

The courtyard of my house: an analysis of the benefits of group intervention for women experiencing homelessness from a professional perspective

José Manuel Díaz GonzálezUniversidad de La Laguna **Jennifer Hernández Martín**Universidad de La Laguna **Nuria Fustier García**Universitat de Girona **María Virginia Matulic Domandzic**Universitat de Barcelona <https://dx.doi.org/10.5209/cuts.95940>

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EN Abstract. Female homelessness is a complex and often invisible phenomenon, influenced by structural inequalities and the lack of a gender perspective in public policies, highlighting the need for tailored approaches for their social integration. This study explores group intervention as a strategy for the social integration of women experiencing homelessness, focusing on the initiative “El Patio de mi Casa.” The objective is to understand social work professionals’ perceptions of the impact of this intervention on women, identifying its benefits and key aspects for implementation. A qualitative methodology was employed, using structured interviews with ten professionals collaborating directly with homeless women in Santa Cruz de Tenerife. The results show that group intervention facilitates socialization, empowerment, and the improvement of participants’ emotional and physical well-being. The professionals recommend permanently adopting this initiative, indicating the need for methodological and logistical adaptations to optimize its impact. It is concluded that “El Patio de mi Casa” effectively promotes homeless women’s empowerment and social inclusion. However, its implementation requires a participatory approach and long-term commitment. Furthermore, the gap between theory and practice underscores the need to strengthen training in group interventions, ensuring that professionals are equipped to effectively address the complex needs of this group and promote sustainable social inclusion and recovery.

Keywords: Keywords: Woman; social exclusion; homelessness; gender-based violence; social work with groups.

Sumario: 1. Introduction. The invisibility of women in homelessness. Care for women experiencing homelessness. Homelessness and gender-based violence: two sides of the same coin. Group social work as an effective strategy to promote social integration of homeless women. “El patio de mi casa”: a group intervention experience with homeless women. 2. Objective. 3. Methodology. Design. Sample. Instrument. Data collection procedure. Data analysis. Ethical considerations. Limitations. Results. 4. Discussion and conclusions. References.

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1. Introduction

The invisibility of women in homelessness

Women face structural inequalities that increase their exposure to poverty and hinder their social and economic progress, contributing to their residential exclusion (O'Flaherty, 2010) and discrimination (FEANTSA, 2022). Often rendered invisible compared to men in situations of homelessness (Matulić et al., 2020), there is a scarcity of research focused on homeless women, especially from a gender perspective (Gámez-Ramos, 2018; Vázquez et al., 2017), which exacerbates their condition as they encounter multiple vulnerabilities (Alonso et al., 2020).

Homelessness among women cannot be understood without acknowledging a series of interconnected structural factors that deepen their social exclusion. These include the feminization of poverty (Espino, 2021), gender-based violence (Mayock et al., 2016), migratory processes (Matulić et al., 2020), and the lack of access to affordable housing and effective public policies that address their specific needs (González-Arribas et al., 2024). The exclusion of homeless women is further reinforced by unequal access to essential services, such as health and education, which widens gender gaps in homelessness (Phipps et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the absence of an emotional and social support network not only exacerbates the emotional and psychological challenges already faced by these women but also hinders their recovery and exit from homelessness (García et al., 2024; Bretherton & Pleace, 2018). Evidence shows that women experience homelessness through processes distinct from those of men, due to the complexity of interconnected factors that shape their paths toward exclusion (Alonso et al., 2020; Bretherton & Mayock, 2021).

Available evidence highlights that women experience homelessness through processes different from those of men (Alonso et al., 2020; Bretherton & Mayock, 2021), influenced by interconnected factors (FEANTSA, 2022). When women experience homelessness, they may turn to social and family support (Meadows-Oliver, 2016), seek the protection of men who often exert abusive control (Watson, 2016), or move through network resources (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2019). These traumas not only worsen their situation but also increase the risk of developing disorders like post-traumatic stress, a common condition among women who have endured multiple forms of violence (Maguire & Semancik, 2016). Additionally, homeless women are more exposed to sexual and domestic violence than those not facing homelessness, which further complicates their access to adequate support services (Watson, 2016).

