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**Ending gender violence in the family and in society.**  
*Empirical research in psychodrama,  
group psychodynamic therapy and group processes*

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## *Project EMPoWER: the experience of SPP and UMAR\**

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***Summary.** In this presentation we will review the experience of the project EMPoWER-Daphne I in Portugal where the project was developed jointly by the Sociedade Portuguesa de Psicodrama (SPP) and União de Mulheres de Alternativa de Resposta (UMAR), that have integrated, respectively, their ecological model, their intervention methods and psychodrama. It is our aim to share the experience of the intervention with women victims of violence, including: the structure and proceedings of the intervention by both teams; the issues connected to the ecological intervention; and the issues connected to the psychodrama group process and the psychodrama techniques and their adequacy for the group.*

**Key words:** *violence against women, ecological model, psychodrama*

### **Intervention**

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### *Sample selection*

Among the women in attendance in UMAR, the two groups were as follows, the psychodrama group – women in ecological intervention and the ecological group – women in ecological intervention plus the psychodrama intervention. The composition of the groups was: Ecological group (EG) N=12 and Psychodrama Group (PG) N=9. The ages ranged from 24 to 65 years old.

### *Evaluation of the intervention*

We applied in both groups pre-and post-test questionnaires consisting of the following instruments: Clinical Outcome Routine Evaluation – Outcome Measure (CORE-OM: Evans et al., 2000; Portuguese version by Sales, Moleiro, Evans & Alves, 2012), Beck Depression Inventory II (BDI-II) (Beck A, 1996; Portuguese version by Coelho, Martins, Barros, 2002) and the Revised Spontaneity Assessment Inventory (SAI-R) (Kipper & Shemer, 2006). For the analysis of violence we created an interview guide for social workers – SW Form, was also used for the evaluation of the psychodrama sessions and the reports of the sessions.

### *Intervention*

The EG included the ecological intervention and integrated several attendances distributed as: external articulation with other institutions, phone calls, attempts to contact via telephone, Social Worker sessions, law sessions, Psychologist sessions, vocational guidance sessions. The target group included all the attendances mentioned above plus the 25 psychodrama sessions. The distribution of total attendees by groups was as follows in Table 1 and Table 2.

**Table 1:** EC total attendances

Women code	Ecological Intervention
P15	87
P17	29
P18	47
P20	35
P22	107
P26	56
P27	45
P28	54
P34	22
P31	48
P38	41
P36	49

**Table 2:** PG total attendances

Women code	Ecological intervention	Psychodrama Intervention
P1	16	1
P2	22	23
P4	46	3
P10	39	22
P11	32	20
P12	24	13
P14	64	16
P25	75	18
P23	28	8

The basis for the psychodrama group intervention followed the Gabriela Moita psychodrama manual sessions (Table 3) proposed in the psychodrama training at “Empower Meeting I”, but some sessions were adapted to the needs of the women in each session.

**Table 3.** Psychodrama sessions

<b>Me and We</b>
1. Presentation
2. Group creation and cohesion
<b>Me/We and others</b>
3. Social and familiar atom
<b>My/Our family stories</b>
4. Speaking about Families
5. Family attachment
6. Mapping the aggressors in the family or in their lives
7. Violence cycle
8. Open session
9. Collecting and sharing narratives of the persecutor and victim narratives of recuperation
10. Analyze the repeated patterns in family (The chain)
<b>Working on some specific topics (security, fear, guilt, assertiveness, etc.)</b>
11. Analyze fear in relationships
12. Violence and guilt (weakness and power in the relationship)
13. Assertiveness in communication

14. Security
15. Factors that maintain violent relationships
<b>Cultural analyses (axiology: love, marriage, etc.)</b>
16. A socioeconomic analysis of love
17. Limits/boundaries
18. The man/woman relationships – in society/ in their families
19. Demystifying stereotypes
20. Cultural analysis of some positions concerning marriage
<b>Our/My power</b>
21. The power of the group
22. The creator
23. The Mother role
24. Creating the mother role
25. Closure – last sharing

### **Overview about the Social Work Form (SWF) and the Psychodrama Reports**

We will present a brief analysis about the description of the sample and the impact of psychodrama sessions, using the SWF and three reports of Psychodrama Sessions. The criterion used was descriptive so we used the software ATLAS.ti (Muhr, Thomas & Friese, Susanne, 2004), and the analysis centered on the women's discourse and the connections with words related to *empower, relationship mother and daughter, psychodrama objective*.

