

Essential Factors and Strategies Focused on the Design of a Management Model to Reduce Gender-Based Violence Against Women

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Abstract

The study focused on identifying the essential factors and strategies needed to design an efficient management model aimed at reducing gender-based violence against women and promoting structural change within the community of San Francisco de Milagro, Ecuador. Using a qualitative and participatory approach, the methodology included emancipatory workshops with women and local female leaders, as well as in-depth interviews with specialists in the field. Among the most relevant findings are the importance of providing comprehensive and personalized support to victims, fostering economic inclusion, implementing community awareness campaigns, utilizing technological tools for efficient management, and basing decision-making on reliable data. These key factors and strategies not only address the immediate needs of affected women but also serve as catalysts for social transformation, with high potential for replicability in other similar contexts, both in Ecuador and across Latin America.

Keywords: *Violence Against Women, Management Model, Women's Unit, Public Policies.*

Introduction

Gender-based violence against women continues to be a deep-rooted problem globally, affecting one in three women at some point in their lives, according to data from the World Health Organization (WHO, 2021). In Latin America, and in particular in Ecuador, the figures are equally alarming. The National Survey on Family Relations and Gender Violence against Women (ENVIGMU) of the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC, 2023) reveals that 64.9% of Ecuadorian women have suffered some type of violence, whether physical, sexual, psychological or patrimonial. This phenomenon disproportionately affects young women and those living in rural areas, which shows the urgency of interventions adapted to these contexts (Villagrán, A. M., Martín-Fernández, M., Gracia, E., & Lila, M., 2020; Alfonso & Cárdenas, 2021; Velásquez Chalán, L. F., García Núñez, R., Armendáriz Tubón, J. M., San Juan Bosch, M. A., & Díaz Brito, A., 2019). The implications of this problem transcend the family sphere, also affecting public health, the economy and social cohesion. Gender-based violence, manifested in its multiple forms—physical, psychological, symbolic, and political—continues to be a daily reality for women, who, as recent studies show, continue to be victims of aggression both at home and in educational institutions and in political spaces (Castillo-González & Terán Andrade, 2024; Alfonso & Cárdenas, 2021).

Despite the efforts of the Ecuadorian State to protect women's rights through the implementation of public policies and regulatory frameworks that promote non-revictimization and comprehensive reparation (Ortega Pérez & Peraza de Aparicio, 2021; Tapia, 2021; Alfonso & Cárdenas, 2021) the implementation of such measures has not managed to mitigate the problem in its entirety, especially in local contexts. In this regard, the creation of a Women's Unit in a Decentralized Autonomous Government (GAD), also known as municipalities or town halls, makes it possible to bring care and prevention services closer to the communities, adapting strategies to the social, cultural and economic particularities of the environment.

The opportunity and suitability of carrying out this research at the present time is based on the growing social and institutional demand for concrete solutions adapted to the local context. The COVID-19

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pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities and increased cases of domestic violence, making the implementation of targeted measures even more urgent (UN Women, 2020). In addition, recent studies indicate that community-based interventions designed with the active participation of affected women are more effective in reducing gender-based violence (Mannell et al., 2022; Engel, D., Vyas, S., Chalasani, S., Luna, J. R., & Robinson, A., 2022).

From a theoretical perspective, this work contributes to the enrichment of knowledge about gender-based violence and strategies for its eradication. By integrating interdisciplinary approaches that address the problem of violence against women from the perspective of critical feminist theory, emancipatory education, and process management (Tapia, 2021; Corboz et al., 2024). These approaches allow not only to understand the factors underlying violence, but also to design interventions that promote women's autonomy and the transformation of power relations in the community. Through a qualitative analysis based on a participatory action research design, it is expected to identify the essential needs and key components for the design of effective strategies to reduce gender-based violence in San Francisco de Milagro (Velásquez Chalán et al., 2019; Friederic, 2024).

The usefulness of the study is reflected in its potential to generate more inclusive and effective public policies. By focusing the research on a local context, the results can be applicable in other localities with similar characteristics, contributing to a better distribution of public resources and greater equity in the provision of services for affected women (Aroca, 2020; Castillo-González and Terán Andrade, 2024; Velásquez Chalán et al., 2019).

The contribution to society is significant. The direct beneficiaries will be women who have experienced violence in the local context, who will be able to access specialized services designed to respond to their particular needs. The community at large will benefit from an improvement in social cohesion and a reduction in violence-related tensions. In addition, the scientific community and policymakers will benefit from the study's findings, which will offer new perspectives on the implementation of evidence-based strategies to combat gender-based violence (Corboz et al., 2024; García-Moreno et al., 2015).

