interactions that do not favour recovery, we identified two main characteristics. First, the justification of emotional dependence is based on the irrationality of emotions, i.e., the impossibility of avoiding being in love with someone who mistreats her. Second is the projection of a positive and even attractive image of the abuser.

A: And I questioned whether or not he was an abuser, because talking to friends, who are no longer friends, they said to me, "Are you sure that he was? Are you sure that he abused you?" And I felt very questioned. I didn't see him as an abuser and so that made me doubt a lot whether he really was or wasn't. (Woman survivor of violence, 50 years)

In contrast, those interactions that have facilitated a transformative process are characterised by having established an egalitarian dialogue where the main focus was the socialisation of women around the attraction towards a model of traditional dominant masculinity and the consequent model of affective and sexual relationships, in which domination and abuse could take place. We see, therefore, that these dialogues reflect the main current scientific evidence. In addition to this recognition of the women's socialisation, as detailed in the following sections, the content of these conversations also included memories of the characteristics of the person or persons who mistreated them and their conceptions of love relationships.

So for me, for example, in my case, what helped me a lot is that she (friend) made me think, that is, instead of telling me directly, she said to me, "but do you think that if this happened, he would support you?" In other words, she put me in the position of thinking, and I said, "Jeez, this is not normal". Because in the end you normalise your relationship so much, because you don't see it from another perspective, from the outside, that it makes you realise that if this were happening to someone else, it wouldn't be normal. So, she would give me those examples, and she would give me cases that I realised, so she would give me cases and I would start to open my eyes, and she would tell me, "He is mistreating you psychologically, I have been seeing you for years, you are getting sadder and sadder, you are no longer you", and that was when I started to realise the mistreatment. (Woman survivor of violence, 36 years)

3.1.1. Characteristics of Interactions in the Dialogical Reconstruction of Memory with Women Victims of Gender-Based Violence

Our fieldwork also allowed us to identify how these interactions that work on the dialogical reconstruction of memory with women victims of gender-based violence should be developed. These characteristics are as follows:

- o The victim should not be blamed or judged.
- o Equal dialogue: breaking down hierarchies, listening to her and not acting in a paternalistic way. Sincerity is particularly important in this dialogue to avoid unrealistic expectations and disappointments, e.g., about how the process will go.
- o Creating a bond: building trust, making her feel safe and supported, showing that the person accompanying her is committed to the process of transformation that the woman will undergo.
- o Value the woman's transformative potential and act accordingly: putting women at the centre and basing the intervention on women's needs. The women are placed in the position of protagonists in the course of their own recovery. This positioning helps them to empower themselves so that they know their rights and stand up for them. At the same time, women must be encouraged to have high expectations. Therefore,

we must abandon any view of women that might revictimise them or put them in a position of inferiority.

- o Empowerment: preventing the women from becoming dependent in the long term on any person or service that supports them.
- o Acquiring a discourse of possibility: encouraging women to take an active role in transforming difficulties into possibilities and seeking alternative ways of coping when adversity arises.
- o Providing the women with examples of lives that are free from violence.
- o Accompanying: characterised by continuity and availability and breaking the feeling of loneliness. That is, during the process, support and follow-up are provided to the women at all times. This support consists of preventing the women from the feelings of abandonment that they have felt from other institutions and people.
- o Not criminalising all men: this characteristic involves helping the women reflect on the characteristics of men who perpetrate violence and the recognition of another type of masculinity that is the complete opposite—new, alternative masculinities.