Women experiencing homelessness often face a series of interrelated needs frequently linked to mental health issues (Duke & Searby, 2019; Mayock & Sheridan, 2012), physical illnesses, substance addictions (Phipps et al., 2019; Mayock & Sheridan, 2012), barriers to employment access and/or social isolation (FEANTSA, 2016), as well as suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts (Tinland et al., 2018). Research such as that by Riley et al. (2014) highlights the prevalence of substance abuse and severe mental disorders among these women, and Rodríguez-Moreno et al. (2020) emphasizes that mental illnesses significantly increase the risk of homelessness.

Care for women experiencing homelessness

Women experiencing homelessness often turn to informal solutions, such as support from family and friends, and continue relying on this assistance even after accessing formal services (Bretherton, 2020; Bretherton & Mayock, 2021). However, accessing these services does not guarantee overcoming homelessness, as many women alternate between the streets and shelters (Reeve et al., 2006). The lack of specialized services to address abuse and vulnerability contributes to their low utilization (FEANTSA, 2016). It is essential to have flexible and tailored services that consider their needs and to train professionals in a gender-sensitive approach to effective care (FEANTSA, 2016).

Specific services for women experiencing homelessness can transform their lives, providing material support and empowerment through social interaction and personalized care (Bretherton & Mayock, 2021; Hansen-Löfstrand & Quilgars, 2016). By accessing these resources, women feel valued and find motivation for personal development (Bretherton & Mayock, 2021). Compassionate care based on trust and respect, along with training opportunities, is essential to strengthen their resilience and promote empowerment and autonomy (Biederman & Nichols, 2014).

Although welfare and protection systems are intended to assist women experiencing homelessness, they often face attitudinal barriers, such as prejudice and stigmatization, and lack the necessary social support to access health and welfare services (Baptista et al., 2015). Stigma and negative perceptions toward homeless individuals delay the use of these resources by women, who frequently seek them later than men and with more complex needs (Bretherton & Mayock, 2021).

Resources for homeless individuals are often designed for men, making them less accessible and suitable for women (Gámez-Ramos, 2018). This lack of adaptation can discourage women from seeking help due to fear of not finding a safe space (Bretherton & Pleace, 2018; Moss & Singh, 2015). Consequently, many choose hidden places to avoid risks (Matulić et al., 2019; Mayock & Sheridan, 2012; Mayock et al., 2015a). The absence of specific services not only limits their access but also contributes to their rejection of available assistance (Bretherton et al., 2016). To better respond to the needs of homeless women, it is essential to design services from a gender-sensitive perspective, ensuring their dignity, autonomy, and comprehensive care (Hansen-Löfstrand & Quilgars, 2016).

Women are more likely to use homeless services when these are specifically tailored to them, such as exclusive housing resources or the "Housing First" program, which offers safe and permanent housing solu-

tions (Bretherton et al., 2016). However, sharing shelters with communal rooms and lacking specialized staff negatively impact their perception of safety and willingness to use these services (Bretherton & Pleace, 2015). This underscores the need to design resources adapted to women's needs, ensuring a safe and dignified environment (Mayock & Sheridan, 2012).

Although some research suggests that women value relationships with staff and the safety provided by the rules and structures of shelters and hostels, perceiving these environments as a form of protection and risk reduction (Andermann et al., 2021; Biederman & Nichols, 2014; Mayock et al., 2015b), the overall experience tends to be negative. In many cases, these spaces reinforce the exclusion of homeless women, as they fail to adequately address their specific needs or provide an effective pathway out of homelessness (Phipps et al., 2019).

