

## Article

# Co-Creating Social Impact: Dialogues Between Policymakers, Practitioners, and the “Other Women” for Sustainable Development

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## Abstract

**Background:** Scientific literature highlights that practitioners and policymakers in social and educational fields can contribute to the inclusion and empowerment of vulnerable groups when developing actions grounded in scientific evidence of social impact, co-created through dialogic engagement with the concerned communities. This study, aligned with Sustainable Development Goals 4 (“Quality Education”) and 5 (“Gender Equality”), provides new evidence on the co-creation process between policymakers and practitioners and women without higher education degrees and its impact. **Methods:** A qualitative study was conducted through nine in-depth interviews with practitioners and policymakers engaged in the development of dialogic spaces in education, health, and equality. **Results:** Two key characteristics were identified: (1) a focus on the inclusion of women not yet involved, through the co-creation of egalitarian spaces for dialogue and decision-making, and (2) a commitment to implementing actions based on scientific evidence of social impact. These led to reported improvements in empowerment, education, well-being, health, and employability, not only for the women themselves but also for their families, schools, and communities. **Conclusions:** The findings support the promotion of co-creation processes with women without academic qualifications and in vulnerable situations, demonstrating their potential to foster sustainable social development.

**Keywords:** cocreation; other women; teachers; educators; policymakers; social impact



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## 1. Introduction

Numerous efforts are being undertaken by policymakers, principals, teachers, educators, and other professionals worldwide to enhance the well-being and inclusion of women who have not had the opportunity to access education [1–5]. These initiatives encompass areas such as health and well-being [6–8], the legal sphere [9,10], digital engagement, and technology [11,12], among others. In this context, institutions such as the UN and UNESCO underscore the persistent challenges faced by many women across the globe [13–15].

Co-creation, as defined by the communicative research methodology, goes beyond both top-down and bottom-up models by integrating dialogue between scientists and citizens based on evidence and arguments [16]. The demand for spaces that combine scientific expertise with egalitarian dialogue rooted in democratic values fosters collaboration among

diverse stakeholders. Participants are encouraged to share their views and experiences and to engage in discussions around scientific knowledge that has demonstrated social improvement, thereby upholding the citizen's right to access such knowledge [17]. This contributes to citizen empowerment and enables a deeper understanding of their role in driving social transformation toward more egalitarian and democratic societies [18].

Its adaptability across diverse policy contexts highlights co-creation's relevance within varied governance models [19,20]. It also cultivates inclusive forms of governance by bringing together diverse actors in transformative engagement [21]. In social practice, co-creation has been applied in areas such as social work, where stakeholders like adolescents and youth workers actively collaborate with professionals to develop interventions, enhancing their relevance and impact [22]. It has also been used with marginalized populations, such as the Roma community, to design initiatives that integrate scientific evidence with lived experiences [23].

In the field of community development, co-creation strengthens local capacities for promoting healthcare [24], and in urban planning, it engages diverse stakeholders in designing innovative services that contribute to smart, sustainable, and inclusive urban environments [25]. These processes have enabled traditionally excluded populations to contribute their voices and actions to societal improvement. In particular, this qualitative study focuses on the contributions of the "other women" within co-creation processes carried out in collaboration with practitioners holding decision-making positions in the fields of education, health and well-being, and non-discrimination.

## **2. Theoretical Framework: Dialogic Feminism and the Inclusion of the "Other Women"**

The "other women", based on the term coined by sociologist Lidia Puigvert (2001), refers to women without academic qualifications who have traditionally been excluded from spaces of public debate and decision-making on social and educational policies and actions that directly affect them, their families, and communities [26]. This concept emerged within the framework of dialogic feminism developed by Puigvert, who was the first to theorize the specific inequality experienced by women without formal education within the feminist movement. While racialized women had already begun to be recognized as excluded from decision-making spaces dominated by academically educated white women in the early 2000s, the marginalization of women without academic backgrounds had not yet been addressed. Dialogic feminism made this exclusion visible and provided a theoretical foundation for their recognition and inclusion [27,28].

In recent decades, progress has been made in promoting social and educational actions co-created with non-academic women [29,30] and other collectives within educative communities, aimed at improving the educational and social opportunities of themselves, their families, and their communities [31–34]. This approach is grounded in the co-creation of knowledge involving the participation of a wide diversity of social agents, such as social entities, companies, associations, and spin-offs, among others [35,36], including individuals without academic studies through cooperative engagement in community organizations [37]. Among a wide array of co-created programs and actions involving women without academic studies that have demonstrated social impact, the literature has highlighted Successful Educational Actions (SEAs) as those that have consistently achieved excellent outcomes in terms of academic success and enhanced social cohesion across diverse contexts with students and families [38]. Among these educational actions, the involvement of the "other women" in learning environments such as Dialogic Gatherings (DGs) and Interactive Groups (IGs), as well as in decision-making spaces within their children's schools, has been shown to transform stereotypical beliefs about the abilities

of women without academic education, immigrant women, and those from cultural minorities. This participation also fosters students' motivation for learning. DGs constitute an educational action for the collective creation of meaning and knowledge, grounded in dialogue among all participants about the greatest creations of humanity across various fields, including literature, art, music, mathematics and science [39]. Migrant mothers participating in Dialogic Literary Gatherings (DLGs), one of the DG modalities, in certain schools has been shown to enhance their language acquisition in the host country, developing communicative skills and confidence in the language, strengthening school–community links, and transforming family learning interactions [40]. IGs represent a learning environment in which the classroom is organized into small heterogeneous groups of students, each including an adult (mostly family members or other community volunteers) alongside the teacher responsible for the entire class, thereby increasing effective working time. The inclusion of non-academic women in IGs, particularly mothers and grandmothers, has contributed to multiplying and diversifying learning interactions, positively influencing students' motivation to learn and improving both learning outcomes and the overall school climate [41]. The "other women" are also contributing to their children's schools in other SEAs by supporting the Dialogic Model of Conflict Prevention and Resolution. This model, focusing on conflict prevention, opened new dialogic spaces for the participation of families, contributing to their involvement in improving coexistence within the school and in the community [34].

