

Group practices in the Brazilian legal context focused on violence: integrative review**Práticas grupais no âmbito jurídico brasileiro focadas na violência: revisão integrativa****Prácticas grupales en el ámbito jurídico brasileiro enfocadas en la violencia: revisión integradora**

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This study aims to present an integrative review on group practices carried out in the legal context about the issue of violence in the Brazilian context. The review was carried out in the LILACS, PePSIC, PsycINFO and SciELO databases, in the first half of 2017, considering the period from 2000 to 2016. Based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 16 articles were retrieved. The studies were characterized as empirical. They were carried out with victims, authors and professionals working with violence and focused on group practices related to violence in the legal context. There was evidence of lack of training of professionals in this area in part of the productions analyzed. It was found that group configurations can be effective and adequate forms of care in the judicial sphere, being a resource available to professionals, and a form of treatment for victims and aggressors.

Descriptors: Violence; Psychotherapy group; Justice administration system.

Este estudo tem como objetivo apresentar uma revisão integrativa sobre práticas grupais realizadas em âmbito jurídico, acerca da temática violência, no contexto brasileiro. A revisão foi realizada por meio das bases de dados LILACS, PePSIC, PsycINFO e SciELO, no primeiro semestre de 2017, considerando o período de 2000 a 2016. A partir dos critérios de inclusão e exclusão foram recuperados 16 artigos. Os estudos se caracterizaram como empíricos; foram realizados com vítimas, autores e profissionais que atuam com a temática violência; focaram práticas grupais eficazes em relação a violência no contexto jurídico. Houve indícios de falta de capacitação de profissionais dessa área, em parte da produção analisada. Constatou-se que as configurações grupais podem ser formas eficazes, e adequadas de atendimento no âmbito do judiciário, sendo um recurso disponível para os profissionais, e como forma de tratamento para vítimas e agressores.

Descritores: Violência; Psicoterapia de grupo; Sistema de justiça.

El objetivo de este estudio es presentar una revisión integradora sobre prácticas grupales realizadas en ámbito jurídico, acerca de la temática de la violencia, en el contexto brasileiro. La revisión fue realizada por medio de las bases de datos LILACS, PePSIC, PsycINFO e SciELO, en el primer semestre de 2017, considerando el período de 2000 a 2016. A partir de los criterios de inclusión y exclusión fueron recuperados 16 artículos. Los estudios se caracterizaron como empíricos; fueron realizados con víctimas, autores y profesionales que actúan con la temática violencia; enfocar prácticas grupales eficaces en relación a la violencia en el contexto jurídico. Hubo indícios de falta de capacitación de profesionales de esa área, en parte de la producción analizada. Se constató que las configuraciones grupales pueden ser formas eficaces, y adecuadas de atendimento en el ámbito del judiciario, siendo un recurso disponible para los profesionales, y como forma de tratamiento para víctimas y agresores.

Descriptor: Violencia; Psicoterapia de grupo; Sistema de justicia.

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INTRODUCTION

Violence has probably always been part of the history and of transformations that humanity has undergone¹. Violence affects all sectors of society and is a multidetermined phenomenon that makes the study of this theme and its consequent definition a complex task².

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as

"the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community".

And, it results in:

*"a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation"*³.

The WHO clarifies that violence is a public health problem and divided it into three broad categories, according to the characteristics of those who commit the violent act: a) self-directed violence, characterized by suicidal behavior and self-harm; b) interpersonal violence, subdivided in violence among family members and intimate partners and violence in the community; and, c) collective violence, subdivided in social, political and economic violence^{1,3}.

The phenomenon of violence is of human and social nature and has cultural weight, because there is no known society that is free from violent practices⁴. The word "power" reflects the growing recognition of the scientific community to include the type of violence that does not necessarily lead to physical suffering or death, but which imposes psychological and emotional suffering on individuals, families, communities and health systems, such as violence against women, elderly and children that can result in psychological and social problems¹.