The purpose of this research is to identify the essential factors and strategies necessary to design an effective management model that facilitates the creation of a Women's Unit in San Francisco de Milagro, Ecuador¹, with the aim of reducing gender-based violence against women in the locality. Likewise, it is expected that the essential factors and strategies identified from this research will serve as a basis for replicating management models in this area, which can be implemented in other communities in Ecuador and Latin America. This work aspires to be a significant contribution to the construction of a more equitable and just society, in which women can live free of violence and fully exercise their fundamental rights (UN Women, 2020; Mannell et al., 2022; Engel et al., 2022).

Method

This study adopted a qualitative approach with a participatory action research (PAR) design and a cross-sectional temporality, given that data collection was carried out during the first quarter of 2024 (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The methodology focused on the active participation of women and local leaders, promoting their empowerment and strengthening community ownership in the research process, which in turn fostered significant social changes. (Buller, A. M., Pichon, M., Chevalier, C., & Treves-Kagan, S., 2023). In addition, Business Process Management (BPM) principles were incorporated to structure, optimize and innovate the unit's operational processes, ensuring efficient and sustainable management in the long term (Chapela-Campa et al., 2018; Couckuyt & Van Looy, 2020; Chapela-Campa & Dumas, 2023).

The study adopted a social constructivist ontological approach, which assumes that reality is a social construct that is the product of shared interactions and experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). At the epistemological level, an interpretative framework was followed, valuing the subjective interpretations of the participants and recognizing that knowledge emerges from the interaction between the researcher and social reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The socio-critical paradigm guided the research, seeking not only to understand reality, but also to transform it through critical reflection and collective action (Braun & Clarke,

2024).

Data collection included in-depth interviews and trainings that involved participatory workshops where an emancipatory education methodology was used within the framework of critical theories (Bastos et al., 2023; Pineda & Orozco Pineda, 2023), allowing reflection on essential needs and collective solutions to emerge (Cruz Aguilar, 2020; Mannell et al., 2022). Table 1 shows the details of the participants. In addition, regulatory documents, public policies, and statistical data from INEC on the incidence of gender-based violence were analyzed, which complements the qualitative analysis with a broader and more robust perspective (Engel et al., 2022).

The analysis of the data was carried out using a thematic and semantic approach, following the guidelines of (Braun & Clarke, 2024). For the design of efficient management within the Women's Unit, GMP principles were used (Couckuyt & Van Looy, 2020; Chapela-Campa & Dumas, 2023). In addition, to minimize biases and strengthen the validity of the results, principles of reflexivity and triangulation were applied throughout the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Table 1. Detail of Data Collection for the Study

Participants	Harvesting technique	Guiding categories
110 Local leaders from urban and rural areas.	Emancipatory education training. Where data was collected within the reflective partition of workshops.	Risks that contribute to violence against women. The feelings of women in the context of violence. The feeling of women in the context of care and protection. Cultural and social change from a woman's perspective
Six specialists in management with a gender approach. Two have participated in Women's Units in other cities	In-depth interviews	Key Issues Best practices Attention to users in case of violence Management implementation.

Results

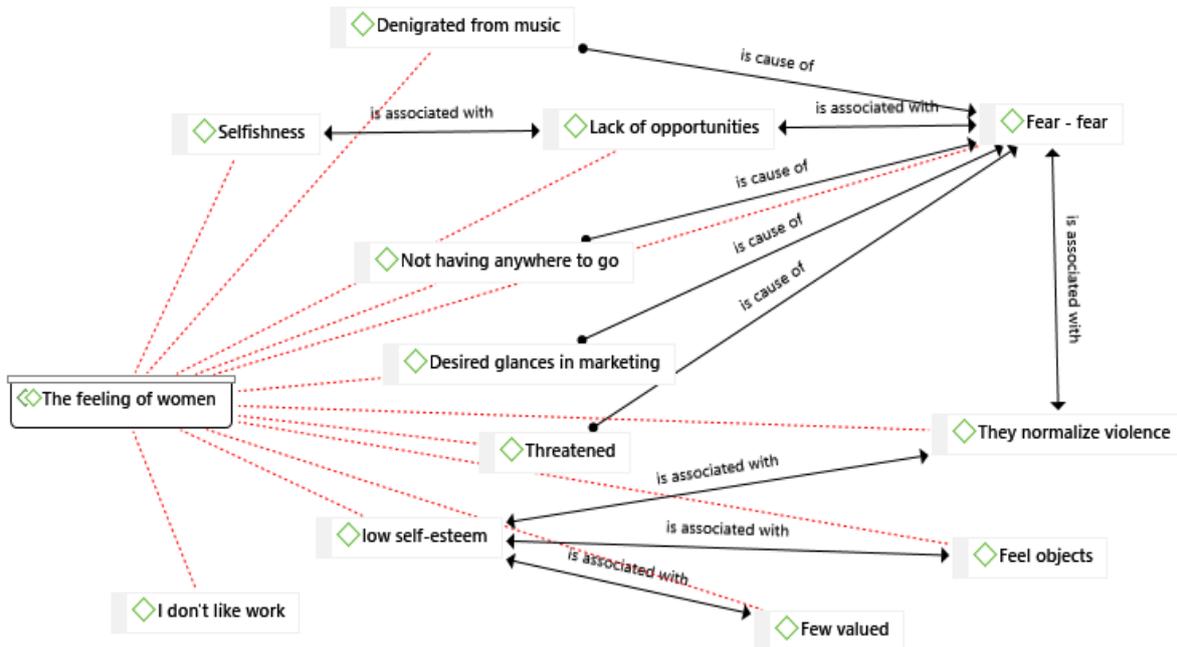
Within the framework of the trainings with an emancipatory participatory methodology approach and in-depth interviews, expressions were obtained from the experience of women leaders and specialists. Participation was active, giving their opinions, thoughtful criticisms, life experiences, and suggestions that contributed significantly to the design of the management model (Lima & Imbiriba Sousa Colares, 2022).

