





The impact of the sociocommunity on the recovery process for women in situations of gender violence: The Spanish political-regulatory framework from a regional, State and European perspective

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ENG Abstract. The fight against gender violence is one of the main challenges for society in the twenty-first century. Policies and legislation can support and promote significant changes if they are consistent with the main evidence generated by the international scientific community, as demonstrated by interventions in social work. Therefore, this article presents a review of regional, national and European regulations to support policies for citizens' involvement in preventing gender violence and supporting the recovery of women who suffer from it. Using scientific evidence that confirms the importance of the sociocommunity in the recovery of victims, an extensive review of regional, national and European legislation was conducted to examine how this fundamental variable is made explicit in these regulations and the policies designed in accordance with them. The findings support international scientific evidence and identify the following elements for the involvement of citizens in recovery processes: community participation, interconnection and collaboration, citizen training, social dialogue and solidarity networks, and the protection of the environment, which unfortunately is not widespread in the legislation subject to analysis. This article also provides recommendations based on the main strengths detected and makes proposals based on gaps identified in the laws.

Keywords: gender-based violence; women; recovery; legislation; second-order violence, isolating violence.

ES El impacto de lo sociocomunitario en el proceso de recuperación de las mujeres en situación de violencia de género: el caso del marco político-normativo español desde la perspectiva autonómica, estatal y europea

Resumen. La lucha contra la violencia de género es uno de los principales retos para la sociedad en el siglo XXI. Las políticas y legislaciones pueden amparar y promover cambios significativos si son coherentes con las principales evidencias generadas por la comunidad científica internacional como se demuestra en la intervención en Trabajo Social. Por ello, en este artículo, se ha realizado una revisión de la normativa europea, nacional y autonómica, como sustento de las políticas, poniendo el foco en cómo se involucra a la ciudadanía en los procesos de prevención y apoyo a la recuperación de mujeres que sufren violencia de género. Para ello, utilizando las evidencias científicas que ratifican la importancia de lo sociocomunitario en la recuperación de las víctimas, se realizó una extensa revisión legislativa a nivel europeo, nacional y autonómico sobre cómo se explicita esta fundamental variable en la normativa que posteriormente diseñarán las políticas acordes a ellas. Los hallazgos se han relacionado con las evidencias científicas a nivel internacional identificando como elementos exitosos para la involucrar de la ciudadanía en los procesos de recuperación los siguientes aspectos: la participación de la comunidad; interconexión y colaboración; formación a la ciudadanía; diálogo social y redes solidarias y protección al entorno, lo que lamentablemente no es profuso en la normativa analizada. En este artículo, además se plantean recomendaciones en base a las principales fortalezas detectadas, y se hacen propuestas en base a los vacíos identificados en las leyes.

Palabras clave: violencia de género; mujeres; recuperación; legislación; violencia de segundo orden, violencia aisladora.

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1. Introduction¹

The eradication of gender-based violence is one of the main challenges facing societies and organisations today, as reflected in the targets of the 5th Sustainable Development Goal for gender equality (United Nations, 2015).

To contribute to this target, scientific evidence has shown that community participation and the creation of solidarity networks are key factors in the prevention of violence and in supporting the recovery process for victims who have already suffered it (Banyard, Plantee & Moynihan, 2004; Cook-Craig, Millsbaugh, Recktenwald, et al. 2014; Melgar-Alcantud, Campdepadrós-Cullell, Fuentes-Pumarola & Mut-Montalvá, 2020). This article explores the regulatory framework of social actions to support women who suffer from gender-based violence and, more specifically, how civil participation in the creation of solidarity networks is encouraged and protected.

This study presents an analysis of the frameworks and legislation in Spain at both the national and regional levels, including European regulations for the recovery of women who suffer gender-based violence, with a focus on how support for these women may be promoted by means of regulations.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. The importance of community in the recovery process of women who experience gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is one of the issues of greatest concern at the international level, as evidenced by UN Women's top priority to "mitigate and reduce gender-based violence, including domestic violence" (UN Women, 2021). Therefore, the scientific community, social organisations and governmental institutions are increasingly joining efforts to prevent and overcome this issue.