The nature of violence can still be recognized in four modes of expression: *physical*, producing injuries, traumas, wounds, pains or incapacities in others; *psychological*, including verbal or gestural aggressions with the aim of terrorizing, shunning, humiliating the victims, restraining their freedom or isolating them from social interaction; *sexual* violence, related to the act or game that occurs in heterosexual or homosexual relationships that aim to stimulate the victims or use them to attain sexual arousal in erotic,

pornographic and sexual practices imposed by grooming, physical violence or threats; and violence by *neglect*, *abandonment* and *deprivation of care* that are characterized by the absence, refusal or neglect to provide the necessary care to someone who deserves such attention and care⁴. It is known that the various natures of violence interact with each other and they directly affect the health of the population.

Although violence is present in societies, humanity should not accept it as an inevitable aspect of its own condition. There are and there have always been systems that try to prevent or contain it, such as religions, philosophies, criminal laws, penalties by community laws. Within the possible forms of prevention and treatment of the consequences of violence are group practices that can be planned to be implemented in institutions, directly or indirectly dealing with the different forms of violence.

Groups and practices that turn to group processes have been understood and studied in different ways⁵⁻⁸. In Brazil, under the strong influence of the Argentinean school, group practices began in the 1950s and grew in prestige until the early 1980s. Since then, several crises have marked their history, to the point where, in the 1990s and 2000s, the interest decreased.

However, recently, Group practices driven by the psychiatric reform and public policies on mental health have rediscovered fertile ground in institutions, coupled with theoretical research and practice within universities⁹. Would this new historical movement be noticed in the Brazilian legal scenario, through scientific productions?

In the field of prevention and treatment of consequences of violent practices, group processes can be a resource to promote awareness of the victims' rights and an instrument for care and prevention of mental health problems among individuals involved¹⁰⁻¹⁶.

Considering that Brazilian Legal Psychology has its own history and that its construction, as well as that of group practices, is dynamic¹⁰, and that its professionals work with people and in

scenarios resulting from violence processes, seeking to understand if group practices have been organized before the demands related to violence, in legal contexts, is relevant today.

And, in case such practices have been organized, are there reflections of them in the academic scenario? This study aims to present an integrative review on group practices carried out in the legal context, on the issue of violence in the Brazilian reality.

METHOD

This is an integrative literature review (ILR) showing a synthesis of several published studies and conclusions about a certain area of knowledge^{17,18}.

For operationalization of an ILR, the following steps are followed: a) identification of the theme and elaboration of the guiding question; b) establishment of inclusion and exclusion criteria/search or sampling of the literature; c) definition of the information to be categorized; d) evaluation of studies included in the review; e) interpretation of results; and f) presentation of the review/synthesis of knowledge¹⁸.

Searches were carried out in the electronic databases LILACS, SciELO, PePSIC and PsycINFO in the first half of 2017. Combinations of unified terms related to the three main focuses of this ILR were used: violence, group practices and Legal Psychology in Portuguese and English (violence, group processes, group psychotherapy, group practices, group therapy, psychology and judiciary, forensic psychology, criminal psychology and legal psychology).

In the LILACS database the research was carried out with the combination psychology *and* judiciary, because the unified terms legal psychology, group practice and forensic psychology were not available.

The following inclusion criteria were considered: (a) published in scientific

journals, because these studies undergo a process of peer evaluation and review; (b) published in Portuguese and English; (c) published between January 2000 and December 2016; (d) available in full text; (e) covering violence, legal context and group practices, and (f) reporting practices and/or research conducted in the Brazilian context, despite of being published in international journals. Theses, dissertations, monographs, books, chapters, abstracts, obituaries, commentaries, letters, annals of congresses, editorials and review articles were excluded.

Data was collected separately by two authors (independent evaluations) in the first half of 2017. Except for these characteristics, the other procedures followed the proposed in specialized literature^{17,18}.