When women turn to homeless services, they do so with the hope of regaining their dignity and autonomy and overcoming the invisibility and vulnerability they experience (Hoffman & Coffey, 2008). However, current resources do not always guarantee an exit from homelessness, and many women find themselves trapped in this situation for extended periods or relapse into it after attempting to leave (Reeve et al., 2006; Vázquez et al., 2019).

Homelessness and gender-based violence: two sides of the same coin

Homeless women face gender-based violence in various contexts, such as on the streets and in shelters, where men are the dominant presence (Bowpitt et al., 2011). Violence has been identified as a common feature in the lives of these women (FEANTSA, 2016; Mayock et al., 2015a), often beginning in childhood (FEANTSA, 2022; Mayock et al., 2015a) and continuing throughout life, especially in the form of gender-based violence (Matulič et al., 2019; Mayock & Neary, 2023). This connection highlights gender-based violence as a primary cause of female homelessness (Bretherton & Mayock, 2021; Maguire & Semancik, 2016; Reeve et al., 2006). Additionally, their situation increases vulnerability, leading them into abusive relationships in search of protection, which often results in further violence and issues such as substance abuse (Cronley et al., 2019; Padgett et al., 2006), perpetuating a cycle of exclusion.

The separation between services for women victims of gender-based violence and those for homeless women is a common reality (Baptista, 2010). Gender-based violence resources often exclude women with mental health issues, addictions, or problematic behaviors, leaving them outside the protection system (Mayock et al., 2015a). As a result, they turn to general homeless services, where they do not receive adequate care, and their vulnerability increases (Mayock et al., 2016). Services must recognize these needs and employ specialized staff and adapted facilities to provide comprehensive support (Moss & Singh, 2015).

Group social work as an effective strategy to promote social integration of homeless women

Although group intervention has declined in social work over the past decades, group therapy has grown significantly (Skolnik, 2017). Although social workers are theoretically trained for this type of intervention (International Federation of Social Workers, 2004), its practical application remains limited (Macgowan & Vakharia, 2012). However, it has proven effective among homeless individuals, reducing alcohol consumption and improving self-protection against sexually transmitted infections (Tucker et al., 2017). Sharing experiences in a group setting fosters deep reflection and empowers participants, helping to challenge harmful behaviors such as substance use (Holland et al., 2003).

Group social work with homeless individuals focuses on planning and evaluating activities that meet their needs, promoting self-esteem, confidence, and social skills while fostering support networks and preventing isolation (Fernández & López, 2018; López, 2024). Groups facilitate dialogue and relationship building, enhancing quality of life and social and occupational reintegration. Professionals must recognize their benefits as they enhance individual development and social support (Arija, 2004). Participation in open groups promotes learning and proves to be an effective intervention adapted to the specific characteristics of this population (Wilder et al., 2018).

Although the literature on group social work is extensive, it primarily focuses on closed groups, with limited information on open groups, which present unique challenges due to the constant entry and exit of members (Wilder et al., 2018). This dynamic requires facilitators with adaptive leadership and specialized skills to balance the expectations of both long-standing and new members, maintaining cohesion and achieving common goals (Steinberg, 2014). Despite the challenges, participant turnover enriches the intervention by bringing new insights and approaches that address the group's diverse needs (Wilder et al., 2018).

In Spain, group interventions have improved the quality of life for women in vulnerable situations. In Madrid, a psychosocial program for older women at risk of loneliness increased their self-efficacy and social participation (Lorente-Martínez et al., 2021). In Barcelona, a cognitive-behavioral intervention with women victims of gender-based violence who used substances reduced psychological abuse and alcohol consumption and increased assertiveness (Tirado-Muñoz et al., 2015). In Madrid, group interventions with homeless women promoted social reintegration, developing support networks and reducing isolation (Vázquez et al., 2019), improving self-esteem and skills to cope with homelessness (Calvo & Carbonell, 2018). Reducing perceived discrimination is essential for their social and emotional rehabilitation (Vázquez et al., 2023).