The active participation of women and women leaders in the training workshops provided a valuable approach to the reality of gender-based violence from a local context, making it possible to identify specific needs and formulate lines of relevant programs and initiatives to address the problem. At the same time, the experiences shared by the interviewed specialists facilitated the organization of the factors and strategies that emerged during the development of the study. This collaborative and reflective process culminates in the proposed management model, designed specifically for the implementation of the Women's Unit in San Francisco de Milagro.

Expressions and Experiences of Local Women and Leaders

The first analysis reveals that the risks that contribute to violence against women in San Francisco de Milagro are deeply rooted in cultural, social, and economic dynamics (Figure 1). Lack of information and

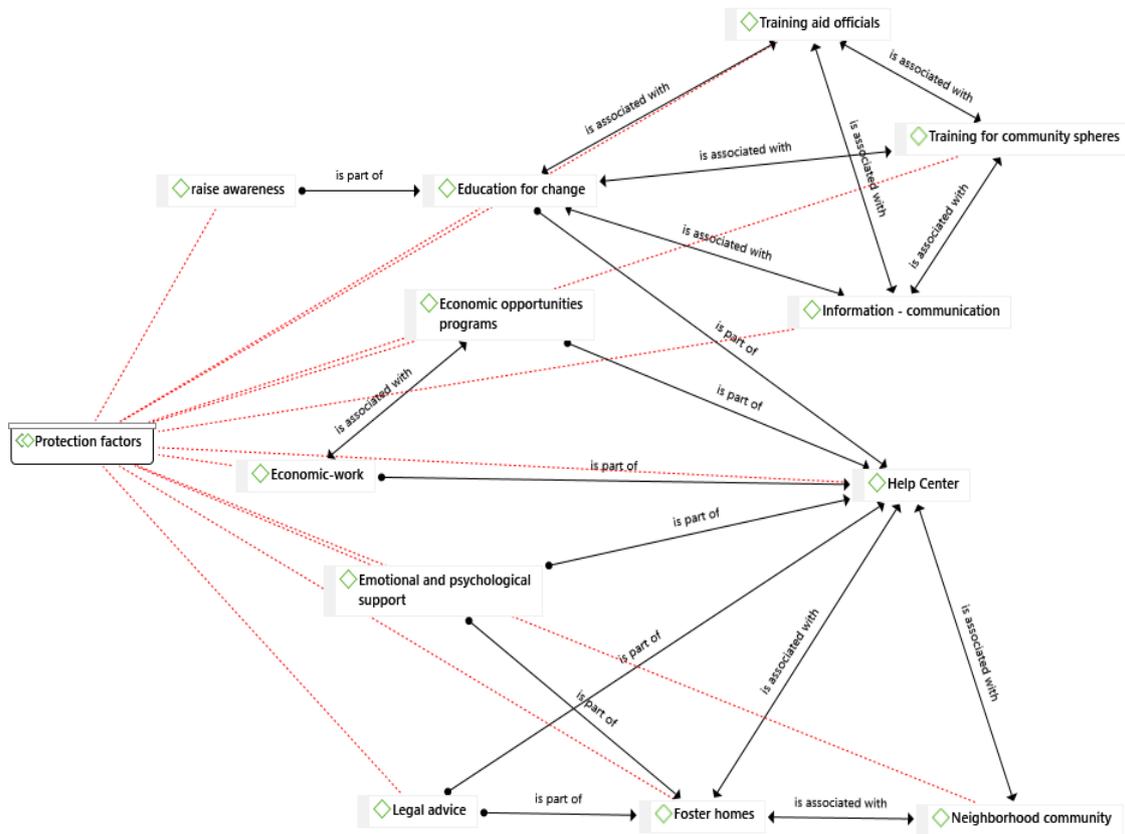
Figure 2. Semantic Network: Women's Feelings in the Context of Violence Against Women.