The contribution of the "other women" to the co-creation of social and educational actions aimed at improving well-being has extended beyond their children's schools. Roma women in Spain played an active role in preserving the health of their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic, helping to prevent the exacerbation of existing inequalities by promoting health literacy that enabled evidence-based decision-making in their daily lives to protect themselves, their families, and their broader social environments [30]. Cases such as these have demonstrated that when actions are co-created between researchers, educators, and stakeholders alongside the "other women", and grounded in scientific evidence of social impact, they generate improvements not only in the lives of the women involved but also in those of their relatives and the communities in which they live [38,42].

In light of this reality, which opens new avenues for research, this article presents part of the findings from a research project framed within the pursuit of contributing to Sustainable Development Goal 4, "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all", and Goal 5, "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". The project, entitled [Anonymized] (2021–2024), has been funded by [Anonymized] and is oriented towards addressing society's challenges. The primary aim of the [Anonymized] project is to analyze the social impact of educational actions that contribute to the empowerment of women experiencing greater inequality, due to factors such as not holding higher education degrees, being immigrants, and belonging to cultural minorities, among other circumstances. This article presents the results of Phase 2 of the aforementioned project, specifically those related to the common characteristics of co-creation processes fostered by principals, teachers, educators, other professionals, and policymakers within dialogic spaces across the fields of education, community development, equality of rights, and health, in collaboration with the "other women" from both urban and rural contexts in Spain. The settings include (1) Dialogic Gatherings and other forms of educational participation by families, primarily mothers without academic qualifications, including some Roma and immigrant women from Morocco and various Latin American countries, in their children's schools. These activities took place in (1) four urban elementary schools located in underprivileged neighborhoods across four regions in Spain; (2) a rural school; (3) a Dialogic Literary Gathering held at an urban primary health

care center; (4) a community development plan (settings 3 and 4 were implemented in the same neighborhood); and (5) an office for equal treatment and non-discrimination within one of the regional governments.

### 3. Materials and Methods

#### 3.1. Research Questions

To guide the analysis presented in this study, two key research questions are formulated. These questions aim to deepen the understanding of the co-creation processes between policymakers, practitioners, and women without higher education degrees, as well as to explore the social impact of these actions. The following research questions are addressed: (1) What characteristics are common in the co-creation process of social and educational actions promoted by practitioners and policymakers with women without higher education degrees? (2) What was the social impact of these actions on women, their families, and their communities?

#### 3.2. Data Collection

A qualitative study with a communicative methodology was carried out through in-depth communicative interviews with nine practitioners and policymakers. No additional interviews were conducted due to saturation, understood as the point at which no new themes relevant to the research questions emerged. However, beyond saturation, decisions throughout the development of the project were taken dialogically, involving both researchers and participants, with the aim of generating deeper knowledge that contributes to advancing the inclusion and empowerment of women without academic qualifications through actions grounded in scientific evidence of social impact.

This qualitative study does not aim to provide a representative sample. Instead, it seeks to generate in-depth understanding of the experiences and contributions of participants within specific social and educational contexts. The selection criteria for participants had been defined in the research project prior to data collection and included: (1) Practitioners in decision-making positions involved in the co-creation and development of local educational actions engaging the “other women”, for which prior evidence of social impact existed in terms of improvements for the women themselves, their families, or their communities; and (2) Policymakers from public administration at the local, regional, or national level responsible for the creation and development of social or educational policies or programs aimed at the inclusion of the “other women”.

In addition, diversity of territories was ensured, with participants coming from four Autonomous Communities and seven municipalities (six urban and one rural). The identification of the individuals to be interviewed was based on prior agreement with participants involved in Successful Educational Actions previously identified through literature review and direct contact. This process included several conversations with key individuals coordinating schools and entities implementing these actions, in order to select those profiles whose contributions could most clearly illustrate the social impact achieved in their respective territories. The involvement of research team members in collaborative work with some of these initiatives facilitated this selection process, ensuring that the voices included in the study reflected both the diversity of contexts and the depth of transformative experiences.

Table 1 presents the specific profile of each of the nine individuals interviewed (eight women, denoted as W, and one man, denoted as M), using the following codification: Po 1–5 (Policymakers) and Pra 1–5 (Practitioners), along with the identification of the educational action or dialogic space they have promoted. For reasons of confidentiality, neither the Autonomous Communities of Spain nor the urban and rural areas are identified in these profiles. All proper names are pseudonyms.

**Table 1.** Practitioners and Policymakers interviewed.

Code	Profiles	Social and Educational Actions
W_Po1	Director (she), non-discrimination office, regional government	Dialogic space with migrant and Roma women
W_Po2	Educational advisor (she), regional government	Dialogic Gatherings
W_Po3	Educational advisor (she), national government	Dialogic Gatherings, Educative participation of families
W_Po4	Former Deputy Mayor and Councillor for Gender Equality and Enterprise (she), urban area	Dialogic Gatherings
W_Pra1	Principal (she), elementary school, urban area	Dialogic Gatherings, Educative participation of families
M_Pra2	Director (he), rural school	Educative participation
W_Pra3	Educator and coordinator (she), community development plan, urban area	Dialogic Gatherings, Educative participation of families
W_Pra4	Doctor and Director (she), community health centre, urban area	Dialogic Gatherings
W_Pra5	Principal (she), elementary school, urban area	Dialogic Gatherings, Educative participation of families, Interactive Groups

Communicative interviews elicit an interpretation of reality through the combination of existing scientific literature on the issue under study and the perspectives of the interviewees. The interviews were not a list of closed questions but were developed in an egalitarian dialogue between the researcher, who guided the research questions and shared previous existing evidence, and the interviewee, who contributed their knowledge as a professional involved in the analyzed social and educational actions. The communicative approach allows both the researcher and the interviewee to agree on the interpretations they consider valid, in this case, about the co-creation process of the educational and social actions and the social impact that these actions have had. The researcher contributes to the dialogue by sharing the previous evidence available in relation to the two research questions of this study, thereby facilitating an open conversation around each of them. Within this exchange, interviewees are able to connect this evidence with their own lived experiences, generating a dialogic interpretation of reality that is reflected in the cited excerpts. These interviews are recorded, with the prior consent of the participants, and subsequently transcribed by members of the research team [43].

The interviews were conducted online from September to December 2023 by researchers of the team. All the interviewed were asked to sign an informed consent form accepting their participation in the study and the publication of the results. The interviews' communicative approach was oriented to the collective creation of meaning and knowledge between the researcher and the person being interviewed.

