


## Career Interventions for Promoting Gender Equality: Methodological Aspects

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**Abstract:** Women commonly face a complex network of barriers that hinder their career trajectory. Therefore, this article aims to address career interventions as a methodological strategy to minimize gender inequalities in the workplace. Given the scenario of inequalities experienced by women, attention in the development of interventions is needed, so that problems are not worsened with superficial initiatives that focus only on individuals. This article discusses gender inequality in careers; presents recommendations for research with interventions; exemplifies some interventions and provides a step-by-step guide for designing them, which consists of choosing the theoretical framework, defining the objectives, target audience and context, identifying resources, structuring the intervention, defining the content, activities and assessment. The limits and possibilities of using interventions in research on gender and career are discussed, in addition to the challenges of this scientific field.

**Keywords:** professional development, women, working women, work, gender

## Intervenções de Carreira para Promoção de Igualdade de Gênero: Aspectos Metodológicos

**Resumo:** Mulheres comumente enfrentam uma rede complexa de barreiras que prejudicam sua trajetória de carreira. Diante disso, o objetivo deste artigo consiste em abordar as intervenções de carreira como estratégia metodológica para mitigar as desigualdades de gênero no mundo do trabalho. Considerando o cenário de desigualdades vivido pelas mulheres, é necessária atenção na construção de intervenções, para que os problemas não se agravem com iniciativas superficiais e que focam apenas nos indivíduos. Este estudo discute a desigualdade de gênero nas carreiras; faz recomendações para pesquisas com foco em intervenções; exemplifica algumas intervenções e fornece um passo-a-passo para a elaboração de intervenções, que consiste na escolha do referencial teórico, definição dos objetivos, público-alvo e contexto, identificação dos recursos, estruturação da intervenção, definição do conteúdo, das atividades e avaliação. São discutidos os limites e possibilidades do uso das intervenções em pesquisas sobre gênero e carreira, além dos desafios desse campo científico.

**Palavras-chave:** desenvolvimento profissional, mulheres, trabalho feminino, trabalho, gênero

## Intervenciones Profesionales para Promover la Igualdad de Género: Aspectos Metodológicos

**Resumen:** Las mujeres suelen enfrentarse a una compleja red de barreras que dificultan su trayectoria profesional. El objetivo de este artículo es abordar las intervenciones en la carrera como estrategia metodológica para minimizar las desigualdades de género en el mundo laboral. Ante el escenario de las desigualdades que viven las mujeres, es necesario prestar atención a la construcción de intervenciones para que los problemas no se agraven con iniciativas superficiales y que se enfocan solo en los individuos. Este artículo trata de la desigualdad de género en las carreras; aporta recomendaciones para la investigación con intervenciones; ejemplifica algunas intervenciones y proporciona una guía para la elaboración de intervenciones, que consiste en elegir el marco teórico, definir objetivos, público objetivo y contexto, identificar recursos, estructurar la intervención, definir el contenido, las actividades y evaluación. Se discuten los límites y posibilidades de utilizar las intervenciones en la investigación sobre género y carrera, además de los desafíos de este campo científico.

**Palabras clave:** desarrollo profesional, mujeres, trabajo de mujeres, trabajo, género

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According to data from the World Economic Forum (2022), gender parity would be achieved only 132 years from now, if progress continues at the current pace. While the gender gap in education narrowed considerably over time, in 2022 it reached 62.9% in the workforce, the worst rate since 2006, when the index began to be measured (World Economic Forum, 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic is one of the main contributing factors, through reduced working hours, mass layoffs, and economic crises that have affected women in a disproportionately negative way (Collins et al., 2021). Women continue to be underrepresented in leadership, as organizations hold only 31% of women in high-rank positions (Catalyst, 2022). Segregation is also observed in the amount of care-related work undertaken by women, as 55% of their working hours involve unpaid work, while the same occurs in only 19% of the total hours worked by men (World Economic Forum, 2022).