“El patio de mi casa”: a group intervention experience with homeless women

“El Patio de mi Casa” is a group intervention project by the Comprehensive Homeless Support Service of Santa Cruz de Tenerife aimed at homeless women. Its objective is to complement individual interventions

with a safe space for support and solidarity (Díaz et al., 2023b). It employs a participatory methodology that promotes empowerment and autonomy, allowing participants to decide on topics relevant to their needs, fostering engagement, and creating a sense of belonging to the group (Marzana et al., 2023; Valderrama, 2023).

It is structured as an open group that organizes educational and social sessions covering key topics such as gender equality, gender-based violence, and other aspects related to the experience of homelessness (Grupo 5, 2022). These sessions not only facilitate the development of informal support networks among participants but also foster an environment where they can share their experiences, reflect on their challenges, and explore potential strategies for overcoming their vulnerable situations (Sherwin, 2021).

A key aspect of this project is the creation of a safe space where women can express their experiences without judgment, fostering a process of resilience and emotional strengthening. This group dynamic is crucial for mitigating the social isolation many face and promotes socialization and active participation, essential elements for their social integration and recovery (Galán Sanantonio et al., 2022; Matulić et al., 2024).

All women participating in the group intervention also receive individualized support from a designated professional who supervises and evaluates their progress, providing continuous follow-up in both modalities. The input of professionals is key to identifying the benefits of both intervention methodologies and offering a comprehensive view of the participants' progress.

The women participating in “El Patio de mi Casa” currently reside or have resided in the service, allowing for close and continuous monitoring of their cases. This proximity facilitates constant tracking of their progress and ensures that interventions are tailored to their specific needs, enhancing the service's ability to provide personalized and effective responses.

2. Objective

This research aims to explore professionals' perceptions regarding the benefits gained from group interventions with homeless women. It seeks to identify the direct benefits that such interventions contribute to their empowerment and social reintegration processes, as well as to analyze the key elements and challenges to consider in implementing these group strategies, intending to optimize their effectiveness and adaptability to the specific needs of this population.

3. Methodology

Design

This research is framed within a qualitative approach, using an ad hoc structured interview specifically designed to understand the complexity of female homelessness from a professional perspective. The methodology follows the principles established by Creswell and Poth (2018), who provide a detailed framework for the design and execution of qualitative research.

Sample

The sample included ten social work professionals intentionally selected for their direct experience with homeless women. These professionals work in the Comprehensive Homeless Support Service of Santa Cruz de Tenerife, with an average of 4.6 years of experience working with this population. The inclusion criterion was having worked for at least one year with homeless individuals, and all of them have been involved in the group intervention since 2021.

Table 1. Sample characteristics

CODE	SEX	YEARS OF GENERAL PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE	YEARS OF HOMELESSNESS EXPERIENCE	YEARS OF SERVICE TENURE
EM1	Woman	21	4	4
EM2	Woman	18	7	7
EM3	Woman	13	3	3
EM4	Woman	8	3	2
EM5	Woman	8	2	2
EM6	Woman	6	2	2
EH1	Man	19	7	7
EH2	Man	14	7	7
EH3	Man	12	7	7
EH4	Man	7	4	3

Source: Table created by the author.

Instrument

The structured interview included sections on sociodemographic data and professional experience (age, gender, educational level, years of service, and time working with homeless women). It delved into professionals’ perceptions of the group intervention, exploring its effectiveness in group dynamics, employed methodologies, and observed changes in participants, such as improvements in emotional well-being, socialization, and empowerment.

Data collection procedure

Before conducting the interviews, authorization was obtained from the Santa Cruz de Tenerife City Council and Grupo 5, the company responsible for managing the service. Participants signed an informed consent form after receiving detailed information about the purpose of the research. The interviews, conducted in June 2023, were recorded using a smartphone application and subsequently transcribed for analysis.

Data analysis

The analysis was conducted using ATLAS.ti software, following a systematic process. Open coding was used to identify key concepts in the data, followed by axial coding to explore relationships among them. Finally, selective coding was applied to define a central theme. Through these procedures, analysis categories were established to structure the interview analysis, grouped into key dimensions.