The importance of social support and solidarity networks for women in violent relationships has long been known. This informal support is vital given its potential positive impact on recovery and the fact that it is the first resort for women in cases of gender-based violence (Melgar et al., 2021). Not only are women with adequate support less likely to be in violent relationships, but women who have already been victims but have adequate support are also less likely to be involved in a second violent relationship (Katerndahl et al., 2013; Plazaola-Castano et al., 2008). Along these lines, women who are in an abusive relationship but who have social support report fewer feelings of self-blame (Andrews & Brewin, 1990; Katerndahl et al., 2013; Latta, 2009) and have better physical and mental health (Beeble et al., 2009; Coker et al., 2002; Katerndahl et al., 2013; Latta, 2009).

Sinko and Saint Arnault (2020) noted that recovery for victims of violence involves reconnection with oneself, with others and with the world. Consistent with this approach, research by Melgar et al. (2021) showed that reconnection with others is the key to progress in the other two indicators given that the process of recovery from gender-based violence cannot be an individual experience but must rely on the environment.

Although environmental support is a key factor, research has shown that there is a stigma towards women who suffer violence that revictimises them (Eckstein, 2016; Kennedy & Prock, 2016; Meyer, 2015) and that many people close to them withdraw their help (Meyer, 2015). Thus, the women themselves reduce contact with their social support networks out of shame, guilt and fear that news of their abuse will spread (Katerndahl et al., 2013; Trotter, 2009).

Therefore, to overcome these stigmas and build supportive social networks, a strong body of theory has identified community capacity building as an important strategy for preventing gender-based violence and supporting survivors (Jo-Barrett et al., 2019; Mancini et al., 2006; Sabol et al., 2004).

Thus, this research shows how solidarity networks and support are essential and play an important preventive role in the recovery process of survivors of gender-based violence.

2.2. The community as a resource to assist in the recovery process for women who experience gender-based violence

In line with the previous section, women's **sense of belonging** to their environment is an essential issue for the creation of support networks. Research by Jo-Barrett et al. (2019) revealed that a strong sense of social belonging is significantly associated with a greater likelihood of seeking help from friends, other women and neighbours. Given the ability of natural networks to provide support for specific needs beyond the crisis period and support from other entities, there are multiple advantages for survivors in seeking help from

¹ This article is part of the following research: Melgar P. (2019-2021). SOL.NET Solidarity networks with impact on gender-based violence victims' recovery processes [SOL.NET Redes de solidaridad con impacto en los procesos de recuperación de mujeres víctimas de violencia de género]. Ministry of Science and Innovation. Grant agreement: RTI2018-096947-A-100.

their neighbourhood community. In addition, improved neighbourhood cohesion and connectedness for all people in a community benefit survivors who do not openly identify as victims of violence (Budde and Schene 2004; Jo-Barrett et al., 2019).

Furthermore, given that women survivors of domestic violence are more likely to turn to informal than formal sources of help, continued support for evidence-based public education initiatives is essential to equip the community to effectively support women and respond to abusive relationships. Providing communities with training to improve their capacity to offer helpful assistance to survivors of abuse is a critical public effort (Jo-Barrett et al., 2019; Flannigan, 2011).

In line with the importance of education, training must be provided so that the first people women turn to for help can provide adequate support, offer appropriate responses and share knowledge about available resources (Fanslow & Robinson, 2010). In addition to collaboration between formal services and informal support networks, awareness-raising work must be undertaken with the community to raise awareness of their obligation and responsibility to provide support (Melgar, 2021; Moe, 2007; Goodkind, Gillum, Bybee & Sullivan, 2003).