She doesn't help me by saying, "You have to do this". What she does is try to get me to think, to reconsider. . . (. . .) She never tells me, "You have to do this". No, she makes me think, reflect, both with me and with my daughters. (Woman survivor of violence, 44 years)

In my ignorance, I thought, "They're going to make me crazy with the feminist stuff, that he's the bad guy. . ." Of course, I still didn't have a clear idea that I had been mistreated, so I thought, "They're going to beat him up or I'm going to beat him up, and he doesn't deserve it". In other words, I had a totally wrong idea about associations, totally wrong about what they are. And now, I'm talking about empowerment; for me, power and empowerment before was, "Men are the bad guys, let's go after them. . .". But I didn't see it as something personal, as saying, "I feel empowered, I feel strong, I feel alive"; I had a very different concept. (Woman survivor of violence, 50 years)

3.1.2. Changing the Image of the Abuser

When exploring their experience, the women participating in our research who showed emotional dependence towards their abusers acknowledged having described the abuser in the past in a distorted way. In other words, they presented an image that did not correspond to reality. In this sense, we found testimonies of women who stated that they did not remember the violent behaviour of their partner or minimised its seriousness in the past, even going so far as to remember to a greater extent only the moments shared with that person in which violence was not exercised. In this way, they prioritised what they categorised as "good memories".

[referring to conversations with people who help you]. They dismantle you, they take away your guilt, they take away your sorrow (. . .) One very good thing I had was a memory. . . they remembered things that I had said maybe three months ago, "because you had said this". And maybe I didn't even remember that I had lived through that and she remembered. Because, of course, it was normal for me to say, "When you go into the street, I'm going to take you, and I'm going to throw a stone at you. You're going to get a stone in the head, and you won't know where it's coming from". As I was used to that every day, as if I didn't know. . . She remembered everything and took away my sorrow, the blame and took it all away from me. (Woman survivor of violence, 36 years)

Among the women participating in our research, those who achieved recovery and sustained it over time, having overcome emotional dependence, had changed this positive perception of the abuser and delegitimised the positive thoughts associated with abuse through an exercise of dialogical reconstruction of memory. In this process, it was particularly important to recognise the existence of a dominant coercive discourse that reinforces traditional dominant masculinities.

And look, it's funny, I've always seen him "uhhhhhh", but, "uhhhh" of "my God!" [referring to the attraction I felt for him].

I hadn't seen him for a long time, and when we had the trial about child custody and all these things, I don't know if it had been ten months or a year since I had seen him. When I saw him in court, he had shrunk in size; he was smaller, you know what I mean? But really smaller in height, I mean, at what point was he so tall? (. . .)

So, when I left the court, I deduced that he had come down because I had put him on a pedestal. And I had grown up because I felt very small next to him, I was always very small, very little, very small, tiny. And I had grown up because I was worth it, and he had come down from where he was mounted, I don't know where I had put him. (Woman survivor of violence, 44 years)

3.1.3. Decoupling Love from Violence

Women who succeeded in breaking their emotional dependence through the dialogical reconstruction of memory broke with their conception of love associated with violence, rejected the relationship between love and irrationality, and disassociated falling in love from control, inequality or power. On this point, it is important to emphasise the role of the culture of pretence that prevents violence from being recognised or may even confuse it with love. In their accounts, women who had gone through recovery processes expressed how difficult it was for them to realise that their perception of their relationship was skewed. In this sense, their current analysis leads them to conclude that their own distortion of reality is a strategy they used to maintain the relationship.

(when asked if he considered that what he had in his relationship was love) Man, obviously it wasn't, I mean, but I recognise it now. Look, you have to idealise love to the maximum in order to be able to put up with everything that person does to you, I mean, I've explained myself in a few words. You have to idealise it, and you are so, so in love and you love him so much that you have to put up with it, because if you don't love him so much, you can't put up with it, you run away. (Woman survivor of violence, 36 years)

Two other elements that were also identified in their stories and that make it difficult to recognise violence are stereotypical and reductionist views of gender-based violence. This reductionism, in some cases, means that when violence occurs outside stable relationships or does not involve physical violence, it is not identified as violence.