Note: Own elaboration based on data from the training workshops (2024)

The analysis of the feeling of care and protection in contexts of gender-based violence highlights the importance of essential factors that promote women's safety, autonomy and empowerment (Figure 3). Education for change, together with the training of aid officials and community leaders, strengthens support networks in community spheres, while information and communication guarantee access to essential resources, breaking down barriers of ignorance that perpetuate vulnerability (Schraiber et al., 2023; Alvarado, 2022). Emotional and psychological accompaniment in help centers facilitates recovery and personal strengthening, allowing traumatic experiences to be overcome (Ribeiro et al., 2020). In the economic sphere, labor and financial opportunity programs are fundamental tools to achieve economic independence and reduce the dependency that perpetuates the cycle of violence (Marcano & Palacios, 2017; Dixit et al., 2024). In addition, shelters, supportive neighborhood communities, and legal advice provide shelter, justice, and effective protection (Connell, 2013).

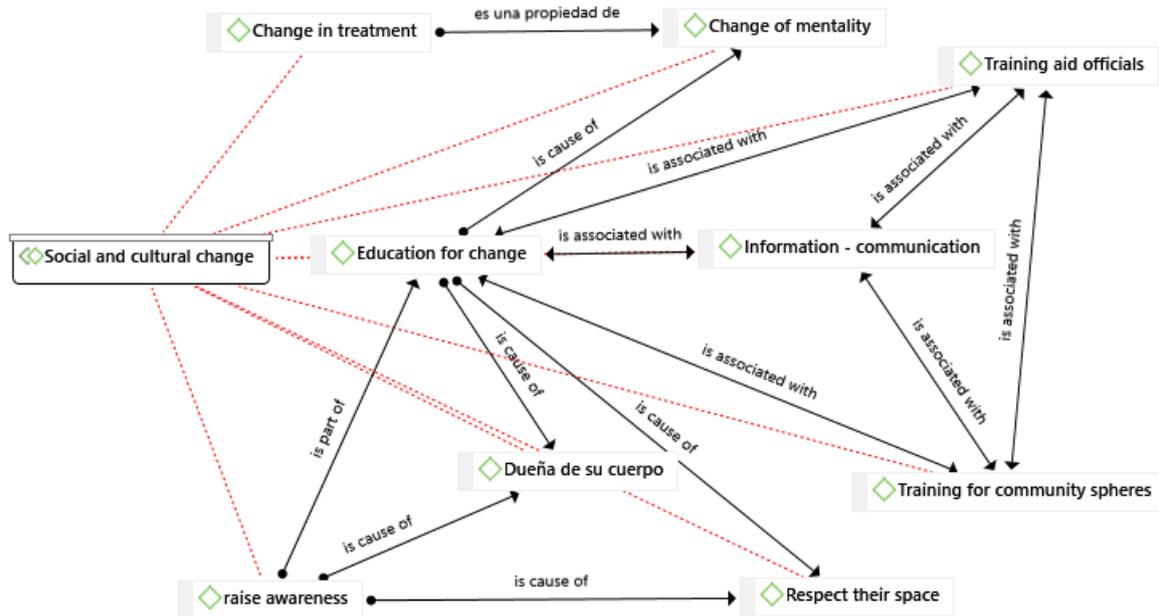
Figure 3. Semantic Network: Women's Feelings in the Context of Care and Projection



Note: Own elaboration based on data from the training workshops (2024)

Finally, the analysis of cultural and social change reveals that this integral process requires transforming mentalities, social practices, and institutional structures to eradicate gender-based violence (Figure 4). This change is underpinned by education for change, which promotes respect for personal space, women's bodily autonomy, and awareness of their rights, serving as a catalyst for modifying cultural norms that perpetuate macho culture and inequality (Connell, 2013; Kiss et al., 2012). The training of aid officials and training in community spheres strengthen institutional and social actors, equipping them with effective tools to address situations of violence (Schraiber et al., 2023). In addition, information and communication play an essential role in raising awareness and disseminating knowledge, promoting a change in the treatment of women and consolidating a culture of respect (Mannell et al., 2022). This change not only implies modifying individual attitudes, but also transforming collective practices and social discourses, positioning women as masters of their bodies and fully autonomous (Brown & Wyatt, 2012). For this dynamic to be effective, a coordinated approach is required between education, training, and public policies, ensuring the participation of all social sectors in the construction of a more equitable and just society (Ribeiro et al., 2020).