One possible way for training, therapeutic space and community to interact is through support groups. These groups contribute to physiological, psychological, economic or social improvement (Koegler et al., 2019). These formal or informal support networks work by helping women identify sources of support in their environment, strengthen their ties to those supports, disconnect from violent people, identify their strengths and increase their awareness of the resources available to them. This contributes to the improvement of their mental health and guides them to rethink and reframe their life history—especially with regard to their affective sexual relationships—while providing them with practical support. Many of these activities give women time to reflect on their experience, an element that has previously been shown to be essential in recovery (Koegler et al., 2019; Racionero-Plaza, Ugalde-Lujambio, Puigvert, Aiello, 2019).

In this vein, research suggests that professional networks and institutions need to be connected to the whole community for more effective intervention and prevention (Gear et al., 2018; Pennington-Zoellner, 2009; Voith & Brondino, 2017). A growing body of research indicates that responding flexibly to the needs of GBV survivors and providing them with advocacy and broad social support may be a more successful strategy for women's protection and that this aspect should guide the creation of new policies (Goodman & Epstein, 2005).

For this awareness to have an impact on the community and to enhance its intervention, it is necessary to activate mechanisms to prevent isolating violence (Flecha, 2021; Joanpere & Morla, 2019) as well as violence and harassment experienced by people who take a stand in favour of others who suffer gender-based violence and denounce the aggressors (Vidu, Puigvert & Flecha, 2021). In some cases, the lack of intervention is not due to a lack of awareness but to fear of possible negative consequences or retaliation, i.e., fear of isolating violence (second order sexual harassment).

2.3. Policy design for social support for women survivors of gender-based violence

One of the main avenues for this work is the generation of legislation and social policies to address violence against women (Kiss et al., 2012; Kuskkof and Parsell, 2020).

Historically, feminist movements have pushed for policies for the protection and recovery of women who have suffered from gender-based violence. This has been an arduous struggle for the recognition of feminists' academic and intellectual production and, subsequently, the incorporation of their contributions into legal and legislative frameworks (Campos & Severi, 2019).

In this sense, the enactment of laws to combat gender-based violence is an essential step in changing the practice of violence, although it is neither a single nor sufficient element. Nevertheless, efforts to reduce violence and discrimination against women require sustained and localised engagement with specific communities. Law enforcement is an essential element of a comprehensive approach to addressing violence against women (DeLaet, 2013).

One premise for the creation of such legislation and policies is grounding in the Declaration of Human Rights with special emphasis and reference to the protection of women and girls and in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (United Nations, 1979, 1989, 1993). These instruments, developed with the aim of obliging states to protect women and girls in their jurisdictions, apply to human rights violations in both the public and private spheres (Riane Eisler, 2015). To increase the effectiveness and inclusiveness of legislation, it is proposed that the "national, ethnic, racial or religious group", human rights violations in the private sphere of family and other intimate relationships in addition to human rights violations in the public sphere of national and international relations be incorporated as recognised categories (Riane Eisler, 2015).

Another important element for effective gender-based violence legislation is the recognised importance of collaboration between law enforcement, local government agencies and victim agencies in different communities as well as multiagency collaboration through evaluation (Jenning, Powers & Perez, 2021).

Another a recognised need is the legislative drive to change public attitudes towards sexist assaults and gender-based violence to remove stigma. Therefore, research continues to examine victim-blaming attitudes and beliefs (Jenning, Powers & Perez, 2021).

With regard to involving citizenship, scientific evidence has shown that an essential factor for these policies to be effective is community participation and the creation of solidarity networks (Banyard, Plantee & Moynihan, 2004; Cook-Craig, Flecha, 2020; Millspaugh, Recktenwald, et al. 2014; Melgar-Alcantud et

al., 2020). In fact, the importance of the whole community for the eradication of gender-based violence is concept that originated with social movements and has become particularly relevant in recent years, such as the #metoo movement (Flecha, 2021; Geis, Melgar & Vidu, 2023; Joanpere et al., 2022; Pennington-Zoellner, 2009).