Gender equity is considered a dynamic and multidimensional phenomenon, at the individual and collective level, composed of equality in participation and access to career opportunities, and in experiences intrinsic and extrinsic to work (satisfaction, well-being, wages, and promotions, for example), both for men and women (Kossek et al., 2017). However, the presence of women in the world of work is marked by multiple and persistent barriers that affect them at different times in their professional careers. Work-family conflict, gender discrimination, difficulties in decision-making, professional dissatisfaction, lack of confidence and inadequate professional training are examples of the most common barriers faced by women, which in a complex combination can impair their career trajectory (Oliveira-Silva & Parreira, 2022).

Unfortunately, a significant volume of theories, measures and publications within the scientific career scholarship has been mostly developed from a male, white, blue-collar and Eurocentric perspective. The lack of diversity consideration along the knowledge advance in the field may have led to biased interpretations that limit the understanding of minorized groups experiences (Pires et al., 2020). Women's career development, for instance, is produced and reproduced through dynamic interactions with factors such as culture, history, economics and politics, which often are not sufficiently taken into account (Kossek et al., 2017).

Such scenario is pronounced when one considers the intersectionality between race, gender identity and social class. Brazil, for instance, is the country with the highest number of murders of trans people — trans women and *travestis* being the main victims of violent deaths — resulting in an average life expectancy of only 35 years. The everyday lives of trans people are marked by exclusion and vulnerability in the most diverse aspects, resulting in low access to health, education, and inclusion in the formal labor market (Benevides & Nogueira, 2020). Likewise, according to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2019), 47.8% of informal workers are Black women, compared with 34.7% of White women. Black women represent 64.2% of unemployed workers, while the

rate for white women is 34.6%, which strengthens race as a social marker that places them in a situation of marked vulnerability.

This demonstrates that although all women are subject to gender discrimination, other identity factors strongly influence their experience. Considering only the category of gender within the broader social context is not possible or ideal, since such narrowness could be understood as a way of perpetuating inequalities (Barbosa & Moura, 2021). Therefore, the context calls for practical actions, encompassing both personal and collective initiatives that can help reduce gender inequality in the world of work and careers, from an intersectionality perspective. Identifying viable interventions that catalyze progress towards gender equality is required considering the specific conditions different women face.

Interventions genuinely need to address gender inequality in all its complexity and nuances, entailing continued investment, appropriate incentives, and solid evidence-based actions (Ryan, 2022). Therefore, good intentions alone cannot ensure that career-related interventions for women are successful, as they might, in some cases, increase inequality and hostility, as well as other negative effects (Guthridge et al., 2022; Ryan, 2022). Considering the lack of solid guidelines for how interventions for gender equality should be conceived, designed, conducted, and evaluated, this article aims to address career interventions as a methodological strategy to minimize gender inequalities in the workplace. To this end, general recommendations and a step-by-step for the design and implementation of career interventions for women will be presented and discussed, followed by the exemplification of some possible interventions.

### **Career Interventions for Women: How to Effectively Address Gender Inequality?**

Although the first career interventions were developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, gender issues began to be considered in career development theories and practices only in the 1970s. Despite the growth in theoretical and empirical publications addressing the relationship between career and gender since the 1980s, only recently have career theories begun to more emphatically consider the effects of socialization and the context in which women are inserted (Phillips, 2023). Regarding studies in Brazil and Latin America, the gap persists due to the scarcity of specific actions for the career development of Brazilian women and the lack of consideration of gender differences (Santos & Ribeiro, 2021).

The literature points to a diversity of interventions being carried out worldwide and that aim to promote gender equality (Guthridge et al., 2022). However, less than 5% of the studies in fields such as management and psychology are dedicated to identifying and analyzing how interventions might contribute to solving gender inequality in organizations (Lau et al., 2023). An intervention usually consists of a program, organizational policy, process, people

management practice, or experimental condition that aims to achieve a certain outcome (Guthridge et al., 2022). Regarding women and careers, interventions can address issues related to gender biases, prejudices, barriers, coping strategies, among others.