The results were presented and qualitatively analyzed¹⁹, using the studies accessed to establish the dialogue.

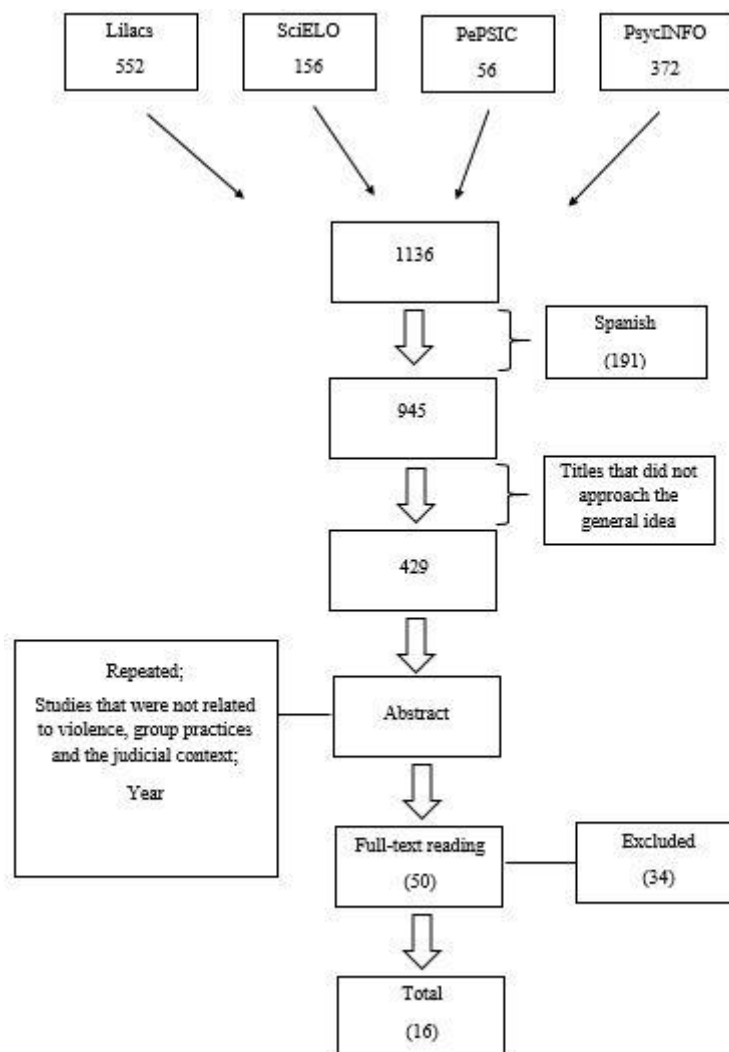
The retrieved articles were categorized in an Excel spreadsheet according to: title, authors, year, type of study, type of violence object of attention/research, type of practice/group process, place where the group was formed, theoretical approach that supported the attendees, target participants, instruments used for evaluation and/or development of the activities, objectives and main results and conclusions.

These categories were organized into thematic axes, in order to respond to the objectives of the ILR: (a) profile of publications; (b) types of violence; and (c) characterization of group practices.

RESULTS

The initial search resulted in 1136 articles, of which 552 were found in the LILACS database, 156 in SciELO, 56 in PePSIC, and 372 in PsycINFO. In of the screening according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 16 articles were retrieved and analyzed; these articles composed the *corpus* of this study (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Steps and number of articles in the period from 2000 to 2016. Uberaba, 2017.



Regarding the period of analysis proposed in this review, the retrieved studies were published between the years 2004 to 2013; there were no publications in the year 2007 and in the period from 2014 to 2016. Regarding the type of study, the articles were empirical, characteristically focused on performance practices.