Most policies to address gender-based violence have focused on professional –intervention through formal networks, as in the case of the World Health Organisation (Sinko & Saint, 2020). This push for professional responses reflects a desire for policies to be based on scientific evidence (Choi, 2016). However, the mere fact that interventions are delivered by professionals does not guarantee that they are science-based, nor does it ensure their quality. Similarly, intervention by nonprofessionals does not imply a lack of scientific basis (Melgar, 2021).

Finally, if all evidence shows that support and advocacy for victims is essential, it is also essential that victims are protected at the political and legislative levels. Isolating violence is physical and/or psychological violence against those who support victims of direct sexual harassment (Flecha et al., 2024; Vidu et al., 2017). Therefore, it is essential that policies and laws also recognise and protect both supporters and victims (Flecha, 2021).

3. Methodology

This qualitative and exploratory research uses documentary analysis by means of purposive sampling of regulations, laws and plans to identify community involvement in the recovery and support of women who suffer gender-based violence.

For the selection of the material, the legislation and plans of all autonomous communities, the Spanish state and Europe were reviewed with a focus on the documents that regulate action on gender violence. To conduct this analysis of legislation, the official websites of each administration since the beginning of the century were used. Plans and projects of political significance were also included. In addition, a search was conducted on conventions on gender violence at the European level, although this was not included in the article as no reference to the subject of this study was identified. The following documents were identified:

- At the European level: 9 documents;
- At the state level: 10 documents (including grey literature);
- At the regional level: 20 documents.

A first normative review was conducted, and the following categories of analysis were established:

- Definition of recovery;
- Formal resources involved in recovery (e.g., human, institutional);
- Informal resources involved (e.g., family, friends);
- Other community proposals;
- Promotion of solidarity networks or similar.

Using the Mxqda program (Caravantes & Botija, 2022), the documentation was analysed and the most significant fragments were extracted with reference to the following:

- How the recovery process is understood;
- What mechanisms are available for participation and connection with citizens;
- References to work at the social level, such as awareness raising and training processes;
- References to the creation of solidarity and support networks;
- Specific resources and safeguards for citizen involvement.

All the fragments and sections that included these themes were collected and organised by sections. Once collected and reviewed, they were contrasted with the main evidence that resulted from the theoretical review.

4. Results

4.1. Identification of the categories of analysis in the autonomous, national and european regulations

Legislation has been passed at the national level, plans have been drawn up, evaluations have been carried out, assessments have been made and, most tellingly, a state pact on gender-based violence has been agreed upon.

With regard to the analysis of the categorisation mentioned above, the definition of recovery is barely mentioned by the National Plan in the legislation of Castilla León and Catalonia. However, there is an important impulse towards the implementation of formal resources for the recovery of women who have suffered gender-based violence. In contrast, there is little interest in solidarity networks or support for informal resources such as the family (see Table 1).

Table 1. Analysis of regulations where some of the categories appear

		Def. Recupe	Formal PR	PR Information	Red solid
Andalusia	Law 13/2007 of 26 November 2007 on measures for the prevention and comprehensive protection against gender-based violence				X
Castilla-La Mancha	Law 4/2018 of 8 October for a Society Free of Gender Violence in Castilla-La Mancha.		X		
Castilla y León	Law 13/2010 of 9 December against gender violence in Castile-Leon (LCVGCL)	X	X		
Catalonia	Llei 17/2020, del 22 de desembre, de modificació de la Llei 5/2008, del dret de les dones a erradicar la violència masclista (LDMEVM).	X	X	X	
Valencian Community	Law 7/2012 of 23 November; comprehensive law against violence against women in the Valencian Community.		X		
Extremadura	Law 8/2011 of 23 March on equality between women and men and against gender violence in Extremadura.		X		
Galicia	Law 11/2007 of 27 July 2007 on the prevention and comprehensive treatment of gender-based violence in Galicia.		X		
Navarre	Foral Law 14/2015 of 10 April 2015 to act against violence against women.		X	X	
State level	Balance of results of the application of Organic Law 1/2004 of 28 December on comprehensive protection measures against gender violence, 15 December 2006.			X	X
	Evaluation of the application of Organic Law 1/2004 of 28 December. Protection measures against gender-based violence at the autonomous community level.			X	
	National plan for awareness-raising and the prevention of gender-based violence.	X			