### 3.3. Data Analysis

The interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. Both the audio files and the anonymized transcripts were securely stored in an encrypted cloud folder of the University of [Anonymized], with access restricted exclusively to the research team members responsible for this task. The data were analyzed using a thematic analysis which combines both deductively (from the literature and research questions) and inductively (emerging from the data). The themes were discussed and reached by consensus among the research team members. Table 2 provides a summary of the main themes and codes identified in the analysis. The table synthesizes the key characteristics of the co-creation processes between practitioners, policymakers, and women without higher education degrees, as well as the social impacts of these actions on the women themselves, their families, and their communities.

**Table 2.** Summary of Main Themes and Codes Identified in the Analysis.

Main Theme/Code	Subcategory/Code	Description	Example Quote
Inclusion of other women' in co-creation processes (1)	Moroccan mothers (urban school) (1.1)	Participation in Spanish classes and school activities; overcoming language barriers	We told the mums, if you come with 8 of you, we can make up a group; and the week after we had 8 mothers. . .
	Moroccan mothers (rural school) (1.2)	Creation of mutual support groups; intercultural dialogue	The self-support group is above all for the Muslim families. As they have been empowering themselves. . .
	Roma women (public administration dialogic space) (1.3)	Access to complaints and support services; empowerment through trusted spaces	What is done there is to ask her what she wants to do, how she is, to complement in her story. . .
Social impact of co-created actions (2)	Empowerment and well-being (non-academic women) (2.1)	Increased self-confidence, language acquisition, and active participation	She explained in the roundtable at the Conference that she didn't participate in the school because. . .
	Impact on children (2.2)	Improved motivation for learning, better school climate, enhanced family-school relationships	He changed all the way by seeing his mother here. He was more in class, was more attentive. . .
	Impact on families (2.3)	Parents supporting children's learning, improved family learning interactions	I already did my homework with her. . . he changed all the way by seeing his mother here.
	Impact on the community (2.4)	Broader participation, community mobilization, new roles for women, support for newcomers	That moment. . . all of us in the audience had tears in our eyes because it was super emotional. . .
	Intercultural solidarity (2.5)	Muslim and non-Muslim families supporting each other, translation, inclusion	They facilitate whatever they need, for instance, the language. . . but also to talk about issues that are of interest to them. . .
Commitment to actions based on scientific evidence of social impact (3)	Dialogic Literary Gatherings (DLGs) in health/community centers (3.1)	Implementation of DLGs to improve well-being and mental health	The DLG is all of that, and the evidence is that they held on even during the pandemic period. . .
	Decision-making spaces in community development (3.2)	Involvement of non-academic women in assemblies and commissions	We invite them, above all, in the decision-making spaces. Also, in the Assembly, which is the more decision-making space. . .

Table 2. Cont.

Main Theme/Code	Subcategory/Code	Description	Example Quote
	Policymakers promoting SEAs with ‘other women’ (3.3)	Inclusion of non-academic women in policy design and implementation	I have participated with the women, helping to conduct dialogic gatherings with women, particularly with the ones who I have participated in the most, the Roma women.
	School-family relationships (4.1)	Shift from hierarchical to collaborative relationships	We were no longer the teachers who wanted to teach him or tell him ‘You can’t do that’. For him, we were another type of people. . .
Transformation of institutional practices (4)	Community engagement (4.2)	New spaces for dialogue in everyday settings (hair salons, cafés, etc.)	We have been doing the dialogic gatherings in hairdressing salons, in some bars, and in some bookstores as well. . .
	Employability and civic participation (4.3)	Women becoming cultural mediators, joining family associations, and participating in public events	Many of the women who participated in these gatherings are now employed as cultural mediators in public schools across the city.



## 4. Results

The research enabled the identification of two common characteristics among the diverse profiles of practitioners and policymakers interviewed, in relation to the co-creation processes of social and educational actions they promoted with the “other women.” These characteristics are (1) a focus on including women who had not previously participated, by co-creating spaces for dialogue and decision-making with them, and (2) a strong commitment to implementing actions grounded in scientific evidence of social impact. The following sections present these characteristics in detail, along with the social impact these actions have had on the women involved, their families, and their communities.

### *4.1. Focus on the Inclusion of Women Not Yet Involved, Co-Creating Spaces of Dialogue and Decision-Making with Them*

The findings reveal how the various practitioners and policymakers involved in the research focus their efforts on the inclusion of women without academic qualifications who are not yet engaged in spaces of attention, education, decision-making, and participation. Their narratives demonstrate how their interventions have been dedicated to co-creating spaces in which these women are heard through egalitarian dialogue, leading to more effective responses to their needs and interests and facilitating the implementation of successful actions with a clear positive impact on their lives, as well as on those of their families and communities.

#### 4.1.1. The Inclusion of Moroccan Immigrant Mothers in an Urban Elementary School

The inclusion of Moroccan mothers in an urban elementary school was facilitated through the creation of Spanish language classes and the encouragement of their participation in school activities. This approach helped overcome language barriers and fostered a sense of belonging among these mothers.

In this school, family involvement in learning activities and decision-making processes forms an integral part of the school’s regular educational project. The Principal recounts how, upon initiating the implementation of successful education actions in the framework of the Schools as Learning Communities project, it became evident that they needed to explicitly reach out to families who were not yet participating. While many families, mostly native Spanish women, were already engaged in educational activities within their children’s classrooms and other learning and decision-making spaces, Moroccan mothers were not participating, despite having both the time and opportunity to do so. To encourage their inclusion and participation in the school, the Principal and the Head of Studies chose to speak with them at the school entrance, conveying a sense of trust and welcome, while also asking why they did not stay, and expressing appreciation for the valuable contributions they could offer:

Well, and when we started this whole process over time, we saw that it was (always) the same families who participated and that there was a group of mothers who were outside and who did not make the step. Then, one day it was Marisa (Head of Studies) who came out to them and said, “let’s see, now that you’re here, why don’t you come in” and they told her “It’s just that since we don’t know the language we don’t want to, we don’t know what. . . , if we do, we’re not going to do it right”.