Table 2. Analysis categories and dimensions in research on group interventions

Analysis category	Dimensions
Effectiveness of group intervention	- Improvement in emotional well-being. - Increased socialization. - Promotion of empowerment.
Group dynamics	- Active participation. - Group cohesión. - Conflict management.
Intervention methodology	- Facilitating techniques. - Structure of the sessions. - Adaptability of activities.
Observerd changes in participants	- Self-esteem. - Interpersonal relationships. - Autonomy.
Recommendations for optimization	- Methodological adjustments. - Necessary resources. - Innovative approaches.
Reflections on the future	- Sustainability. - Scalability. - Areas for future research.

Fuente: Tabla de elaboración propia.

Ethical considerations

The ethical standards established by the European Commission’s Ethical Review Procedure (2013), the Data Protection Directive (95/46/EC), and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000/C 364/01) were strictly followed. This included obtaining informed consent from participants and ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of the information provided.

Limitations

This research presents several limitations. The small sample size and its intentional selection limit the generalization of the results to other contexts, though they provide valuable insights for future adaptations. Additionally, the absence of direct testimonies from homeless women could bias interpretations toward the professionals’ perspectives, which should be considered in future studies. While the qualitative methodology provides an in-depth analysis, it introduces an inherent subjectivity in data interpretation, which has been mitigated through the rigorous implementation of the methodological process.

Results

Professionals widely acknowledge the group intervention methodology “El Patio de mi Casa” and identify it as an effective strategy for addressing the needs of homeless women. As expressed by one professional:

“[...] This methodology has allowed us to work with homeless women from a different perspective and has proven effective in addressing certain needs and achieving goals that were not being met through individual intervention. Significant improvements have been observed in the women across different areas, and it also facilitates the subsequent individual work” (EM3, personal interview, June 2023).

Homeless women face high vulnerability, marked by social isolation, gender-based violence, low self-esteem, emotional distress, limited social skills, health issues, and a deteriorated self-concept. One professional highlights the complexity of these situations:

“[...] When women arrive at this service or are identified by the Mobile Outreach Units while sleeping on the streets, they report many pains, having experienced numerous stressful life events... All that human suffering is complex to address and requires a great deal of time and effort from the women, as well as from the services and professionals here for them” (EM6, personal interview, June 2023).

Professionals emphasize that the group intervention ‘El Patio de mi Casa’ provides key benefits, including the opportunity to exchange experiences and knowledge, form support networks, boost self-esteem, and strengthen communication skills. This methodology is especially valuable for reducing isolation and promoting social integration and participation among homeless women. One professional reflects on this positive impact:

“[...] Many women had not had healthy relationships with other women for a long time, and through ‘El Patio de mi Casa’ they have relearned how to relate, communicate, respect each other, and share their perspectives and expectations, finding role models and support in other women... without a doubt, these meetings contribute to socialization, the development of skills, and the acquisition of highly useful tools for the women” (EM1, personal interview, June 2023).

The group intervention has proven to be a vital space for strengthening sisterhood, self-esteem, and emotional well-being among women, as well as a catalyst in forming informal support networks. This approach is also essential for the development of social skills, improved coexistence, and increased awareness of their situations. A professional describes it powerfully:

“[...] En la intervención grupal las mujeres construyen su espacio, que se constituye como un micro-sistema donde fluye la confianza, la comprensión, la empatía, el respeto y la conexión con las otras personas. Les permite ahondar en cuestiones que previamente no habían sido tratadas, analizarlas e interpretarlas, y tomar decisiones. Además, se aborda del modo que ellas consideran, siendo las verdades protagonistas de esos momentos y de su proceso de cambio (EH2, entrevista personal, junio 2023).