#### *Social Work Form (SWF)*

The SWF (Figure 1) about women in the project showed a high level of physical violence perpetrated by the husband. The main characteristics of the aggressors are: controlling, authoritarian, conflictive and manipulative. The home was the main context of violence, both physical and psychological. The consequences of the violence observed in women were: anxiety, depression, tension, low self-esteem, hyper vigilance and fear. Most of the women report economic dependence on the aggressor.

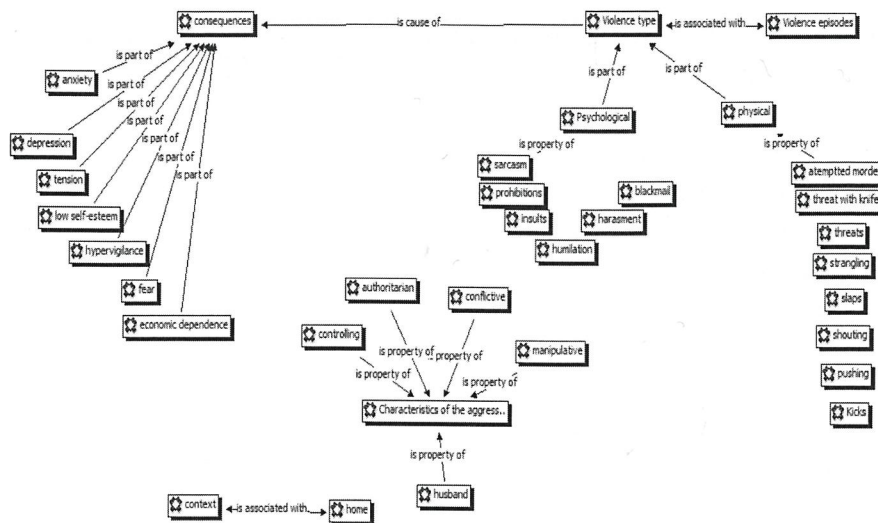


Figure 1. SWF – Data about the aggressor

*Psychodrama Reports*

From the first session there was a climate of intimacy that reached a deep cohesion among women. Of the nine women, eight were victims of violence at the hands of the husband/boyfriend (six were divorced, one married, one separated) and one was a victim at the hands of the father. The women report satisfaction about being divorced or for being able to maintain a relationship with their partner. From this session a symbolic statue emerged representing «the common suffering of women, the friendship we can create and the strength to fight against the things that make us feel bad» this sculpture was repeated throughout the sessions (Figure 2).