(W\_Pro1)

#### Impact on The Women Themselves

The action of Head of Studies was pivotal as she approached the women who were not participating, asked about their reasons, and listened to them. Furthermore, when the



Head of Studies provided these women with opportunities to engage in the school, taking into account their specific needs, particularly regarding language, they became actively involved. Having listened to the barrier they expressed about the language and determined to facilitate their participation, she continues to explain how they started up just a week after a group for learning the Spanish language, which spread rapidly and led to much interest in participation for the Moroccan mothers:

And we told the mums, if you come with 8 of you, we can make up a group; and the week after we had 8 mothers that wanted to learn Spanish. And over time, the word spread, and more mothers wanted to come who were not from the school.

(W\_Pro1)

At the beginning, the classes were conducted by the Principal and the Head of Studies with other volunteer mothers who came forward to teach Spanish to the Moroccan mothers. The success of these classes in the neighborhood, which was attended by more and more Moroccan women, led the City Council to finance the salary of an educator so that she could take charge of the classes, which highlights an impact of co-creation with these women.

#### Impact on Their Families

The Principal highlighted that this shift has also had a significant impact on children, particularly in terms of motivation for learning. As an example, she describes the transformation of the son of one of these mothers, who had previously been highly distracted in class and exhibited poor behavior, but who subsequently improved his motivation for learning and began completing his homework:

At the beginning, when his mum still did not participate, he didn't like that family members of other children in the school entered the classroom (as part of their volunteer participation in the educational actions implemented in the school). This changed immediately when his mother started to attend school for the Spanish classes and because she took part in other school activities. The typical (boy) who did not like that parents are around in school. But she (his mother) used to come every day. We started telling her: "We will tell your son that you came". And then we would tell him: "Jamal, your mother came". (He) says: "I already did my homework with her", you see, he changed all the way by seeing his mother here. He was more in class, was more attentive, had another relationship with us also because we are helping his mother. He gave it such importance (to the fact that) his mother was here, but really much and when they would walk the halls, it was like "what a pride".

(W\_Pro1)

The school principal also explains how this change also affected his relationship with his teachers and the way he saw them and the school, so much that on his last day at the school (at the end of primary education) he was very moved and said he did not want to leave:

Because he spoke different to us, before we were the body that ruled over him, made him behave properly and now we were the people who were helping his mother learn Spanish. He gave a different value to us; he saw us differently. We were no longer the teachers who wanted to teach him or tell him "You can't do that". For him, we were another type of people, he saw us differently. His perspective towards us changed. The last day of Sixth (last year of primary education), he was the last one to leave through that door, and he made us all cry. Well, it was super emotional, and the mother was the same; the mother was

saying, “Can I continue coming?”. We had never seen him so moved, and he said: “It’s that I don’t want to leave, I don’t want school to end”. It was very beautiful.

(W\_Pro1)

Creating spaces for dialogue in which mothers can express their needs, such as the Spanish classes for Moroccan mothers, has a broader impact on other members of the family and the wider community. This is illustrated by the case of a mother and her daughter from the same school who encouraged the father to join and learn Spanish:

The mother very fast started to speak Spanish very well, but the father not, and the daughter would say to Marisa (the Head teacher): “Marisa, you will convince my father to come to the Spanish lessons” (...) That is, it’s that this changes people’s lives, those of the ones who come to class, but it also has an impact on the children because children that their families are coming to school, that they care.

(W\_Pro1)

Another example shared by the school principal illustrates the far-reaching impact of this dialogic process centered on these women. In this case, one of the Moroccan mothers, who had begun attending Spanish classes just the previous year, participated in a round table at a conference organized by the Department of Education of the regional Government and a teachers’ association. She shared her experience in front of more than 300 teachers who had recently begun implementing successful educational actions in their schools. Her participation had a direct impact on her confidence in speaking Spanish publicly, and was deeply meaningful for her daughter, who witnessed her mother’s journey from being unable to express herself in Spanish to addressing an audience as an example of achievement. As recounted by the school principal, following this experience, the mother felt empowered to join the family association and informed the principal of her intention to do so:

She explained (in the roundtable at the Conference) that she didn’t participate in the school because she did not know the language. She says: “I started to participate because I learnt Spanish there. I’m encouraged now, and I’m attending (other official language) classes as well”, she says, “and I can help my daughters”. Well, this is very thrilling for me (the Principal shows emotion in her voice, expression, and shiny eyes when explaining it). The mother says, “I can help my daughters and read with them”. The daughter (one of them) was seating next to her looking at her like “wow, my mother is here talking to all these people about how she learns” I mean, that moment. . . Well, all of us in the audience had tears in our eyes because it was super emotional. It’s like these girls see that their mother is not only at home but also does other things. Then we talk to that mum, and she said, “Next year, I will also be in the AFA (Association of Families of Students).”

(I\_W\_Pro1)

These findings illustrate how the intentional creation of inclusive spaces, such as Spanish language classes and opportunities for participation in school activities, can effectively address barriers to engagement among Moroccan immigrant mothers. The process not only facilitated their inclusion into the school community but also generated positive ripple effects on their children’s motivation, family dynamics, and the broader school climate. The evidence highlights the transformative potential of dialogic and co-created educational practices, demonstrating that when schools actively foster egalitarian participation, they contribute to the empowerment of women and families who had not previously been involved, and to the development of more cohesive and supportive educational environments.

#### 4.1.2. The Inclusion of Moroccan Immigrant Mothers in a Rural School

##### Impact on The Women Themselves

The inclusion of Moroccan immigrant mothers in a rural school context reveals how co-creation processes can foster intercultural solidarity and empower women who have previously remained outside educational spaces. Unlike urban settings, where institutional resources and community networks may be more readily available, rural schools often face additional challenges in engaging immigrant families. This case illustrates how practitioners, through dialogic engagement and responsiveness to the specific needs of these women, were able to transform barriers into opportunities for mutual support and community building. The evidence highlights the capacity of dialogic spaces to generate sustained collective action, not only enhancing individual empowerment but also reshaping the social fabric of the school and its surrounding community.