In a review of career interventions for women produced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Lau et al. (2023) proposed a

framework based on the Theory of Ecological Systems. Table 1 summarizes the types of interventions identified and how they relate to the different levels of analysis. They evidenced that most interventions focused on ontogenic and microsystems, being mainly related to gender stereotypes and social relations, which reveals a gap in the development of interventions focused on the macro and chronosystem.

**Table 1**  
*Categorization of career interventions for women produced in the 21st century*

Level of analysis	Description	Focus of interventions
Ontogenic systems	Interventions focused on women’s behaviors and their consequences on their own careers.	Behavior management, identity management, and contesting of gender stereotypes.
Interpersonal microsystems	Interventions focused on women’s relationship with their immediate environment (family, colleagues and supervisors).	Development of support networks and conquest of allies.
Organizational microsystems	Interventions on organizational processes, aiming at changing discriminatory practices and policies.	Elimination of biases in decision-making, policies on work and family, trainings, female representation, resignification of stereotypes, transparency and accountability.
Mesosystem	Interaction between interventions in microsystems and their developments.	*
Macrosystems	Interventions directed to the sociocultural, political, and economic context.	Conducting cross-cultural research and changes in legislation.
Chronosystems	Impact of time, considering generational differences and historical events.	Development of appropriate interventions for different generations.

*Note.* \* = The mesosystem does not consist of a category of interventions. Rather, it consists, at the level of analysis, of the interaction among the results of different interventions; Based on Lau et al. (2023).

As a consequence of such an individual focus, researchers and activists in Gender Theories and Feminist Studies often recommend avoiding interventions that focus only on changing women’s behaviors and attitudes (Guthridge et al., 2022; Ryan, 2022). Some of the reasons are that such interventions may not contribute to altering systemic sexist structures, holding women primarily accountable for the changes to be made regarding gender equality (Ryan, 2022). Although women often adjust their attitudes and behaviors towards gender to adapt to environments or stay in certain careers, in the long term, such a strategy does not represent a sustainable way to improve gender equality in the workplace (Lau et al., 2023).

Therefore, one of the first and most important recommendations for designing interventions is paying attention to how much they can contribute to questioning existing sexist structures. Interventions should avoid, directly or tangentially, reinforcing stereotypes, attributing to women changes that

concern only themselves, or a tacit acceptance of structural sexism. While interventions can often target behavioral and attitudinal changes, they must somehow consider that women can act as agents of change and shape their surrounding environments. The barriers and exclusions women experience are not the result of individual failures, but the product of a broader social structure that needs contestation, and creating mechanisms to help women to acknowledge that is central.

In this sense, “awareness” represents a critical aspect when addressing gender inequality. Social transformations usually occur through the development of critical awareness, which often involves analyzing, understanding, and acting on a given reality. From the Psychology of Working Theory perspective, for example, critical awareness is essential for marginalized people’s access to decent work, which is viable through the recognition of themselves as social actors, their place among power relations, and the overcoming of structural barriers (Pires et al., 2020).

The lack of awareness about rights and gender biases represents a primary obstacle to achieving gender equality (Lau et al., 2023). Thus, proposing career interventions aimed at women must consider how they recognize discrimination and unfair treatment. Often we equivocally assume women behave as reactive agents, who only respond to instances of gender discrimination by altering their actions to manage others' expectations of them. Conversely, the emphasis should be on supporting women to be more aware of the barriers they face and to promote change in their surrounding context.

Another recommendation when conceiving career interventions for women concerns the value of affective mobilization. Guthridge et al. (2022), for example, indicate that the favoring of positive affect, associated with empowerment, respect, trust, empathy, and agency, is important to mobilize women for action in post-intervention moments. Activities that allow the dialogue of women with each other, stimulating sorority, networking, strategic alliances and acceptance of differences are powerful elements to be used in interventions.