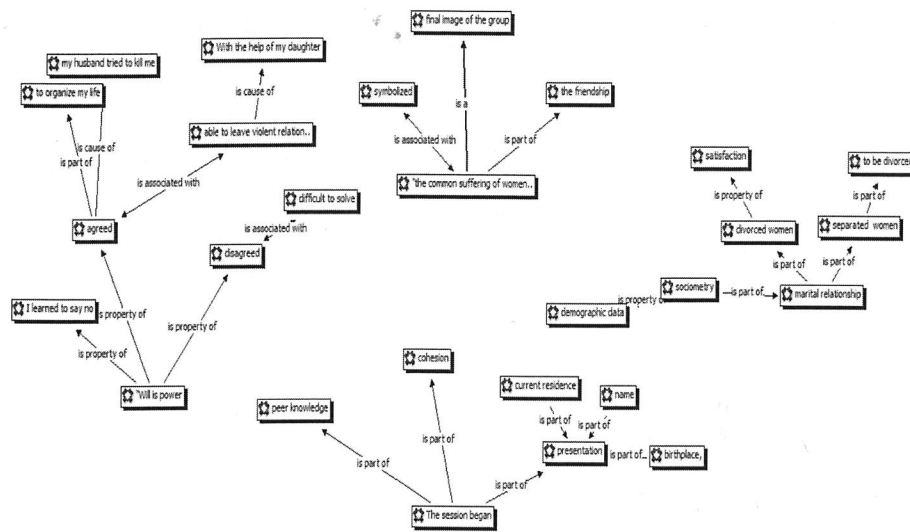


Figure 2. 1<sup>st</sup> Session

Although women feel good about the recent separation, and for many years wish this situation, they report some anger, sadness and regret for not having taken the decision sooner. The prevalent reasons for not separating sooner were: being in a strong catholic country they have to face the social stigma of being divorced, the submission/economic dependence on their husband/partner, and the idea that they should keep the family together.

From the slogan “will is power”, we could see that the reason for not leaving the relationship is not because is not right for a woman to take charge, but because she has difficulties and does not have support to do.. (Figure 3). Women felt that in society they do not have social rights, they do not feel protected, and even have difficulties related to survival issues.

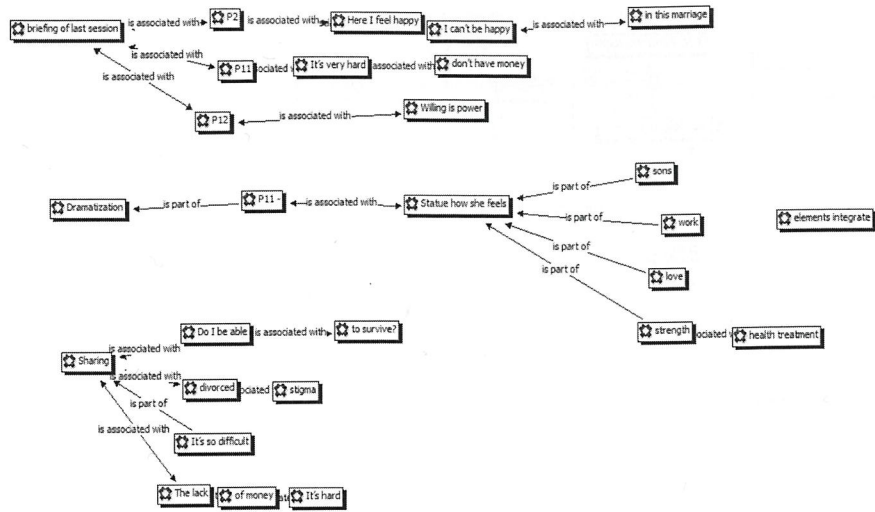


Figure 3. 3<sup>rd</sup> Session

The role of UMAR was very important for supporting women in their decisions to leave violent relationships, and to get the support that they needed.

In a sculpture about “the resumption moment” after leaving the relationship, it was clear to see empowerment indicators through the terms “autonomy”, “living without oppression”, “liberty” and “freedom”, “strong”, and “sense of freedom” (Figure 4).