This is the case of a rural school that participated in the study. The school principal described a co-created initiative in which the “other women,” primarily Moroccan immigrant mothers, played a key role. This initiative became a space for solidarity and intercultural dialogue, fostering mutual understanding and support among coexisting cultures. To initiate the process, the principal and several families invited a group of Moroccan mothers, who had not previously participated, to organize an event focused on raising awareness about the Muslim community. As a result of these meetings, more Moroccan mothers began participating in other school activities, such as Spanish language classes and Dialogic Gatherings aimed at preventing violence. The principal explained how the entire process led to the formation of a mutual support group, in which Muslim families, particularly mothers who had already learned the language at school, and autochthonous families supported other families who were newcomers or faced language barriers. They practiced Spanish conversation with them, acted as translators during school meetings, and assisted with various tasks related to their children’s education, inclusion in the community, and job-seeking. This example demonstrates how co-creation fostered intercultural solidarity and empowered immigrant families to support others through sustained community action:

The mutual support group is above all for the Muslim families. As they have been empowering themselves, they have wanted to develop their linguistic capacity more also, right? So the mutual support group is a group of people in constant contact with the most vulnerable groups and they facilitate whatever they need, for instance, the language, well then [they (the people in the group)] have conversations with them for them to learn the language, to practice the language, but also to talk about issues that are of interest to them about going shopping, or manage [administrative] papers, how to fill in a job questionnaire, how to get to know the Spanish educational system for them to better choose what is best for their children, and this way they do not conform to low expectations when their high-school tells them that their children need to attend CP [this is a certification that children who do not attend high school] etc. And, especially, so that when they come to the meetings there is always someone looking after them for if they understand or not, they can be next to them, translating them, or telling everything slowly, they tell beforehand or telling them beforehand.

(M\_Pro2)

##### Impact on The Community

Once again, the evidence highlights the impact of creating spaces for collaboration and dialogue directly promoted by teachers in partnership with families. As a result, Muslim mothers overcame their initial fear of entering the school and began accessing it more comfortably, no longer feeling the need to wait until several of them were present before

entering. It showed how co-creation removed barriers, allowing mothers who had not yet participated to enter the school autonomously and confidently:

The school is a hive of people at the start in the morning and the end in the afternoon; a lot of community is generated at the school's entrance. However, before, these women were not confident enough to enter the school, or they did not enter alone (the Muslim mothers), but they always entered two at a time or three at a time; they waited for each other at the gate. Just from that moment on, they entered with whomever; that is, it was not necessary anymore to wait for a Muslim mother, but they entered with anyone in a very natural conversation. There was no border anymore. That border had been overcome.

(M\_Pro2)

The experience of the rural school demonstrates that co-creation with Moroccan immigrant mothers can lead to profound transformations in both individual and collective dynamics. The formation of mutual support groups and the normalization of intercultural interactions within the school environment reflect a shift from exclusion to active participation. These outcomes underscore the importance of creating inclusive spaces where immigrant women feel welcomed, heard, and empowered to contribute. The evidence suggests that in this rural context, dialogic practices dismantle symbolic borders and foster a sense of belonging, ultimately benefiting not only the women themselves but also their families and the broader school community.

#### 4.1.3. The Inclusion of Roma Women in a Dialogic Space of the Public Administration Impact on Women and The Community

The inclusion of Roma women in a dialogic space within public administration illustrates how institutional actors can foster trust and participation among women who had not previously engaged with formal complaint or support services. This case highlights the importance of creating culturally attuned and dialogic environments that respond to the lived realities of non-academic Roma women. Rather than relying solely on formal mechanisms, the co-creation of trusted spaces, developed in collaboration with grassroots associations, enabled these women to express their experiences and make decisions about how to address discrimination. The evidence underscores the transformative potential of dialogic approaches in public institutions, particularly when they prioritize listening, accompaniment, and shared decision-making.

The non-discrimination office was created by one of Spain's regional governments. It aims to develop, implement, and evaluate public policies to mainstream equal treatment and non-discrimination. Within this office is an area for complaints and attention to victims, which provides support and advice to people who have suffered discrimination. The female Director of the office told us that they detected very few complaints from one of the groups that suffer the most discrimination, Roma women, and among these, none came from women without academic studies. The Director knew that they were not reaching out to these women because the victims felt insecure with the administration. After all, it does not represent them; they believe it will not help them.; this is how she explained it: They do not feel identified; they do not feel safe. They do not think that it can be of any use to them (W\_Po1). It revealed how institutional mechanisms often fail to engage women who face greater discrimination, underscoring the need for trusted, co-created spaces.

To reach these women, practitioners began collaborating with entities and associations that offered more accessible spaces for women. Meetings were organized with these organizations, which Roma women attended. During these sessions, they were introduced to the area dedicated to complaints and victim support, where Roma women could receive

assistance from a legal advisor of Roma origin who would guide and accompany them throughout the process. The Director of the office reports that cases involving women with this profile have already begun to emerge and have been resolved satisfactorily. She emphasizes that this success is largely attributable to the nature of the support space: a space for dialogue where the priority is to listen to women who have experienced discrimination and to empower them to decide what actions should be taken at each stage:

What is done there is to ask her what she wants to do, how she is, to complement in her story what she has not put in the complaint because sometimes it is not the same to write something alone than with someone who looks at you and listens to you.

(W\_Po1)

The creation of a dialogic space within the non-discrimination office enabled Roma women who had not previously participated in institutional processes to access support and exercise agency in addressing discrimination. By collaborating with community associations and incorporating culturally sensitive practices, the office fostered an environment of trust and empowerment. The evidence shows that when public institutions move beyond formal procedures and embrace co-creation with the communities they serve, they can more effectively reach those who have remained outside traditional channels. This approach not only improves access to justice but also strengthens the social fabric by valuing the voices and decisions of women who had not previously been included.

#### *4.2. The Commitment of Practitioners and Policymakers to Implement Actions Based on Scientific Evidence of Social Impact*

##### *4.2.1. Non-Academic Women and the Implementation of a Dialogic Literary Gathering in Their Primary Health Center and Decision-Making Dialogic Spaces in the Community Development Plan*

###### *Impact on The Community*

The implementation of Dialogic Literary Gatherings (DLGs) in a primary health center and decision-making spaces within a community development plan exemplifies how practitioners committed to scientific evidence of social impact can foster meaningful participation among non-academic women. These initiatives demonstrate the potential of cross-sector collaboration, between education, health, and community development, to create inclusive environments where women contribute actively to improving their own well-being and that of their communities.