And she says, "My friend says I'm suffering from gender-based violence, but I told her I'm not". She had all the symptoms, and yet the friend from the outside had seen them at first glance; she had told her, "He is mistreating you", and she said, "No because he doesn't hit me". We have the feeling that if he doesn't hit you, he doesn't mistreat you; if he doesn't hit you, he doesn't do anything to you, you know? (Family member of woman survivor of violence, 44 years)

Los resultados obtenidos permiten concluir que, en el caso de las mujeres víctimas de violencia de género, la dependencia emocional se rompe cuando, a través de un proceso de reflexión, reconocen que sus concepciones sobre las relaciones amorosas son el resultado de un proceso de socialización, es decir, de aprendizajes adquiridos a lo largo de sus vidas. En consecuencia, rechazan la idea de considerar el amor como algo irracional. Identifican los sesgos que las llevaron a tener una percepción distorsionada de su relación. Superan las visiones estereotipadas y reduccionistas de la violencia de género, que dificultan el reconocerse a sí mismas como víctimas. Además, rompen con la concepción del amor vinculada a la violencia, desvinculando el enamoramiento del control, la desigualdad o el poder. Estos elementos pueden ser tenidos en cuenta como indicadores a la hora de evaluar el impacto de las intervenciones en la superación de la dependencia emocional.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

Although the impact of the dialogic reconstruction of memory on the prevention of gender-based violence has already been confirmed with an adolescent population (Anderson 2008; López de Aguilera et al. 2021; Puigvert et al. 2024; Torras-Gómez et al. 2020), until now, no studies have analysed its role in working with women victims of gender-based violence. The results obtained show the effectiveness of the dialogic reconstruction of memory in addressing one of the elements that previous scientific literature has identified as the main barrier in the recovery processes of women victims of gender-based violence: emotional dependence (Koegler et al. 2019; Puigvert et al. 2019). Therefore, we not only provide knowledge about its effectiveness with another group but also specify its impacts on the recovery process.

As in the research project led by Racionero-Plaza et al. (2020) “MEMO4LOVE”, as well as in other research (Duque et al. 2023; Ruíz-Eugenio et al. 2020), through reflection on socialisation in affective and sexual relationships, women became aware of the dominant coercive discourse within relationships. This awareness allowed them to recognise violent attitudes and behaviours they had experienced in their relationships. In our research, more specifically, in terms of the behaviours and attitudes of their abusers and in the dynamics of their relationships, we eliminated the distortions that had allowed the women to construct a positive image in this respect. The results obtained allow us to conclude that women victims of gender-based violence can overcome emotional dependence through a reflective process, during which they arrive at certain critical realizations. They recognize that their conceptions of romantic relationships are shaped by socialization, that is, the learning acquired throughout their lives. Consequently, they reject the notion of love as irrational. They identify elements in their narratives that did not correspond to their real past experiences, thereby showing they have become aware of the distorted perception they had of their relationships. Additionally, they overcome stereotypical and reductionist views of gender-based violence, which hinder self-identification as victims. Furthermore, they disentangle the concept of love from violence, separating falling in love from elements of control, inequality, or power. These realizations can be considered as indicators for evaluating the impact of interventions in overcoming emotional dependence.

These findings are of particular interest to all those who place value on transformative interactions and, more specifically, people who work in different services for women and the people around them (Roberts and Schenkman 2005; Moe 2007). Focusing on the dialogical reconstruction of memory (López de Aguilera et al. 2021; Salceda et al. 2020), we specify the aspects mentioned above on which, in the case of gender-based violence, reflection should focus, but we also specify how these dialogues should take place: in an egalitarian manner, through building a bond with the woman and avoiding the criminalisation of all men, among other characteristics.

However, to favour the recovery of women victims of gender-based violence by applying this knowledge, it must be transferred to the corresponding services, to the victims’ environment, and to the general public. It is these last two groups that we often forget when transferring the results of our research, although, as different studies have shown, they can play a crucial role (Melgar et al. 2021; Schucan Bird et al. 2022). Friends, family members, and coworkers are often the first people with whom women share their experiences and their interpretation of them. The first challenge we face is the potential for these people to withdraw, leaving the woman in a situation of isolation (Flecha 2021). The second challenge is that these shared dialogues should help the women recognise reality and avoid distorting their present experiences, as well as recognise in their life trajectory the socialisation process, they have undergone that may have brought them closer to violence (Francis et al. 2017; Goodkind et al. 2003; Thomas and Scott-Tilley 2017). As previous research has shown, special emphasis should be placed on the experience of previous affective and sexual relationships, whether stable or sporadic, as this is one of the main risk factors for victimisation in gender-based violence, above even family violence (Bramsen et al. 2012; Cohen et al. 2018; Gómez 2015; Oliver et al. 2021; Tapp and Moore 2016).