As to the journals, the highest number of papers was published in *Clinical Psychology* (n = 2) and *Psychology & Society* (n = 2). Most of the studies (n = 14) were published in journals under editorial responsibility of *Psychology* and two of them in other areas of knowledge (*Latin American Journal of Nursing* and *Brazilian Journal of Maternal and Child Health*) (Figure 2).

Three main tendencies can be listed regarding the objectives of the retrieved studies; they sought to present results of group practices carried out with three different audiences: (1) professionals working in legal contexts; (2) victims or peers who suffered violence and (3) perpetrators of violence (Figure 2).

The trends of the presented objectives are in agreement with the target public portrayed in the surveys (Figure 3). The participants of the studies that fit the first trend (professionals) are psychologists, judges, social workers, educators accompanying young people who comply with socio-educational measures, bailiffs, judicial advisors, judicial technicians and judicial analysts.

Figure 2. Main trends of objectives in the period from 2000 to 2016. Uberaba, 2017.

Main tendencies of objectives	Retrieved articles
To present the results of group interventions carried out with professionals working in the judiciary	Olmos and Henriques (2006); Silva, Ferriani and Silva (2012a and 2012b); Freitas and Habigzang (2013).
To demonstrate/discuss the results of group practices performed with victims and/or their peers who experienced violence	Bocco and Lazzarotto (2004); Machado (2004); Costa, Penso and Almeida (2005); Oliveira, Caritá and Ernesto (2008); Bussinger and Novo (2008); Habigzang, Hatzenberger, Corte, Stroehner and Koller (2008); Marques and Czermark (2008); Costa, Almeida, Ribeiro and Penso (2009); Costa, Castilho, Barreto and Jacobina (2010); Costa (2011).
To present/discuss the results of group practices conducted with perpetrators of violence	Guareschi, Weber and Nardini (2006); Costa, Ribeiro, Junqueira, Meneses and Stroher (2011).

Types of violence

Regarding the types of violence explored in the studies, it was observed that sexual

violence was the most mentioned, followed by physical violence and institutional violence (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Characterization of the articles published in the period from 2000 to 2016 according to the type of violence. Uberaba, 2017.

Type of violence	Retrieved articles
Sexual violence	Costa, Penso and Almeida (2005); Habigzang, Hatzenberger, Corte, Stroehner and Koller (2008); Costa, Almeida, Ribeiro and Penso (2009); Costa (2011); Costa, Ribeiro, Junqueira, Meneses and Stroher (2011); Silva, Ferriani and Silva (2012a and 2012b); Freitas and Habigzang (2013)
Symbolic, white and ideological violence	Oliveira, Caritá and Ernesto (2008)
Physical violence	Guareschi, Weber, Comunello and Nardini (2006); Bussinger and Novo (2008)
Institutional violence	Bocco and Lazzarotto (2004); Olmos e and Henriques (2006); Marques and Czermark (2008)
Patrimonial violence	Costa, Castilho, Barreto and Jacobina (2010)
Domestic violence	Machado (2004)

DISCUSSION*Characteristics of group practices*

In the literature on group therapies, Zimmerman⁸ classifies the groups into two large sets, the operative and the therapeutic. The first is subdivided into: teaching-learning, institutional and community-based.

Therapeutic groups, in turn, include those of self-help and those of psychotherapy. On the other hand, Tubert-Oklander and Tubert²⁰ underline the philosophical reach of Pichonian thinking on groups, criticizing the use of the term "operative group" as a "group type."

Castanho²¹ agrees with these authors and affirms that Pichon Rivière designates as "therapeutic group" the operative group whose task is the treatment (or "cure", depending on the translation option).

However, while discussing the technical peculiarities of group management,

Castanho²¹ observes that, if the proposal of the Pichonian working groups is characterized by interventions of the coordinator(s) centered on the transference with the task is what, in case the task is the treatment, the transference with the coordinator(s) of the group tends to take on the foreground.