Source: Own elaboration

4.2. The importance of community in the recovery process of women survivors of gender-based violence

First, it is essential to note how recovery is understood in legislation. At the state level, in the National Plan for Awareness and Prevention of Gender Violence, recovery is understood in relation to prevention: *“it requires having resources and instruments for socialisation and the restoration of a life plan for women victims of gender violence: to recover their identity as a person in order to avoid the reproduction of subordinate behaviour in other relationships”*. At the regional level, in Castilla y León, the main objective is *“prevention and comprehensive care for its victims in order to achieve their effective recovery, understanding as such not only the woman but also the people who depend on her”* (LCVGCL). In Catalonia, it is understood more specifically as a life cycle in which women who have suffered gender violence re-establish their damaged links (LDMEVM).

4.2.1. Participation through social entities and associations

Having mentioned the importance of the community in the recovery process described above, we analysed the participation of society. As seen in the following excerpts, this incentivisation of social involvement is mainly achieved through links with entities and institutions. In general, the laws examined do not specifically address how social agents can collaborate to prevent and overcome gender-based violence. However, they frame and recognise the importance of work between institutional administrations and social agents. One example is the case of the Balearic Islands and the Canary Islands, which are very focused on gender equality and promote relations between administrations, institutions and social agents based on the principles of collaboration, coordination and cooperation to guarantee equality between women and men (LIMH; LCIMH).

This is the same case in Murcia, where the general approach is as follows:

The Autonomous Community of the Region of Murcia has to face notable rates of inequality, as well as a significant incidence of sexist violence in our society, which makes it necessary to increase efforts to promote real and effective equality between women and men based on a culture of prevention, training and information aimed at public employees in all areas: Teaching, health and general, as well as the general public and, in particular, the users of educational, health, care and cultural centres supported by public funds (LIMHPVGRM).

In most of the regional legislation, the contact and involvement of citizens in the recovery of women who suffer gender-based violence and, in general, in the fight to eradicate gender-based violence is carried out through the connection and creation of networks with social entities and the associative movement.

Article 9 of the Law 13/2007 of 26 November on measures for the prevention and comprehensive protection against gender violence in the Autonomous Community of Andalusia specifically promotes the creation of support networks by associations:

Support for the associative movement. The Administration of the Andalusian Regional Government will support the initiatives of women's associations, as well as other groups and associations dedicated to the eradication of gender violence, and which carry out programmes that act on its prevention and awareness, as well as those that set up self-help groups and promote the creation of support networks (LMPPIVG).

Asturias also promotes mechanisms for participation and collaboration with associations, both private initiatives and with bodies and institutions of the autonomous community, as well as connections with other autonomous communities, the State and the international sphere (LIMHEVG of 11 March).

In Cantabria, work between institutions and the associative movement is also encouraged: "The Administration of the Autonomous Community of Cantabria will collaborate with those organisations with experience and training in this area that develop activities to raise awareness, prevention, protection, care and eradication of gender violence" (LIPVCMPIV).

The same is true in Galicia, with an emphasis on the importance of coordination and cooperation:

The Galician public authorities will intensify actions for inter-institutional cooperation and coordination of resources and instruments against gender violence, promoting the collaboration and participation of women's associations, as well as civil society entities and organisations. The local councils, as the administration closest to the citizens, shall participate in the development of this law, with the Galician administration providing the necessary resources for this purpose (LGPTIVG).