Although some authors claim that recovery work is facilitated when women have ended a violent relationship (Francis et al. 2017; Goodkind et al. 2003; Thomas and Scott-Tilley 2017), our fieldwork was conducted entirely with women who had already ended the relationship. The fact that we did not interview women who were still in the relationship does not allow us to establish or disregard being out of a violent relationship as a requirement when working on the dialogical reconstruction of memory.

Although these results will allow us to improve formal and informal interventions for women victims of gender-based violence, aspects such as the one mentioned above show that there are still questions to answer with regard to the dialogical reconstruction of memory. The results presented here, as well as future results, stand out for their potential social impact on the process of recovery from gender-based violence.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Socio-demographic data on women survivors of violence.

Age
4 between 18–30
18 between 30–50
8 between 51–65
2 more than 65
Academic background
7 compulsory basic education studies
2 baccalaureate
3 vocational training (intermediate level)
1 vocational training (higher level)
7 degree

Table A1. *Cont.*

3 doctorate and/or master's degree
9 no qualification recorded
Marital status
4 single
1 married
4 separate
12 divorced
3 widow
8 not stated
Profession
4 socio-health
3 unemployed
3 administrative
3 teacher
2 cleaner
2 security guard
1 retired
1 telephone operator
1 billing technician
1 tourism technician
1 waitress
1 teacher's assistant
1 social worker
1 social educator
1 architect
1 psychologist
5 not stated
Children
23 do have
9 do not have

Table A2. Information about the entities participating in the case studies.

Entity Code	Year of Creation	People Served	Areas of Work	Description
1	1998	Women in situations of gender-based violence	Training, psychological support, counselling, awareness-raising, prevention, assistance.	Organisation that offers psychological and social support, and aims to provide accompaniment that enhances individual personal skills. It also links women in leisure, social, training and work activities, encouraging their participation in them.
2	2014	Women at risk or victims of forced marriage	Awareness-raising, psychological, health, labour, training, legal, academic, community.	Organisation that offers psychological-emotional support with the aim of accompanying them in their process towards emotional wellbeing. They also have a temporary housing resource and work in a network with the services of the territory with the aim of achieving a comprehensive recovery through coordinated work.
3	2002	Women at risk of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation. As well as their children	Awareness-raising, vocational training, academic training, psychosocial intervention, legal support	Organisation that offers psychosocial support to women in situations of gender-based violence, with legal assistance and training and employment support services.
4	2014	Women at risk of gender-based violence and their children	Counselling, support mechanisms, awareness-raising, employment entrepreneurship, legal support, psychological care, family care, educational training.	Organisation that offers comprehensive care through psychological care, legal advice, care for minors, care for family members, search for resources and group sessions.
5	1990	Women at risk of gender-based violence, family members and minors, men and women	Education, adult education, gender equality, awareness-raising, community work, prevention, legal assistance, sport, health, leisure, etc.	Organisation that carries out campaigns for the prevention of gender violence. Provides comprehensive care for victims of gender-based violence.
6	2015	Women at risk of gender-based violence and family members	Psychosocial support, legal assistance, job training, awareness raising	Organisation that provides shelter for women in situations of gender-based violence, accompaniment, for example, to court. It also offers support for reintegration into the labour market, protection for minors and training for empowerment. At the same time, they raise awareness through conferences, talks. . .
7	2008	Women in situations of gender-based violence	Psychological accompaniment, legal advice, community accompaniment.	Organisation that accompanies women in situations of gender violence. It also offers comprehensive care through psychological care, legal advice and collective and leisure activities.
8	1991	Women in situations of gender-based violence and their children	Psychological, social, legal care	Recovery centre, where women in a situation of gender violence and their children find comprehensive care, through psychological support, legal, social and educational counselling.

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