Figure 4. Semantic Network: Cultural and Social Change from a Women's Perspective

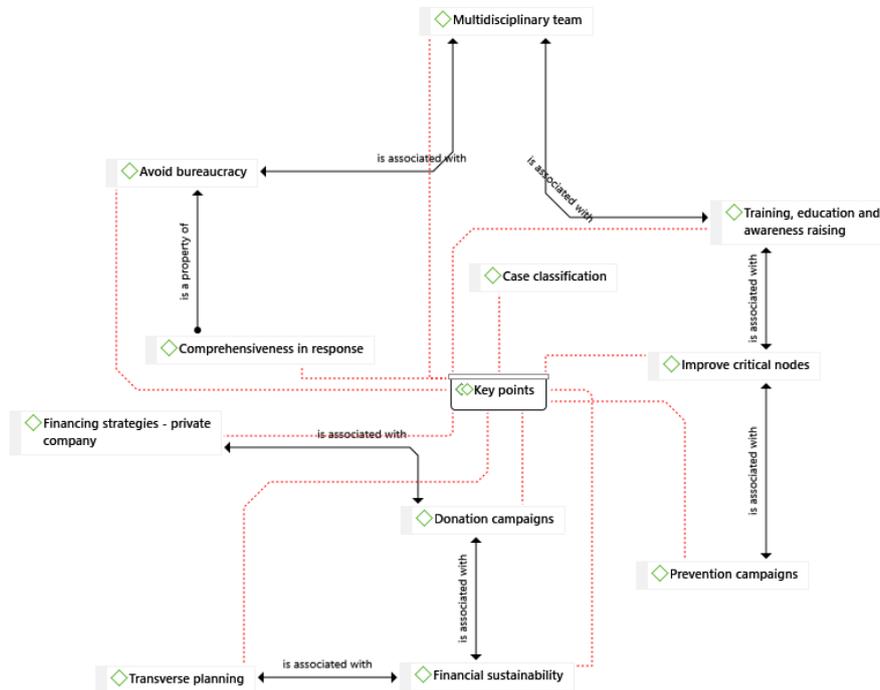


Note: Own elaboration based on data from the training workshops (2024)

Expressions and Experiences of the Interviewed Specialists.

The specialists point out as key issues that a Women's Unit must have a comprehensive and efficient approach, based on the elimination of bureaucratic barriers, the classification of cases and multidisciplinary teams trained in gender and human rights (Schraiber et al., 2023). In addition, they highlight the importance of prevention and donation campaigns to raise awareness in the community and ensure financial sustainability with the support of the private sector (Chapela-Campa et al., 2018; Marcano & Palacios, 2017). Resolving critical knots in operational processes and raising awareness helps prevent violence and ensure an agile and effective response (Connell, 2013; Kiss et al., 2012). This approach ensures both immediate attention to victims and the transformation of structural dynamics that perpetuate violence (Figure 5).

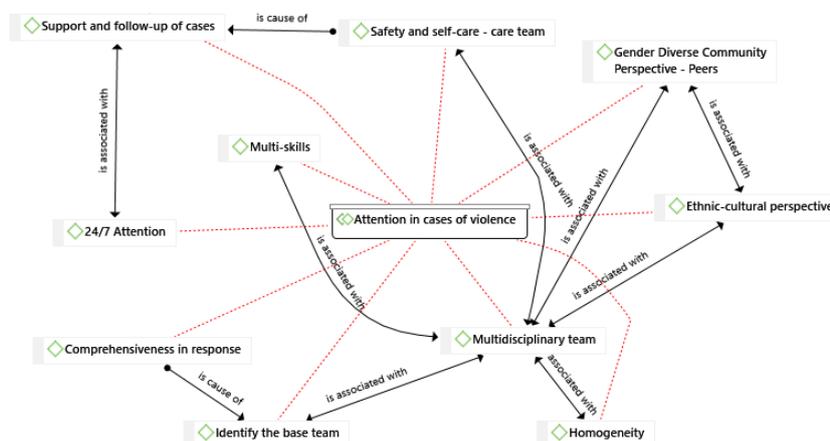
Figure 5. Semantic Network: Key Issues for the Management of a Women's Unit



Note: Own elaboration based on interview data (2024)