Considering these theoretical-technical distinctions and the denominations, eight studies of the sample used groups called "operative"^{11,12,14-16,22-24} and two performed "group psychotherapies"^{13,25}. In the specific case of the so-called psychotherapy groups, all were based on cognitive-behavioral theory.

The cognitive-behavioral group therapy model represents an intervention to care for children and adolescents' victims of sexual violence; this approach seeks to act in the promotion of resilience and in the

improvement of the quality of life of victims of sexual violence and their families¹³.

Six other studies were configured in other ways that were not mentioned⁸: four focus groups and two embracement groups. The focus group is a qualitative research technique that collects information through group interactions⁶. Embracement group, in turn, conveys the idea of the configuration in which people present experiences that they have in common and, by sharing something of their reality, those involved identify with the situation and, from this, significant exchanges can be constructed. The subjects can externalize their anxieties, resentments, and re-signify them in the group⁷.

As for the place where the groups investigated were developed, the so-called operative groups had the following locations as context: two studies did not clearly show the places where they were carried out^{15,25}; one of them was a non-governmental organization (NGO) that helps in cases of intrafamily violence¹⁶; another occurred in the Nucleus of Residential Shelter for children and adolescents²²; one was carried out in the Court of Justice¹¹; and two in a Center for Psychopedagogical Medical Guidance^{12,14}.

Regarding the focus groups, two studies were carried out in institutions for children and adolescents^{26,27}; one in a Court of Justice²⁸; and the other in the Association of Mothers and Relatives of Victims of Violence²⁹. As for the embracement groups, one study took place in a Graphic Arts Company³⁰, and the other in a teaching clinic³¹.

Findings on the evolution of productions over time and on types of study indicate that methodological resources and conceptual bases of the possibilities of applying group practices in legal contexts have not been the object of attention.

This fact made hindered the wider comprehension of the reality investigated in the documents, because the studies did not emphasize, for example, the limitations or potentialities of the group practices, in the different environments that surround the action in the legal scope.

Some authors only mentioned in a generalized manner that provision of

assistance in groups is possible with certain themes, but there were no concerns about evaluating these practices, so that they could be used as references for the development of similar works, be them theoretical or empirical.

Studies on group practices carried out with psychologists, judges, social workers, educators, bailiffs, judicial advisors, judicial technicians and judicial analysts (N = 4) seemed to reflect the scarcity of publications in the area. This characteristic of the studies indicates that professionals have not been the object of attention in this sphere of work, what must be pondered through the characteristics of the method employed.

Further studies can be performed to clarify questions such as the following: Would this result be similar in other databases? And how is this manifested in the judiciary of realities other than the Brazilian? Have professionals who deal with violence in the judicial sphere not been the focus of attention, or, as it is the case of the Brazilian academic production, there has been no conditions for such research take place in this context, making the existing practices invisible?

Some studies^{23,24,27,28} have discussed the limitations of professionals working with violence. For them, the limits come from the lack of resources and training, as well as the lack of professional and personal training, taking into account that these individuals had no contact with the subject, but ended up being inserted in these work environments. Therefore, this fact can generate significant consequences, such as unskilled work and resistance/difficulties to understand the reality of the clientele.

The studies pointed out negative factors that affect the work developed on violence, such as: lack of dialogue and interdisciplinarity of professionals, especially from the judiciary sector; hierarchy of the professions in these environments and the consequences thereof in the sentences; and slowness of the services rendered.

Emphasis is given to importance of teamwork in this area, with the objective of providing the best resolution of the sentence, and not the dispute of decisions of the

different professionals involved^{27,28}. There was a need to offer care to these professionals, since this care tends to directly affect the work that is provided to the clientele²³.

In the groups carried out with professionals, the group practices focused on the challenges and difficulties they have in their performance, showing positive results, because changes of beliefs and repertoire to deal with problems previously not worked were perceived. In addition, techniques and skills acquired in the meetings were useful tools for the development of their work activities^{23,25,27,28}.