Likewise, considering the specific needs of women and their intersectional characteristics is also mandatory when planning career interventions. Women from marginalized groups benefit from different strategies – the barriers faced by black and trans women, for instance, demand tailored approaches. Since intersectionality emphasizes how interactions between axes of oppression yield different discrimination experiences, interventions should, preferably, target specific groups. Those who design and implement interventions should, as well, minimally represent the target group – which means that an intervention focusing on black women should not be organized and led exclusively by white women or men, for example.

Besides intersectional issues, how women use different strategies depending on their career stage and the power dynamics they face should be considered. Some strategies that work well for younger women may not be appropriate for more experienced women, or for women who work in STEM and non-STEM fields. The literature indicates that individual differences are strong moderators of the effectiveness of gender equality interventions, but there is little systematic investigation about them in current research (Lau et al., 2023). The recommendation is that interventions should also consider individual characteristics and circumstances, such as age, education, area of activity, career time, marital status, and maternity.

Just as the barriers faced by women are multiple and complex, so are the solutions. Therefore, interventions tend to be more positive when they are part of broad and long-lasting institutional programs, which preferably involve other strategies to assist women's professional development (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018). Organizational practices aimed at leadership development for women, for example, should focus on supporting networking and providing assistance during career transitions; however, without inclusive organizational cultures or leadership that supports these

initiatives, the changes will not produce the expected impact. Dobbin and Kalev (2018) also indicate that interventions tend to be more effective in “organizational accountability structures,” which distribute the responsibility for ensuring the inclusion of women and other minorities. Such structure can be shaped by hiring people to be exclusively responsible for managing diversity, by holding accountable those who are already in the organization or through the establishment of diversity committees and other affirmative actions.

In addition to interventions that focus on the micro level — that is, behaviors, cognitions and affects — the creation of instances/instruments that involve the recognition of structural gender disadvantages is essential. Some examples are quotas, promotion criteria related to opportunity, the availability of channels for reporting sexual and moral harassment, the provision of daycare services or daycare in the workplace, the formation of support groups for women in leadership and the existence of allies and supporters in management (Warren & Bordoloi, 2021). With such initiatives, the agent of change notion expands and distributes the responsibility for other actors such as male leaders and colleagues, other than holding women accountable solely.

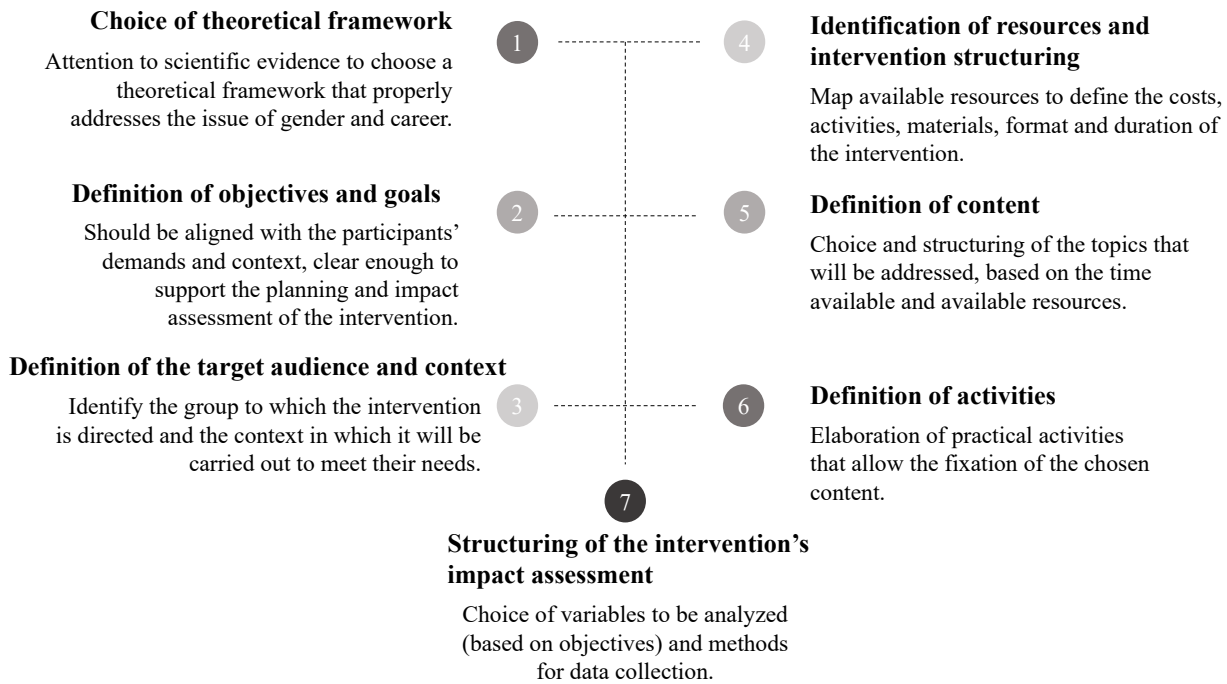
### **Step-by-Step for Evidence-Based and Gender-Sensitive Career Interventions**