In the analysis of the care of users in cases of violence, the specialists emphatically mention that effective care in cases of violence requires a comprehensive, inclusive and specialized approach (Figure 6). Care must be continuous, with services available 24/7 and personalized accompaniment that guarantees the safety and recovery of victims (Schraiber et al., 2023). It is essential to have multidisciplinary teams with multi-competencies, prepared to approach cases from different perspectives, while implementing self-care protocols that protect their physical and emotional well-being (Connell, 2013; Walker, 1979). In addition, the inclusion of a cultural and sexual diversity perspective makes it possible to design interventions that are sensitive to ethnic and gender particularities, promoting adapted and equitable care (Kiss et al., 2012; Ribeiro et al., 2020). Homogeneity in protocols and standards of care is also key to ensuring equity and effectiveness in the response to cases (Dumas et al., 2018; Schraiber et al., 2023). This comprehensive and inclusive approach makes it possible not only to address the immediate needs of victims, but also to transform the structures that perpetuate gender-based violence.

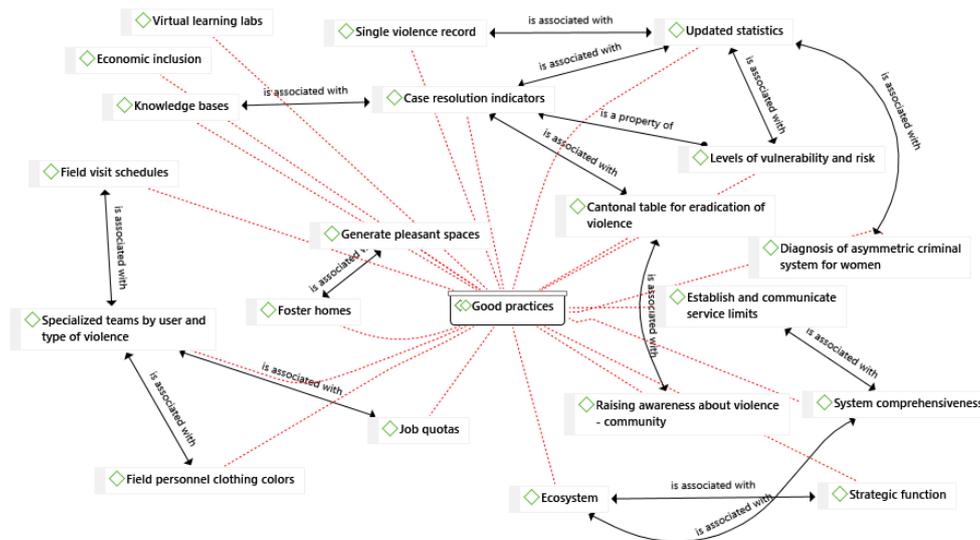
Figure 6. Semantic Network: Attention to Users in Case of Violence for the Management of a Women's Unit



Note: Own elaboration based on interview data (2024)

The specialists in relation to good practices emphasize that the implementation of a Women's Unit should focus on data-based management, comprehensive care, prevention, economic inclusion and technology (Figure 7). A single register of violence and updated statistics makes it possible to diagnose risks and measure interventions (Chapela-Campa & Dumas, 2023; Chapela-Campa et al., 2018). Comprehensive care requires specialized teams, shelters, and humanized spaces (Kiss et al., 2012; Schraiber et al., 2023). Strategies include community awareness, inter-institutional roundtables, and economic inclusion programs to break cycles of dependency (Connell, 2013). In addition, virtual laboratories and digital tools promote innovation in training and management (Marcano & Palacios, 2017).