The adoption of individualized intervention programs is significantly enriched by the incorporation of group spaces, which facilitate the exploration of alternatives to overcome homelessness. Professionals agree that integrating women into group interventions not only complements but also enhances the success of personalized plans, suggesting its adoption as a permanent strategy in the center. One professional highlights this point: “[...] group intervention with women promotes a comprehensive approach and allows them to achieve personal and group goals through meeting and sharing with other women” (EM2, personal interview, June 2023).

The initiative has been a catalyst for change for the participants, who have reported multiple benefits from their involvement. The program has provided a safe and constructive environment, allowing women to live together and interact positively. Professionals emphasize the importance of the emotional support and understanding generated among them. One of the highlights:

“[...] The fact that women found understanding in other women already helped them emotionally and contributed to them feeling better. I don’t know... knowing that other people have gone through similar situations and have managed to overcome them, that they are not the only ones who have had those traumatic experiences, and that these have been managed successfully, seeing how other women have been able to develop resilience... well, I think all of that helps, and experiences like this one have proven it” (EH3, personal interview, June 2023).

Regarding the personal development of the women, participants’ testimonies reinforce these findings. One professional commented: “[...] in many women, progress has been observed in terms of their well-being, as many felt less anxious and more encouraged to try new things and take on new challenges...” (EM5, personal interview, June 2023). Another explained:

“[...] Feeling that they would be supported by the center and that relationships with other users were better than they expected made them feel less stressed, more relaxed... and this made it easier for them to start trusting, to care more about their self-care, and to follow the guidance of their designated professional... The example they observed in other women also helped; if they saw a peer improving, it motivated them to start their process of change” (EH4, personal interview, June 2023).

The benefits associated with the change process for homeless women following their participation in the group intervention are reflected in the following statements from professionals:

“[...] many of our users had gone more than 15 years without a gynecological check-up, and since they have been at the center and participating in the group, they have agreed to visit their midwife for a Pap smear, mammogram...” (EM4, personal interview, June 2023).

“[...] some women have gone through multiple processes at the center; some were here years ago, and now, I’m not quite sure why, they have decided to make a change in their lives. Indeed, the atmosphere

at the center and the way they are cared for has changed a lot, but I also think that this change in approach, in methodology, may have had something to do with it as well" (EH1, personal interview, June 2023).

The group intervention has played a crucial role in reinforcing the individualized intervention for each woman, as highlighted by another social worker in the program:

"[...] here, all the women have their individualized intervention process, which can be ambitious and may be fulfilled to varying degrees... in many cases, securing their commitment to this was quite challenging, especially in certain cases. However, through group intervention, a higher level of engagement has been achieved in some women; they see that they have the support of their peers, they see some peers manage to recover and heal from their pain, they see some peers manage to overcome homelessness and gain access to alternative housing..." (EM1, personal interview, June 2023).

Another professional emphasizes:

"[...] it must be considered that 'El Patio de mi Casa' is a space for them; they propose and decide on the activities they would like to do. We have analyzed and debated countless topics such as prostitution, gender-based violence, what it means to be a woman, our perception and relationship with motherhood, and conflict management... we have also invited other professionals from the center to participate, like the psychologist or social integrators, a gynecologist who gave us a workshop on women's health, an equality officer with whom we worked on understanding the discrimination between men and women and what we should do to eliminate or reduce that gap... By this, I mean that this space contributes to women's empowerment—sorry, rather, to the capacity-building of women—and from a critical, reflective, open, respectful, and free perspective... they have learned about many issues that have helped them to have a different outlook on life and to better face the future" (EM2, personal interview, June 2023).

To improve the program, participants suggest conducting sessions outside the center in various community spaces (50%), increasing the number of sessions held over shorter periods (40%), involving other professionals from the center and other community resources (40%), and securing the necessary resources for the continuity of the initiative and achievement of proposed goals (30%). A professional suggests the following improvements:

"[...] it's important to do more activities outside the center... I mean that not all sessions should take place within the center, like the rest of the usual activities. We could arrange a meeting with the women in a park, a museum, a café, the beach... The thing is, all that costs money, and we'd need to see how it could be done... I don't know, maybe the organization or the City Council could allocate some funds to cover transportation costs, have a small budget for a breakfast, a coffee, to be able to have something..." (EH2, personal interview, June 2023).