One of the educational actions analyzed involves the implementation of a DLG within the premises of a Community Health Centre located in an urban working-class neighborhood. As part of a Community Development Plan funded by the city's Municipality, the Health Centre was invited to contribute by offering community health initiatives. The Municipality selected the Adult School to coordinate the plan, recognizing its longstanding and successful experience in community development based on scientific evidence of social impact co-created with local residents. The Adult School proposed hosting a DLG at the Health Centre, drawing on extensive evidence of the positive effects DLGs have on participants' well-being and mental health. Throughout the dialogue between the Adult School and the Health Centre, non-academic women, who comprise the majority of DLG participants, were consistently involved, alongside the educator and the Health Centre's director. These women shared their experiences and the impact DLGs had on their lives. Despite initial resistance from some members of the Health Centre's medical team, the director remained firm: if there was evidence of DLGs improving health outcomes, why not give it a try, especially when it was an initiative in which citizens actively contributed to their own well-being at no additional financial cost. It highlighted how co-creation between

educational and health institutions enabled non-academic women to actively contribute to community well-being and influence public health practices. In the interview with the director of the Health Centre, she explained these arguments that she used with her team:

We (the community health team) have to be able to open ourselves up and let the very population, our very users, our citizens, our community, the one who enters and is themselves self-able to generate health, let's try it (...) And also, cost-benefit, as I work in issues of management (...) and community health is essential for us to gather evidence and that the activities are transferable to any spaces and are not costly. The DLG is all of that, and the evidence is that they held on even during the pandemic period, and they are still there.

(W\_Pro4)

The commitment of the Health Centre's Director to implementing an action grounded in scientific evidence of social impact enabled the activity to be sustained over time, even during the pandemic period, when gatherings were held in the outdoor courtyard. Most participants in this DLG have been non-academic women, some of whom face mental health challenges stemming from various life circumstances. The positive impact of this DLG on enhancing the well-being and mental health of these women has been further explored in a recently published case study [44].

The coordinator of the Community Development Plan was also interviewed and provided further evidence of practitioners' commitment to involving non-academic women in debates and decision-making processes concerning proposals grounded in scientific evidence of social impact. The assemblies are open to all residents, and decisions are made within working commissions composed of neighbors and educators. The coordinator emphasized that one of her key priorities is to encourage these women to actively participate in these decision-making spaces:

They are involved because they are invited to the commissions or if there is an assembly. We invite them, above all, into the decision-making spaces. Also, in the Assembly, which is the more decision-making space, we invited all the women, and it is them who talked; they are the ones who explained. (...) As coordinator, I do not make any decisions. I simply ask what do you think? We have this proposal, let's meet up and discuss it? What do we do?

(W\_Pro3)

The experiences shared by the director of the health center and the coordinator of the community development plan reveal that the commitment to implementing actions based on scientific evidence of social impact can lead to the active involvement of non-academic women in spaces traditionally reserved for professionals. Through dialogic gatherings and inclusive decision-making processes, these women not only improved their own mental health and well-being but also contributed to shaping community initiatives. The evidence underscores that when institutions recognize and value the contributions of women without academic qualifications, they foster more democratic, effective, and sustainable social interventions.

#### 4.2.2. Non-Academic and Immigrant Women, the Implementation of a Dialogic Literary Gatherings in Their Children Elementary School

##### Impact on Women Themselves

The implementation of Dialogic Literary Gatherings (DLGs) in elementary schools has proven to be a powerful tool for fostering the participation of non-academic and immigrant women in their children's education. The following case illustrates how the commitment of teachers to actions grounded in scientific evidence of social impact can break down

barriers such as language, and shame. Through DLGs that value all voices equally, these women gain the confidence to engage in learning spaces and contribute actively to their children's academic development. The evidence highlights the transformative role of DLGs in promoting educational inclusion and intergenerational empowerment.

This evidence is reflected in the narrative of the principal of this elementary school in a small city. She, the principal, shared the example of an immigrant mother at the school who learned to read and speak Spanish through her participation in the DLGs. This experience motivated her to become involved in Interactive Groups, another educational action at the school in which families actively engage in classroom learning interactions alongside their children. It showed how co-creation through DLGs empowered a mother to overcome shame and actively engage in her children's education:

She has participated in Dialogic Literary Gatherings for adults, and I think there is a before and after for her. Now, she is starting to join Interactive Groups because she used to be very scared of coming to help her children. Because she couldn't speak, she was ashamed of admitting that she couldn't read...and moreover, she has three children (...), and now she is determined to come and help. She says, "Yes, on Friday afternoon I can. I will go to participate. I'm scared, but I will come". This mother would not have participated in her children's education if she had not come to the Dialogic Literary Gathering for adults. For her, it was breaking the barrier and being able to sit on equal terms with people who had studied at the University and who, not necessarily with teachers, were people with a different profile and who treated her with the same respect that perhaps many times they, I think, don't feel in the street.

(W\_Pra5)

The experience of the immigrant mother who overcame her fear and shame to participate in Dialogic Literary Gatherings and later in Interactive Groups exemplifies the impact of co-created educational actions grounded in scientific evidence. Her journey reflects how dialogic spaces can empower women who had not previously participated, enabling them to support their children's learning and engage with the school community. The evidence reinforces the importance of fostering inclusive practices that recognize and build upon the potential of non-academic and immigrant women, contributing to more equitable and cohesive educational environments.

#### 4.2.3. Policymakers in Local, Regional and National Public Administrations Promoting with the "Other Women" Dialogic Gatherings and Other SEAs

Evidence of actions grounded in scientific research and co-created with "other women" has emerged not only among practitioners but also within policymaking spheres. The active involvement of policymakers in promoting Dialogic Gatherings and other successful educational actions with the "other women" reflects a significant shift in institutional practices toward inclusive and evidence-based policymaking. The following cases highlights how decision-makers at local, regional, and national levels not only support but also participate directly in co-creation processes with non-academic women, particularly those who had not previously engaged in educational or civic initiatives. Their commitment to implementing actions grounded in scientific evidence of social impact demonstrates the potential of dialogic approaches to transform relationships between institutions and communities, fostering trust, participation, and improved outcomes.

Three policymakers have actively promoted the implementation of these initiatives from their positions within public administration, engaging directly with non-academic women in their development. These include two educational advisors, one from a regional government and another from the national government, as well as a former Deputy Mayor.