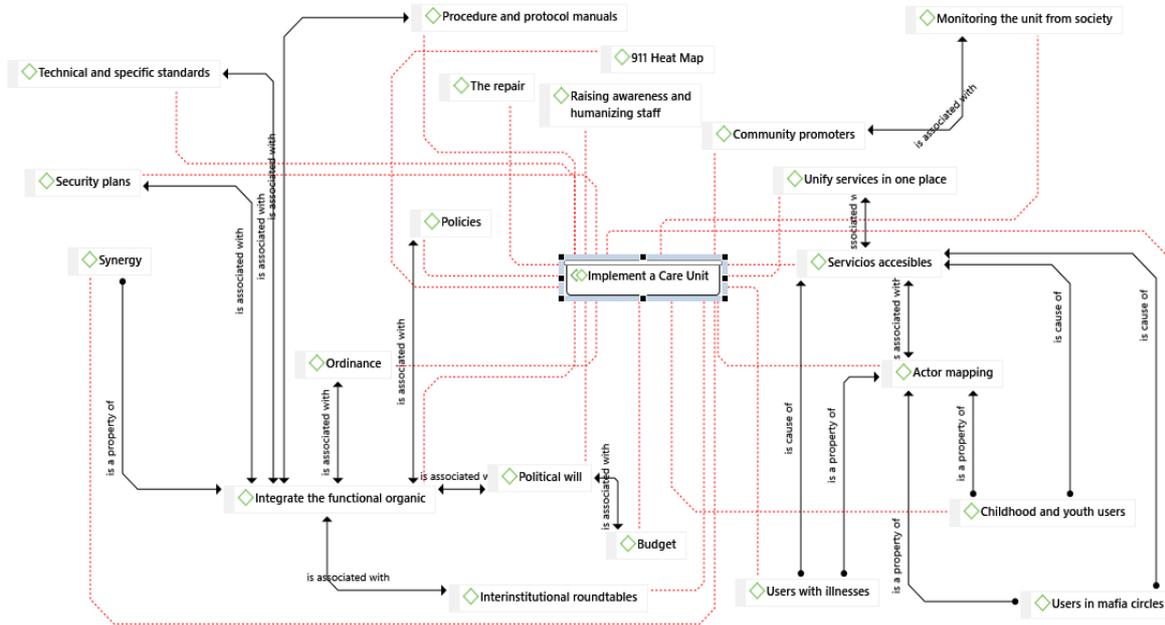
Figure 7. Semantic Network: Good Practices for the Management of A Women's Unit



Note: Own elaboration based on interview data (2024)

The implementation of the Women's Unit requires a comprehensive approach that combines policy support, strategic planning, accessibility, and sustainability (Figure 8). It is crucial to have specific regulations and political will that ensure resources and their integration into the GAD (Dumas, M., La Rosa, M., Mendling, J., & Reijers, H. A., 2018; Schraiber et al., 2023). Planning should include maps of key actors and inter-institutional tables to optimize resources, unifying services in an accessible space (Connell, 2013; Marcano & Palacios, 2017). Humanized care, with sensitized personnel and citizen participation, reinforces transparency (Kiss et al., 2012). Tools such as operational manuals and heat maps prioritize critical areas and standardize processes, ensuring sustainability and effectiveness (Chapela-Campa & Dumas, 2023; Dumas et al., 2018).

Figure 8. Semantic Network: Recommendations for the Implementation of the Management of a Women's Unit



Note: Own elaboration based on interview data (2024)

Management Model for the GAD of San Francisco de Milagro.

After the analysis carried out, emerging categories of the study have been identified, these categories result in the factors that group their strategies. Based on the 14 factors and their strategies, it provides a comprehensive framework for the design of an effective management model for the implementation of a Women's Unit in the GAD of San Francisco de Milagro (Table 2). This approach articulates aspects of care, prevention, sustainability, innovation, accessibility and cultural transformation, essential to address the problem of gender-based violence in a local context.

Table 2. Essential Factors for the Design of A Women's Unit

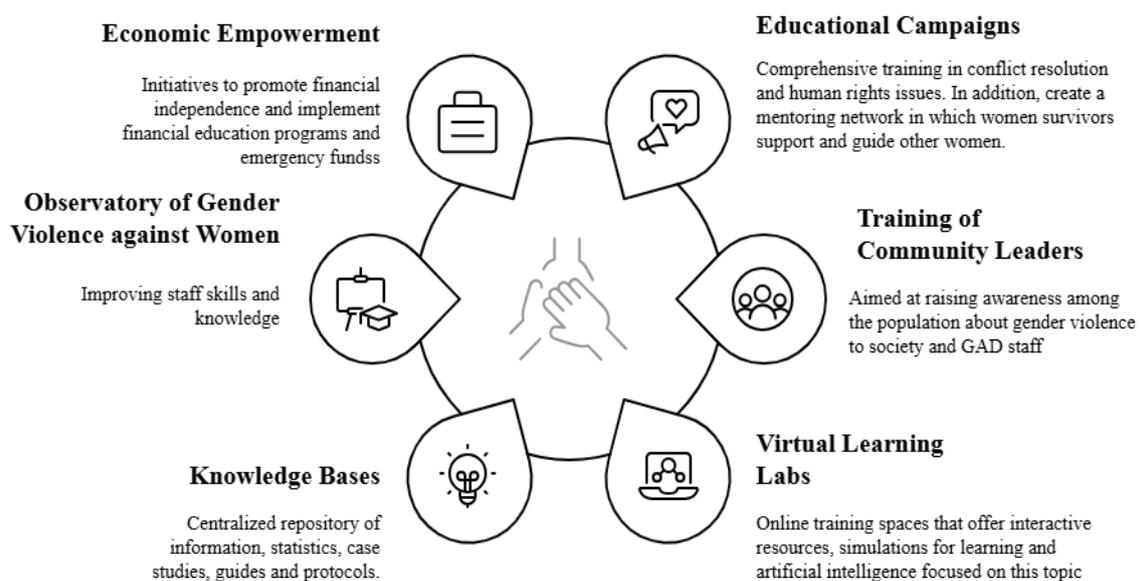
Axes	Factors	Strategies
Process-based organizational structure	System diagnosis and organizational design	Diagnoses of the criminal and protection system. Systemic integration of the unit.
	Process Design and Optimization (BPM)	Functional integration with mapped critical processes, manuals and standardized protocols, agile, scalable and results-oriented management. Continuous improvement through monitoring and evaluation. Interrelation with other internal departmental units. Integrate into comprehensive protection systems.
	Financial and Operational Sustainability	Mixed financing strategies (public and private). Transparent management and transversal planning. Resource Optimization.
	Multidisciplinary Teams and Training	Multi-competences. Identification of a Base Team. Safety and Self-Care. Training, Education and Awareness.
	Normative and Policy Framework	Technical and Specific Standards. Ordinances and Policies. Political Will.
	User Experience - Centralization of Services	Online and multi-channel service portals. Personalization and homogeneity of care. Accessible and unified services in one place. Community promoters as liaisons.