In the case of Castilla y León, in addition to coordination and collaboration between all public and private entities and collaboration with social agents involved in the field of gender-based violence (LCVGCL), special incentives are given to involve women themselves in this process: "*Participation of the women affected, directly or through representative entities of an associative nature*" (LCVGCL). Castilla la Mancha also places special emphasis on and promotes organisations for the eradication of violence:

The Junta de Comunidades de Castilla-La Mancha will promote and encourage the participation of women's associations and feminist organisations in the design and dissemination of strategic plans for the eradication of gender-based violence, of awareness and information campaigns, as well as of the activities they carry out with the victims themselves (LSLVGCL).

In Catalonia, article 7, which establishes the guiding principles in the interventions of public authorities and on repeated occasions thereafter, also frames the special importance of women and social entities in the design of policies and support for survivors of gender-based violence:

The promotion of instruments of participation and collaboration with social organisations, especially women's organisations, such as women's councils, the women's associative movement and women's groups belonging to social and trade union movements, in the design, monitoring and evaluation of public policies to eradicate male violence (LDMEVM).

In article 17, Extremadura proposes the creation of a specific body within its government to promote and regularise women's participation:

The Regional Government of Extremadura will create the Extremadura Council for Women's Participation, attached to the Ministry responsible for equality, as a consultative and participatory body for women's associations and organisations and social and economic agents in the gender equality policies of the Regional Government of Extremadura (LIMHCVGE).

On the other hand, the establishment of support and solidarity networks is promoted in some communities on an ad hoc basis. However, in cases in which the importance of involving citizens in the recovery of women who have suffered gender-based violence is considered, a section is established in the legislation that covers the support that the administrations must provide to the people and associations involved.

This is the case for Andalusia in Article 59 on cooperation networks:

The public administrations of Andalusia will establish exchange and collaboration networks, with the aim of contributing to the prevention and eradication of violence against women, and thus facilitate access to help and resources for those who suffer it (LMPPIVG).

La Rioja attaches fundamental importance to solidarity networks. Article 52 considers them a fundamental support and protection measure, which is why they are encouraged and training for volunteering is offered:

The involvement and participation of society in the eradication of violence is essential. In response to the above, the Government of La Rioja will promote, in collaboration with private entities and associations, the implementation of volunteer programmes to accompany and support victims of violence (...) Volunteers will receive specific training on the work they will carry out and its scope, including a module on the functions and objectives of existing services in this area (LPPCIMVLR).

4.2.2. Community formation

In general, legislation attaches great importance to community building through different mechanisms.

The public administrations of the Canary Islands state that they will develop necessary actions to “*maintain a direct relationship with the socio-family environment and promote or implement the necessary actions to raise awareness among the population of the need to alert them to situations of gender violence of which they are aware*” (Ministry of Equality, 2010, p. 49).

From Asturias (LIMHEVG), for complementary measures for the recovery of women in a situation of gender-based violence, access to culture is proposed to raise awareness in society. Additional propositions include promoting a citizen network of accompaniment, enabling personal and social commitment, and providing support and solidarity to survivors of gender-based violence.

Another important element to highlight is that the Balance of Results of the Application of the Organic Law 1/2004 of 28 December promotes some particularly vulnerable social groups or families, who can play an important role in the prevention of violence. They require their own message in accessible language, and more concrete and accessible actions must be proposed for them.

Although the duties or obligations of citizens are not specified in the case of Castilla y León, it does specify that regular campaigns will be conducted by administrations to raise awareness of the duties of citizens when they become aware of situations of violence (LCVGCL).

The case of Castilla la Mancha is similar; although it does not state what these obligations are, it describes in the law how information on the duties of the citizenry in cases of gender-based violence is to be promulgated:

The purpose of the information actions will be to make known in a truthful and accessible manner: (...) The duties of the citizens, of the personnel in the service of the Public Administrations and of social agents when faced with the knowledge or risk of concurrence of situations of violence in the family, work, educational, neighbourhood and social spheres (LSLVGCL).