The educational advisor from the regional government recounts her involvement in organizing Dialogic Literary Gatherings with Roma mothers at an elementary school situated in one of the city's most disadvantaged neighborhoods:

I have been participating from the point of view of an advisor, right? (...) So, I have participated with the women, helping to conduct dialogic gatherings with women, particularly with the ones who I have participated in the most, the Roma women.

(W\_Po2)

#### Impact on Women and Their Families

Her involvement with mothers in the Dialogic Literary Gatherings fostered bonds of trust that enabled the transformation of complex situations. She shared the case of a second-grade child with behavioral difficulties at an elementary school under her advisory. Prior to the implementation of actions such as Dialogic Literary Gatherings and Interactive Groups, a relationship of distrust existed between the child's family and the school. The introduction of these initiatives shifted the focus towards the active involvement of the child's mother, resulting in the disappearance of disruptive behaviors and the emergence of a relationship grounded in mutual trust between the school and the family:

A case in second grade with a student with behavior problems and confrontation between the school and the family (...). The school started doing Interactive Groups, and the mother was invited to participate. Her attitude changed entirely regarding the school, and only within one session was it possible to establish a suitable dialogue with her.

(W\_Po2)

Another example shared by the educational advisor from the national government demonstrates her commitment to implementing actions based on scientific evidence of social impact in collaboration with the "other women." This was evident in the transformation process of two elementary schools adopting SEAs. In addition to leading training sessions for teachers on SEAs, the advisor also volunteered in the children's classrooms during the training period, while teachers and families engaged in the learning process. Many of the mothers who became involved were those who typically did not participate, non-academic Muslim women, whose inclusion marked a significant shift in the schools' approach to community engagement:

The children were in the classrooms while the teachers were being trained in the school. Then, people from the community were invited to take part in the training (...) In this way, the door was opened to people from the community to take part in the process from the beginning. I remember that from the Ministry we took part sometimes in the training and other times as volunteers in the classrooms with the children were taken care of with the tasks that the teachers had left prepared.

(W\_Po3)

Located in a region where Muslim and non-Muslim families coexist and where academic performance on standardized tests had historically been low, these two schools faced challenges in fostering inclusive participation. Muslim mothers, in particular, were among the least engaged in school activities. However, once given the opportunity to participate in the training and decision-making processes that guided the implementation of SEAs, they began to take part in various educational actions. According to the advisor, this inclusive approach contributed to a measurable improvement in the schools' academic outcomes on the standardized tests administered by the Ministry of Education:

Of course, when the Interactive Groups were put into practice, the schools were open to the families' participation. The results improved in both schools, and the external tests [the official assessment tests] improved.

(W\_Po3)

#### Impact on The Community

The narrative of the former Deputy Mayor, who simultaneously held the role of Councilor for Gender Equality and Business at the City Council, offers substantial evidence of her commitment to promoting actions grounded in scientific evidence of social impact, with the active involvement of the "other women." Prior to entering politics, she served as the principal of an elementary school located in one of the city's most disadvantaged neighborhoods. Over the course of two decades, she championed successful educational actions based on scientific evidence, including Dialogic Gatherings, Interactive Groups, and the active participation of families in other learning activities. Throughout this period, she played a key role in encouraging mothers to engage in various learning and decision-making spaces, which contributed significantly to improved academic outcomes for children. While still serving as principal, she was invited by the City Council to collaborate with the March 8th Commission organizing events to commemorate International Women's Day. Although women's associations from across the city were invited to join the Commission, it functioned merely as an informative space in which participants listened to City Council technicians outlining the planned events:

The City Council organized the meetings of the March 8 Commission. One or two representatives of each women's commission in the city's neighborhoods would come. These meetings only transmitted information, but there was no space for dialogue. Therefore, I strongly encourage this space to be more dialogic and not only for receiving information.

(W\_Po4)

Drawing on her experience with mothers at the school, she proposed the organization of a Dialogic Feminist Gathering, a specific modality of Dialogic Gathering, in which participants read and discuss texts that reflect key historical contributions to overcoming gender inequality, violence, and discrimination against women. This initiative transformed the role of women in the Commission from passive listeners to active contributors. Through the debates, participants shared their interests, concerns, and proposals for furthering women's rights across the city. To make the space more accessible to a wider range of women who had not previously participated, the gatherings were held in everyday community settings such as hair salons, cafés, bookstores, and other local venues. The initiative proved highly successful, attracting women of diverse ages and backgrounds, including 16-year-old teenagers, immigrant women aged 20 to 40, and older women:

So, we organized the dialogic gatherings because they (the City Council) agreed that the meetings should be more participatory (. . .). The idea was not only to be on the district premises where the Commission meetings were held but also to go to different places in the city. We have been doing the dialogic gatherings in hairdressing salons, in some bars, and in some bookstores as well, always very alternative places all over the city. This caused a much greater diversity of women to participate.

(W\_Po4)

As City Councilor for Gender Equality and Enterprise, she continued to prioritize the creation of dialogic spaces with "other women." Among the initiatives she promoted was a Dialogic Gathering with Muslim immigrant women aimed at enhancing their employability.

She played an active role in developing this gathering, even during the COVID-19 pandemic, when meetings were held in a public park. Many of the women who participated in these gatherings are now employed as cultural mediators in public schools across the city:

When I was already Councilor for Gender Equality and Enterprise, I promoted a space for Dialogic Gatherings with immigrant women. We even met during COVID-19 times when going out in the street was possible. We met at tables with chairs that we set up in the park. Young women between 18 and 20 years of age participated, but also women of 44 or 46 years of age.

(W\_Po4)

The experiences of policymakers who promoted Dialogic Gatherings and SEAs with the “other women” show that institutional leadership grounded in scientific evidence and egalitarian dialogue can generate inclusive and transformative practices. By engaging directly with non-academic women, these policymakers contributed to improving educational outcomes, strengthening school–family relationships, enhancing civic participation, and, in some cases, supporting women’s access to employment opportunities. The evidence suggests that when public administrations prioritize co-creation and recognize the value of women who had not previously been included, they foster more democratic and socially impactful policies.