Despite the importance of contextual, social and environmental aspects for increasing gender equality in workplaces, individual and skill-based approaches are common in the literature about interventions for women's careers, as individual differences moderate the impact of interventions on gender equality (Ly, 2022). Although recent reviews such as those by Guthridge et al. (2022) and Lau et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of not holding women uniquely responsible for reducing gender inequality, a solid set of recommendations for designing and implementing interventions for gender equality considering such a perspective is not available in the literature. Additionally, the Training, Development and Education (TD&E) literature guidelines are rarely mentioned, which is an important gap as the field is known for setting foundations for designing programs, developing curriculum, conducting assessments and recognizing learning.

Therefore, the step-by-step presented in Figure 1 was based on TD&E literature, being useful for interventions which tend to emphasize educational and skill development aspects, such as workshops and leadership development programs. Career & gender recent reviews and the accumulated expertise from intervention reports for gender equality (e.g., Oliveira-Silva & Pellissari, 2023) was also considered for proposing such methodological framework. Thus, it aims to guide professionals and researchers on how to design evidence-based interventions for women's career equality. Considering that intersectional interventions, for instance, imply specific theoretical foundations, goals and impact, this step-by-step should work as a map to develop effective career interventions.

**Figure 1**

*Step-by-step for the development of career interventions for women*



The choice of theories and theoretical frameworks represents the first step for designing career interventions, and they must consider, as explicitly as possible, the issue of gender and how it affects people's careers at the individual, group, organizational, and social levels. Professionals and researchers must pay attention to the theoretical models present in the literature, and also to the scientific evidence about the design of interventions and programs aimed at women. Unfortunately, the theoretical framework is rarely reported in research involving gender interventions, and when they do, it is focused on feminist or socio-constructivist theories largely (Guthridge et al., 2022). Other perspectives should also be considered, using theories, for instance, from Career, Organizational & Work Psychology, and Social Psychology, as long as they account for gender differences.

Among career theories, the premises of the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) are useful, as they address how contextual and personal variables affect career development and choice. In the 1990s, this theoretical approach already discussed ethnic-racial issues, sexual orientation and, especially, the perceived barriers in women's career development. SCCT demonstrates a good suitability for minority groups by providing a better understanding of the facilitators and restrainers of human agency in the professional environment (Lent & Brown, 2019). Another model that can be used to support gender and career-related interventions is the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT), which considers the context and psychosocial experiences as critical to understand the working experience of people marginalized by race, class, ethnicity, or gender. PWT is used in studies with minorities

from various continents, and the effort to adapt the model in several countries, including Brazil, is remarkable, enabling its testing worldwide (Pires et al., 2020).