Digital transformation	Cultural Transformation	Digital	Technology training. Fostering a culture of innovation.
	Innovation Management Technology	in and	Agile management with advanced technology for automation, monitoring, artificial intelligence in the early detection of areas with high rates of violence. Virtual labs. Integrated management and interoperability systems.
	Data-Based Decision-Making and Evidence		Impact indicators and flexibility for adjustments. Advanced analytics and real-time dashboard. Single Registry of Violence and Updated Statistics. Knowledge bases.
	Security and Confidentiality	and	Protection of victims' data. Cybersecurity protocols.
Care and Social Interventions	Comprehensive specialized care	and	Empathetic interdisciplinary teams with differentiated protocols according to the type of violence, cultural trait of the users and 24/7 attention; integrate into foster homes; and continuous monitoring of cases. It allows us to guarantee a comprehensive and effective response.
	Prevention and Community Awareness	and	Identification of critical nodes, mapping of actors, use of heat maps, educational campaigns, training of leaders, cantonal tables and security plans to eradicate violence.
	Economic and labor inclusion.	and labor	Labor quotas and economic inclusion programs.
	Cultural and Community Perspective		Sociocultural adaptation of interventions. Strengthening of community support networks. Attention to ethnic and gender diversities. Ordinances for visual advertising and marketing in the city.

Note: Prepared by the author based on data from the training workshops and interviews (2024)

In addition, this model aims not only to respond to the immediate needs of women victims of violence, but also acts as a transformative agent in the eradication of the structural dynamics that perpetuate this problem in all cities. Figure 9 presents a set of programs and initiatives identified in the study.

Figure 9. Programme and Initiatives for the Management of a Women's Unit



Note: Prepared by the author based on data from the training workshops and interviews (2024)

Conclusions

First, the essential needs faced by the women of San Francisco de Milagro in relation to gender violence were identified. Cultural, social, and economic dynamics perpetuate this phenomenon, which demands comprehensive and personalized attention that addresses factors such as economic dependence, lack of job opportunities, and scarce information about violence. It is essential to empower women from the educational and economic spheres so that they can break the cycles of abuse and dependency.

On the other hand, key strategies were proposed to reduce gender-based violence and transform the structural dynamics that sustain it. These strategies include community awareness campaigns, prevention from an educational approach and the use of technology to improve data and process management. These actions, combined with the formation of community support networks and the strengthening of institutional capacities, are crucial to ensure an effective and sustainable response.

The proposed management model is characterized by its comprehensive approach. It combines specialized attention to victims, the prevention of violence through education and awareness, the economic inclusion of affected women, digital transformation to optimize processes and the promotion of cultural change in the community. The use of tools such as real-time indicators and a single registration system allows decision-making to be based on reliable data, ensuring the effectiveness and impact of the model.

Finally, the expected social impact is significant. This model has the potential to reduce gender-based violence in the locality, while transforming the social and cultural dynamics that perpetuate this problem. In addition, the study's participatory approach ensures that strategies respond to women's real needs, fostering sustainable structural change. The model is highly replicable and adaptable to other contexts with similar characteristics, making it a valuable tool to address gender-based violence against women in Latin America.

Note

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