Similarly, in Catalonia, the importance of knowing one's duties is highlighted, but the duties are not specified: “The duties of citizens, of personnel in the service of the public administrations of Catalonia and of social agents when faced with the knowledge or risk of concurrence of situations of violence in the family, work, educational, neighbourhood and social spheres” (LDMEVM). However, it is specified what the duties are in the case of professionals:

Obligation to intervene and communicate (...) All professionals, especially health, social services and education professionals, must intervene when they become aware of a situation of risk or substantiated evidence of gender-based violence, in accordance with specific protocols and in coordination with the services of the Comprehensive Care and Recovery Network (LDMEVM).

Similarly, in Andalusia, cultural, artistic and sporting activities are promoted as a means of encouraging social manifestations that promote social awareness of gender violence and contribute to the recovery of women who suffer from it. The proposal is based on raising personal and social awareness, developing programmes and actions to prevent all forms of violence and inequalities, and providing co-education as a basic element of the prevention of gender-based violence. Andalusia also proposes recognising the historical role of women in society and moving towards an egalitarian society by promoting positive models of masculinity (LMPPIVG).

The Canary Islands and Extremadura also emphasise co-education as a basic element, while Cantabria encourages the promotion of cultural and artistic manifestations in society for the prevention and eradication of gender violence (LIPVCMPV).

In this vein, Castilla la Mancha specifically mentions how comprehensive care for women who suffer from gender-based violence must be carried out with the effort of society as a whole through formal and informal education (LCVGCL).

4.3. Policy design for social support to women survivors of gender-based violence

4.3.1. Social dialogue for policy-making

In Catalonia, article 7, which establishes the guiding principles in the interventions of public authorities and on repeated occasions thereafter, also sets out the special importance of women and social organisations in the design of policies and support for women who suffer gender-based violence:

The promotion of instruments for participation and collaboration with social organisations, especially women's organisations, such as women's councils, the women's associative movement and women's groups belonging to social and trade union movements, in the design, monitoring and evaluation of public policies to eradicate male violence (LDMEVM).

Castilla y León also provides an interesting new element that involves the inclusion of all social agents in the fight against gender-based violence through social dialogue: “*Likewise, the inclusion of the fight against gender-based violence as a subject matter of the Social Dialogue will be promoted, through research, the exchange of experiences and good practices or any other instrument*” (LCVGCL). (LCVGCL)

4.3.2. Protection of the environment – Isolating violence

In line with the above, recognising attacks on people who take a stand with, support and defend women who suffer gender-based violence is fundamental to protecting these people and encouraging many others to do so as they will be protected from possible reprisals. This has been recognised by article 5.4 of Catalan Law 5/2008 on the right of women to eradicate gender violence:

Second order violence: consists of physical or psychological violence, retaliation, humiliation and persecution against people who support victims of gender-based violence. It includes acts that impede the prevention, detection, care and recovery of women in a situation of gender-based violence (LDMEVM).

5. Discussion

In the preambles of state law and at the regional level in Castilla León and Catalonia, the importance of the community in the recovery of women who have suffered gender violence is appreciated and coincides with the entire body of theory that has supported this effort for years (Andrews & Brewin, 1990; Beeble et al., 2009; Coker et al., 2002; Katerndahl et al., 2013; Latta, 2009; Plazaola-Castano et al., 2008). In some cases, as Melgar (2021) noted, it is understood as involvement in a process that requires re-establishing and acting from one's social ties.

Although the importance of the community and citizenship has been demonstrated, the possible connection with citizenship is not entirely explicit in legislation. The mechanisms of social participation in most of the legislation and policies studied refer to associations and social institutions. This makes some points impossible, such as the daily reality of women, which are essential in their recovery (Melgar, 2021; Sinko & Saint, 2020); the environment, which has a longer-term effect than the work and help provided by social entities (Jo-barret et al., 2019); and informal support networks, which are the first to connect women with help resources and are present for women who do not initially identify themselves as victims and therefore do not seek out resources (Budde and Schene, 2004). In the cases of Andalusia and La Rioja, the importance of encouraging solidarity networks of citizens and offering training to increase and improve this support is expressly mentioned.