Social Psychology theories can also guide the planning of career interventions in light of gender issues. Among them, the Social Role Theory indicates how the differences in behaviors between women and men account for gender roles that correspond to prescriptive and normative beliefs about what is socially "appropriate" (Eagly et al., 2000). Within Social Psychology theories, an example is the Ambivalent Sexism framework, which differentiates hostile sexism – which addresses explicit prejudiced behaviors against women – from benevolent sexism, in which attitudes seems positive but reaffirm men's dominance over women and reward behaviors in accordance to female roles (Glick & Fiske, 2011). Another example is the Social Identity theory, according to which the negative evaluation of one's social identity (e.g., gender, race, or ethnicity) can lead to social identity threat, which, in work contexts, results in feelings of fear, avoidance of certain areas (such as predominantly male careers), and decreased performance.

The second step for designing interventions is the objective definition. Objectives should be aligned with the participants' demands and context and they must be simple, in order to support the planning and the intervention impact assessment. One of the ways to ensure that the objectives are properly selected is by surveying needs, which can be done via focus groups, interviews or surveys, preferably matching intervention's structure, content and activities.

The third step is the definition or identification of the target audience and context. Whenever possible, interventions must focus on specific groups of women. When not possible, it is advisable to think of transversal contents and activities which also recognize the intersectional characteristics of region, class, ethnicity, education level, motherhood, sexual orientation and identity. Recognition of context aspects is also important for understanding the work environment — how deep are gender inequalities in each career, for example? We know that women who work in predominantly male contexts are faced with quite aversive work circumstances regarding organizational culture and climate, as are women in positions of power and leadership. Information about the complexity of the setting should be anticipated or, at least, known.

The fourth step consists of identifying the available resources and shaping the structure of the intervention. Do the available resources allow outlining actions at various levels? How long can one intervention last? How many different initiatives can be performed within the same intervention? How many people, maximum and minimum, will be contemplated? Will they involve people in the same organization, department, area, or career? Will there be resources for preparing booklets and videos? How will such guidance material be offered/made available? Will there be budget to hire consultants, instructors or assistants? The identification of all existing resources will also facilitate the decision on what to be addressed considering the offered conditions.

After defining the grounding theories, objectives, target group, context, resources and structure, the fifth step consists on defining the contents to be addressed by the intervention. What aspect of gender equality should be emphasized? Which will be the discussed topics? Some examples in this regard are: career barriers and coping strategies, gender biases and stereotypes, family-work balance, conceptions of leadership, women's rights, motherhood and career, gender microaggressions, exclusion phenomena, among others. Broad themes, such as "gender equality", "patriarchy", "feminism", for example, usually cannot be addressed with the proper depth, eventually resulting in a low intervention impact. Furthermore, some topics may be more viable than others and depend on the context conditions. Topics involving sensitive content that may activate emotional triggers or trauma, such as harassment, for instance, are not recommended for short-term interventions and without appropriate psychological support.

The sixth step is defining the activities and actions that will meet the chosen objectives and contents. In case of interventions that have more of a workshop format, some examples of tools and activities may be: written materials and exercises, one-to-one feedback, information about work and professions, exposure to role models, incentives to build a support network and to identify potential allies, interviews and network with prospective mentors; discussion of a film or podcast, tasks of self-reflection, the development of an action strategy for achieving career goals, planning for collective mobilization; a case study presentation and discussion, an organizational change proposal.

The next step involves the criteria definition for evaluating the impact of interventions, which necessarily involves the choice of impact variables to be analyzed. The impact assessment needs to be carried out comparatively, before and after the intervention and, whenever possible, after a few months have elapsed. The evaluation of career aspects involves longer periods of time, especially when they consider employability, permanence and professional advancement. The impact assessment can be objectively and quantitatively measured through statistically reliable and valid instruments, or can focus more on subjective and qualitative techniques, using interviews, focus groups, or written feedback. Hard indicators, such as salary increase, promotion offers, job change and layoffs, are also important to assessing interventions' impacts.