## 5. Discussion

In alignment with previous qualitative studies [45], this research provides new evidence on the social impact and defining characteristics of co-creation processes in social and educational actions promoted by practitioners and policymakers with the “other women”, a term coined by Puigvert (2003) [28] to refer to the women who, due to a lack of academic qualifications, have historically been excluded from debates and decision-making spaces on issues directly affecting their lives, families, and communities. First, interviews conducted with four policymakers at local, regional, and national levels, working in the fields of education, equality and non-discrimination, employment promotion, and entrepreneurship across four territories in Spain, and five practitioners in education, health, and community development in diverse urban and rural contexts revealed a shared priority: promoting the inclusion of the most vulnerable women, particularly those not yet participating in or benefiting from the programs, actions, and services under their responsibility. Second, the findings show that beyond prioritizing these women, all interviewees demonstrated a strong commitment to implementing actions grounded in scientific evidence of social impact. This commitment led to the creation of spaces for egalitarian dialogue, enabling women to express their interests and needs, and fostering their involvement in initiatives that positively influenced their educational, social, health, and employability outcomes.

Insights from interviews with principals of elementary schools in both urban and rural areas, as well as with policymakers in the educational field, reveal that although these schools were already implementing successful educational actions grounded in scientific evidence of social impact, enhancing learning and coexistence through the inclusion of families in learning and decision-making spaces, there remained a concern for families who had not yet become involved. These were primarily Muslim mothers of Moroccan origin and Roma mothers. In several schools, this concern led to a horizontal and inclusive approach that recognized the value these women could contribute, fostering an atmosphere of trust. Through dialogue with these mothers, schools developed initiatives such as literacy and Spanish language classes, mutual support committees, and tailored support to encourage their participation in school meetings and educational activities like Dialogic Literary Gatherings and Interactive Groups. Principals and policymakers shared numerous

examples of the social impact these co-creation processes achieved. One such example is a Moroccan mother who, initially hesitant to enter the school due to language barriers, eventually presented her learning journey and participation before an audience of over 300 teachers. The impact extended to the children as well. Many expressed pride in their mothers' efforts to learn Spanish and support them with homework, showed increased motivation to learn, and demonstrated improved behavior as their perception of teachers and school shifted upon seeing them support their families. This evidence reinforces previous findings from other qualitative case studies on the positive effects of the involvement of women from cultural minorities in their children's schools on learning outcomes and the overall school climate [40,41,46].

The effort to reach the "other women" who do not yet participate in or benefit from existing services has been identified beyond the scope of practitioners and policymakers in the educational field. This is evident in the interview with a policymaker responsible for an office dedicated to equality and non-discrimination. Her concern stemmed from the absence of reported cases of discrimination involving women who are most affected, particularly Roma women, and among them, those who have not had access to formal education. In response, she promoted two key actions. First, professionals from the office, some of whom are Roma themselves, visited grassroots associations in the neighborhoods where these women live, creating more accessible points of contact and initiating egalitarian dialogue. Second, the office established a dialogic space specifically designed to support these women, offering guidance and accompaniment throughout the decision-making processes. These initiatives have led to the emergence of cases of discrimination affecting Roma women, which the office has successfully addressed. Complementary studies have also documented the positive impact of co-created actions with Roma women by social services, highlighting improvements in their lives, as well as those of their families and communities [47].

All practitioners and policymakers interviewed demonstrated a shared commitment to implementing actions grounded in scientific evidence of social impact. In the case of the director of a primary care health center, this commitment was evident in her decision to advocate for the implementation of Dialogic Literary Gatherings (DLGs) within the framework of a community development plan. Drawing on prior evidence of the positive effects of DLGs on well-being and mental health, she presented a compelling case to her team of community health physicians, who subsequently supported the initiative. The impact of this DLG, particularly on women with no academic qualifications, has been documented in a recently published case study, highlighting significant improvements in participants' mental health and overall well-being [44].

A similar process was promoted by the former Deputy Mayor and Councilor for Equality and Entrepreneurship in an urban municipality. Prior to her involvement in municipal politics, she served as the Director of a public school in one of the city's most disadvantaged neighborhoods, where she led educational initiatives grounded in scientific evidence for over two decades. These actions achieved educational success for all children by actively involving families in learning and decision-making spaces, including many Moroccan immigrant mothers who learned to speak Spanish through literacy classes and different types of Dialogic Gatherings. Building on this experience, she successfully advocated for the City Council to organize Dialogic Feminist Gatherings as a means of including a broader diversity of women in debates on gender equality and feminism. Upon being elected Deputy Mayor and Councilor, she promoted Dialogic Gatherings specifically with Moroccan immigrant women, many of whom, thanks to their participation in these dialogic spaces, have since been employed as cultural mediators in public schools across the city.

While this study offers valuable insights into co-creation processes involving women without academic qualifications and their social impact, several limitations must be acknowledged. The evidence is drawn from a specific number of interviews with practitioners and policymakers operating within specific territorial and institutional contexts in Spain. As such, this research does not aim to offer a representative sample. Future research should expand the scope to include a broader range of social contexts and professional profiles to further diversify the evidence base.

## 6. Conclusions

This study contributes to the growing body of evidence on the transformative potential of co-creation processes involving the ‘other women’, those without academic qualifications, those who have historically been excluded from decision-making spaces that directly affect their lives. Through the narratives of practitioners and policymakers across diverse territorial and institutional contexts, the findings demonstrate that actions grounded in scientific evidence of social impact and developed through egalitarian dialogue can foster meaningful inclusion, enhance wellbeing, and improve educational, social, and employability outcomes. This evidence may have implications for promoting co-creation processes in planning and designing actions, services, and programs in the educational, social, health, and employability fields aimed at women without academic qualifications or in other situations of vulnerability. This qualitative study has provided evidence to support previous studies [48–50], although more studies are needed to have evidence from different social contexts and other profiles of practitioners and policymakers who promote actions and programs from co-creation with women without academic degrees in vulnerable situations. Based on these findings, it is recommended that policymakers and practitioners prioritize the co-creation of inclusive, dialogic spaces that actively engage women who have not previously participated in institutional programs. Doing so can enhance the relevance, reach, and impact of public services, particularly in contexts marked by educational disadvantages, social exclusion, or limited access to decision-making.

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documents: a formal letter containing the researcher's contact information, institutional affiliation, current position, the purpose of the research, details regarding the intended use of the data, and, if applicable, information about funding sources; an official letter from the researcher's affiliated university or research institution confirming their association; and a confidentiality agreement, duly signed by the researcher, indicating their commitment to maintaining the confidentiality of the data.

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