The subject of training and its fundamental importance are included in several of the legislations analysed. Community involvement can be achieved through education and training on gender and violence against women. This is an important factor both for the prevention and elimination of stereotypes and for the recovery of victims (Fanslow & Robinson, 2010; Melgar, 2021; Moe, 2007; Goodkind, Gillum, Bybee & Sullivan, 2003).

Finally, with regard to the design and development of policies to involve the community in the fight against gender-based violence in Catalonia and Castilla León, channels for social dialogue that consider the voices of women in legislation represent an essential factor, as scientific evidence has noted (Banyard, Plantee & Moynihan, 2004; Cook-Craig, Flecha, 2020; Millspaugh, Recktenwald, et al. 2014; Melgar-Alcantud et al., 2020; Campos & Severi, 2019; DeLaet, 2013; Flecha, 2021). With regard to the inclusion of protection for victims of isolating violence, Catalonia pioneered inclusion in its legislation, which is a much-needed premise, as people may not act due to fear of the consequences (Moriana, 2014; Vidu et al., 2017).

Following this analysis, a series of proposals are made in relation to the legislation and the evidence identified in the scientific literature.

- **Community education** is an important aspect of engaging the community in the recovery process for survivors of GBV. This can help to remove the stigmatisation that limits social support for women survivors. For this education to be most effective, it needs to be based on internationally recognised scientific evidence (Jo-Barrett et al., 2019; Flannigan, 2011).
- **Encouraging policies based on unity, diversity and social dialogue** based on the recognition of equal differences can be an important opportunity to promote the interconnection and contributions of vulnerable groups and ethnic minorities. There are already communities in which identity values such as solidarity or the rejection of violence are achieving great improvements in fighting male violence and in which cultural contributions that are recognised and promoted by law can be more inclusive for all victims of violence (Amador López, 2019; Riane Eisler, 2015).
- **The protection of people who accompany**, defend and form part of the recovery process for women who suffer gender-based violence has been shown to be essential. As mentioned, the criminalisation of isolating violence or sexual harassment has been recognised by article 5.4 of Catalan Law 5/2008 on the right of women to eradicate male violence. This is a pioneering event, and there are several social initiatives to replicate it in various regional legislations. This is an excellent example of how social mobilisation can change legislation to make it fairer and more transformative (Banyard, Plantee & Moynihan, 2004; Flecha, 2020; Melgar, Geis-Carreras, Flecha & Soler, 2021; Millspaugh, Recktenwald, et al. 2014; Melgar-Alcantud et al., 2020).
- **Strategies can be improved for the networking** of governmental institutions, NGOs, associations, educational bodies, and cultural and religious centres based on egalitarian dialogue (Gear et al., 2018; Pennington-Zoellner, 2009; Voith & Brondino, 2017).

Conclusions

The findings of this study support its objectives and have significant implications for the understanding of gender-based violence for both research and intervention in social work and especially in policy-making.

This study provides new evidence that supports and expands knowledge about the important impact of regulations on the community to support women who experience gender-based violence. The laws state the need for connection with citizens through associations and specialised centres through participation, but they do not specify or describe measures for carrying out these processes.

In this vein, the need to encourage the creation of solidarity and support networks for recovery and action in situations of gender-based violence is evident. These are the first source of help for victims rather than state institutions or organisations.

The latest legislative contributions are encouraging because they recognise as gender violence the harassment of people who support women who have suffered violence and who, precisely because they break their silence, endure attacks and aggressions.

In conclusion, this study provides solid evidence that the impact of the sociocommunity on the recovery process of women in situations of gender-based violence is essential. It represents a significant improvement in the construction of a transformative public policy with a gender perspective.

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