To choose which variables will be used to assess the impact of an intervention, besides considering its objectives, it is important to address both individual (e.g., self-concept, aspirations, perception of barriers, coping strategies) and organizational aspects (e.g., organizational policies and practices, organizational climate, perception of support and justice). Aspects related to the personal-professional interface can also be evaluated, such as work-life balance, maternity, marital and family life. However, variables that are too comprehensive or challenging to measure, such as "empowerment," "gender equality," "inclusion," and "discrimination" should be avoided, as they represent complex and abstract concepts that make it difficult to assess how much they were impacted by a intervention. In summary, focus should be on assessing impact based mainly on chosen objectives, contents and activities. Interventions that target changes only at the macrosocial level, for example, tend to fail achieving their goals or even generate negative effects, since isolated actions do not have the power to cause high-impact social change in a short-term (Guthridge et al., 2022).

The decision of presenting a step-by-step intervention methodology based on TD&E scholarship is justified by the strong evidence-based recommendations such field provides for developing competences and support adult learning. However, distinct theoretical foundations and models can also work as relevant references, especially when considering the career and counselling scholarship. In that sense, examples that can be used or adapted for future career interventions will be presented next.

## **Examples of Career Interventions for Women**

### *Career Guidance and Planning*

Evidence suggests that career guidance and planning interventions can raise professional maturity and self-concepts (Lau et al., 2021), besides demonstrating a positive impact on occupational self-efficacy and self-efficacy for job seeking among refugees (Morici et al., 2022). For women, career guidance and planning can enhance their skills, knowledge and expansion of interests, especially for those working on predominantly male workplaces (Falco & Summers, 2019).

Career counselling may also encourage younger women to seek out role models who challenge gender stereotypes, opening their minds to multiple examples of career trajectories to follow. Connecting with role models can be indirect, through exposure to images, media or biographies, or direct, through interviews and mentoring relationships. Although short and medium-term interventions might, temporarily, change stereotypes of young and adult women, medium to long-term initiatives, such as career planning, could contribute to internalization of changes.

### *Mentoring Programs*

Another type of intervention that enhances the importance of role models is mentoring, in which a mentor, by developing a close and meaningful relationship with their mentee, offers career-related and psychosocial support in academic or professional contexts (Mullen & Klimaitis, 2021). Some of the positive outcomes of mentoring in undergraduate women involve the increased perception of peer support, academic self-concept, perceived comfort in the classroom and faculty empathy (Holloway-Friesen, 2021).

The mentoring design can be differentiated into traditional and alternative methods. Traditional mentoring is a learning process in which the mentor assumes the position of teacher and the mentee, of apprentice. This may perpetuate oppression, unequal power relations and hinder the access of minorities to mentoring opportunities. The alternative methods, for instance, allow more horizontal relationships and dynamic learning processes, promoting professional and psychosocial development. Mullen and Klimaitis (2021), in their literature review, synthesize information on nine alternative mentoring structures, emphasizing that the mentoring relationship should be socially fair and geared towards inclusion and elimination of inequalities in teaching and work environments.

### *Diversity and Inclusion Training in Organizations*

Diversity and inclusion training is one of the most common interventions in organizational settings for including minorities (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018). It is composed of instructional programs, which usually aim to reduce prejudice and discrimination through the development of Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes (KSAs) related to equalizing treatment and access to resources for those with diverse characteristics. However, Bezrukova et al. (2016) recommends that diversity and inclusion trainings should last longer than only a few hours and be complemented with other organizational initiatives, leading to the improvement of an holistic awareness in participants.