Another professional mentions that:

"[...] the women themselves are requesting that the meetings be held more frequently, not just every three weeks or once a month. I think this is important, both for the benefits it provides them and for the intervention, we are developing" (EM4, personal interview, June 2023).

Lastly, another social worker indicates:

"[...] I believe that experiences like 'El Patio de mi Casa' should not depend on the initiative and willingness of the professionals leading it, but rather should be officially implemented as a methodology in the center and continue to develop group intervention with all individuals who use these resources" (EH3, personal interview, June 2023).

4. Discussion and conclusions

Female homelessness is a complex issue that extends beyond the lack of housing, encompassing factors such as gender-based violence, barriers to accessing services, and structural exclusion (Alonso et al., 2020; Gámez-Ramos, 2018). The results of this study align with previous research highlighting the high vulnerability of these women, particularly in their exposure to physical and psychological violence (Bretherton & Pleace, 2018; Matulič-Domandžić et al., 2020, 2024).

The group intervention "El Patio de mi Casa" has proven effective in addressing these vulnerabilities, promoting empowerment and the creation of support networks, which are crucial for social reintegration (Díaz et al., 2023b), as emphasized in group social work theory (Fernández & López, 2018; López, 2024). Professionals highlight the strengthening of interpersonal relationships among the women, who, by sharing their experiences in a safe space, rebuild their self-esteem and confidence (Calvo & Carbonell, 2018; Washington et al., 2009). This process not only improves their emotional well-being but also encourages their active participation in social and occupational reintegration (García et al., 2024).

To implement an effective group intervention with homeless women, it is essential to adapt the approach to their individual and collective needs, developing it from a gender perspective (Galán-Sanantonio, 2022; Vaca-Ferrer et al., 2020). This adaptation ensures that the strategies employed align with their experiences

and expectations (Reid et al., 2020). Furthermore, it is necessary to adopt an empowerment approach that encourages women to regain control of their lives by developing tools and skills that improve their situation (O'Shaughnessy & Greenwood, 2020).

A key challenge for optimizing group intervention is its continuous and adaptive implementation. Professionals emphasized the need to adjust the program methodology to respond to the changing dynamics of the group and ensure its sustainability (Shelton et al., 2018). This highlights the importance of a participatory approach, where women are co-creators of the activities (Laca & Laca, 2022). Furthermore, both participants and professionals need to be involved in decision-making to overcome structural barriers and adapt interventions to the specific needs of the group (Cederbaum et al., 2014; Kahan et al., 2019).

These groups can provide a safe and supportive space for homeless women to share their experiences and express their emotions, connecting with people who understand and support their experiences (Bretherton & Mayock, 2021). Among their benefits are sharing knowledge, establishing supportive relationships, developing social skills, improving communication, and increasing self-esteem, thus contributing to their emotional well-being (Phipps et al., 2018). Additionally, these groups promote social participation and inclusion, helping to reduce isolation and exclusion among homeless women.

Despite the observed benefits, some challenges have been identified that limit the full impact of the group intervention. Professionals emphasize the need to adapt methodologies and increase available resources to ensure that the sessions better align with the changing realities of homeless women. Additionally, the importance of conducting activities outside the center is highlighted to enrich the participants' experience, as well as to promote the long-term continuity of the program (Sherwin, 2021).

In conclusion, group intervention not only promotes empowerment and social inclusion for women experiencing homelessness but also complements and strengthens individualized interventions (Sofija et al., 2018). The "El Patio de mi Casa" project offers a replicable and adaptable methodology that can be permanently implemented in programs targeted at homeless women. However, it is essential to expand resources and maintain methodological flexibility to respond to the specific needs of this vulnerable population (Díaz et al., 2023a; Matulić et al., 2024).

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