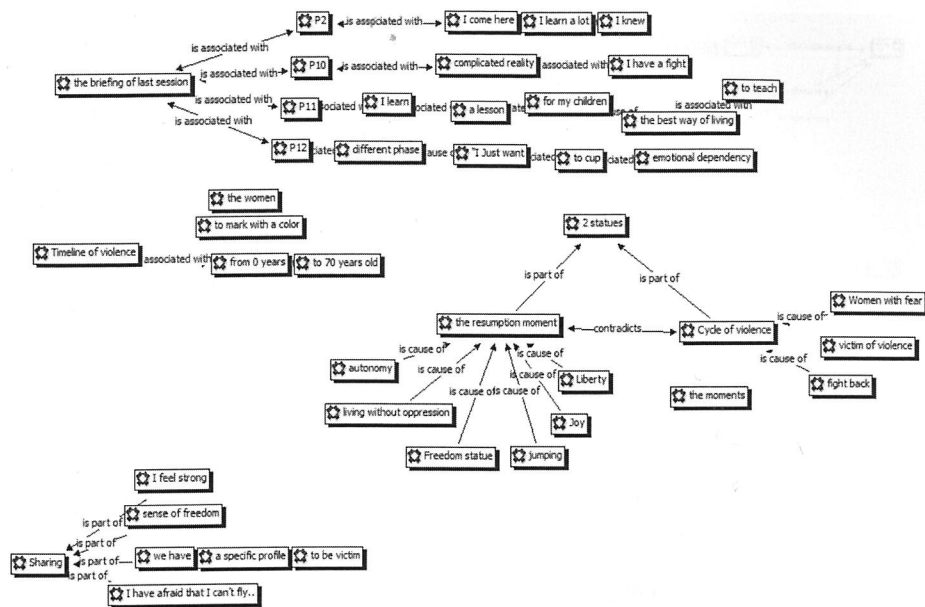


Figure 4. 7<sup>th</sup> Session

After various sessions analyzing feelings such as guilt, fear and poor self-esteem, it was obvious that the women were becoming stronger to go ahead with the decisions they had taken. Also we could observe that they became aware of violence cycles and wished to educate their children in a different way than they were, assuming that their education, the world in which they live and their culture made them succumb to the role of victims.

Through the analysis of the psychodrama process (Figure 5) women refer that the group was a space to reflect about feelings, working on them in order to live better, a possibility to move from a sad situation to one of light and clarity. It was a space of knowledge where new things were learned, especially appreciation of themselves, self-esteem, and above all, not always feeling guilty when something happens. It was a space to get comprehension, support and strength.

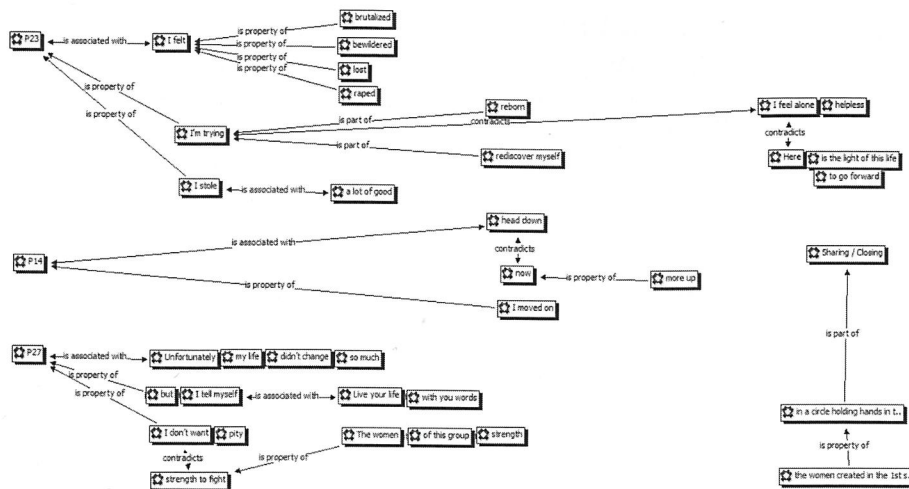


Figure 5. 25<sup>th</sup> Session

## Conclusions

Even without all the results available, it was possible to observe that:

- for women, being a part of the group, represented the first step towards breaking the silence that had prevailed until then (Oliveira, 2010);
- the group «enabled women to validate their experience, receive information, receive and give support (e.g. emotional) and realize that your problem is not unique and that there are alternative ways of dealing with the situation» (Matos & Machado, 2011, p.22);
- the psychodrama group helped women to prevail over their past relationships and the awful experiences related to it;
- in some cases, it was possible to see the transformation from a past time orientation, to a present time orientation. This may be related to the results about spontaneity; higher levels of spontaneity are positively correlated with an orientation to the present – in the moment (Christoforou & Kipper, 2006);
- the intervention, with the articulation of both teams and institutions, enabled the women to connect issues that once seemed disconnected, provided social and emotional support at a macro and a micro level and balanced the emotional and social needs of their lives.

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