Although research indicates contradictory results regarding the effectiveness of this type of initiative, organizations continue to invest in diversity and inclusion trainings (Dobbin & Kalev, 2018). In an investigation with 3,000 workers, Chang et al. (2019) observed that participation in a one-hour gender bias training led to increased perception of participants' own biases, positive attitudes towards women and intention to include women in the workplace.

However, the positive impact reduced over time, with a higher impact specially in groups that already had positive attitudes towards women prior to the training. With this in mind, many organizations adopted gender diversity training and leadership workshops for women and other organization members as part of their diversity management initiatives. However, focusing on training only women risks making them primarily responsible for their career progression, as unequal system forces women to develop additional skills, navigate mazes and seek to overcome double binds to succeed at work (Lau et al., 2023).

### **Final Considerations and Future Directions**

Feminist philosophies and the gender empirical scholarship have made significant progress over the last few years in mapping the barriers and disadvantages women and minority groups face. Now it is time to push for answers, with interventions being a way of experimentation and testing possible solutions. Therefore, interventions will often represent the practical application of the knowledge accumulated by the gender & career scholarship so far. Nevertheless, they should not be one-off initiatives, as only when systematic and frequent can they contribute to the change of sexist social and cultural structures.

Although interventions represent concrete action for tackling gender discrimination and bias in organizational contexts, if not designed properly – considering rigorous methodology, in accordance in the available evidence and tackling systemic inequalities – they will be just a drop in the ocean. Further studies involving how to better design career interventions are needed because, to date, the empirical tradition in career and gender has predominantly focused on the testing of predictive models and mapping antecedent and outcome variables. Such models have great value, but additional methodological strategies are necessary to put into practice the lessons learned and to continue the process of change.

The practical element, inherent to interventions, also highlights the importance of scholars paying attention to the reality faced by women in their everyday experience within organizations. The mismatch between the academic knowledge regarding gender equality and the programs and policy practiced in organizations needs to be equalized, and the methodological framework presented here opens a pathway for doing so.

Although this article focuses on career interventions for women, one of the most important challenges for achieving gender equality is the inclusion of other actors. All members of society, and especially men, can and should be included in interventions ultimately aimed at raising awareness of the sexist structures that persist in everyday life. This also implies that interventions must not focus only on equipping women with skills to withstand and overcome the barriers that affect them, since this can generate contradictory effects such as reinforcing sexist structures and overly blaming women. Notwithstanding, academics and practitioners need to gather efforts to promote changes that enable women to

attain equal rights and opportunities beyond the workplace, also reaching family, political and economic domains.

Interventions also must meet the needs of diverse and intersectional women, considering race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation and also women with careers in predominantly male workplaces. For such a purpose, constant revision of organizational practices and policies is required, ensuring the minimization of biases and promotion of equal opportunities. Likewise, public policies that guarantee the access of women from minority groups to training and professional development programs and opportunities are also crucial.

One of the main methodological challenges for future studies on interventions for gender equality is the need for more experts on the topic, as well as further development and depth on the theories, techniques and strategies used. Another important difficulty is that, in general, designing and evaluating interventions should involve longitudinal studies. Obtaining repeated measures, especially with follow-up studies, can be considerably challenging, especially when considering longer interventions (e.g. programs with more than 6 months). By envisioning practical activities that often involve larger work teams and guests, such as career advisors, mentors or instructors, the operationalization of studies with interventions demands more financial, time and human/material resources when compared to surveys, for example.

For the same reasons, obtaining large samples is often arduous. For interventions such as career guidance and planning, which often consists of an individualized process that can last for months, obtaining a large and representative sample for follow-ups and long-period assessments can be unfeasible. Furthermore, interventions need constant improvement and re-testing regarding its duration, structure, content and activities, such that studies should compose, preferably, continuous research. Initiatives and studies proposing interventions should also more often be accomplished and tested within Global South realities, both in urban and rural areas, given its sociocultural, political and economic differences in relation to the Global North, which remains the setting for much of career and gender interventions scholarship.

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