Regarding the second tendency that showed results of group practices carried out with victims and/or their peers who suffered violence, the participants of the articles were women who had been victims of domestic violence, children who had been victims of sexual abuse, adolescents in the shelter homes, and peers who had lost someone because of violence. The fact that most studies are in this tendency suggests that there has been a recognition of the reality of these people and the inherent need to offer spaces for listen them.

It is noteworthy that group practices made it possible for victims to re-signify the history of violence and create new paths in the face of the violent loss of a loved one and new possibilities of facing life; they worked with the victim with the aim of promoting access to rights, in the sense of exercising citizenship, social protagonism, and aiming at the empowerment of these people in their lives^{24,29}.

The last tendency observed in the analyzed literature sought to discuss the practices of groups with the protagonists of violence, the consequences of their practices, as well as to re-signify their ways of acting. In the two articles with this profile, the participants were aggressive men and adolescent sex offenders.

These studies showed that it is important to create spaces to offer these individuals the possibility of embracement to their suffering and dialogue on the practices they committed, besides working on accountability for the act committed and

denaturalization of daily violence, encouraging in turn cognitive, attitudinal, and subjective changes that result in more equitable relationships. In this sense, the need to offer comprehensive support to all involved - i.e. the victims, their families, and the aggressors - is discussed^{11,12}.

It was verified that other areas related to the judiciary were not included in the studies. They were: guardianship councils, detention houses, internment institutions for adolescents, shelters for women victims of domestic violence, rehab clinics and other places related to the network of assistance to perpetrators of violence and/or victims. This can be seen as an indicator that there is a need for investments both in the production and in the publication of studies reporting and reflecting on the use of the group modality in the different environments of the judiciary.

Regarding the types of violence, it is pointed out that sexual violence against children and adolescents was identified as a serious public health problem with a significant impact on the growth and development of the victims, as well as repercussions on their families^{27,28}.

The researches portrayed some of these impacts, where victims may present distorted beliefs about sexual violence and transfer them to other abusive situations, reproducing the pattern of violent behavior. Victims may show guilt, depression, stress, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and they may avoid people, places and memories of the traumatic experience^{13,25,28}.

Other studies indicated that the transgenerational phenomenon is present in sexual violence, causing violence to be secretly accompanied by generations, for not being aware of the act as violence itself^{11,14,15}. This type of violence is linked to several difficulties on the part of the professionals who deal with it, because they do not have enough resources and knowledge about ways of acting in cases involving underage children^{27,28}.

White, symbolic or ideological violence was portrayed as the result of the current economic and political system that permeates all social relations and that can result in social inequality and exclusion. It is a kind of

institutionalized violence. Because of its nature, its agents are not punished²⁴.

In the work with families that suffered white violence, a study demonstrated the anguish of the participants, the search for an understanding of violence, and their lack of answers. There was a discussion about the pursuit of new possibilities for living, due to the significant consequences in the lives of individuals in different areas such as work, housing and reconstruction of support networks²⁴. Society is, in this context, regarded as perpetrator of this cycle of violence by empowering and disregarding the human being in its totality.

Physical violence was analyzed with a focus on the aggressors. Violence is related to the judgment of value and authority, as power over another person¹⁶. In these cases, acts of aggression are considered as a form of care, an expression of affection, a fact that legitimizes serious aggressions against children.

According to the guidelines for practice in services of the Ministry of Health that meet the demand in cases of domestic violence, this sort of violence is understood as a social problem of great magnitude and is seen as any action or omission that damages the welfare, physical and psychological integrity, or the freedom and right to the full development of family members. This violence can be committed inside or outside the home, either by a member of the family who has a blood relationship or by someone who starts to assume the parental role³².

In relation to institutional violence, the violence that adolescents suffer when residing in internment institutions was investigated^{22,29,30}. There was a clear lack of dialogue in all instances of the institutions, especially among adolescents.

Lack of communication and non-resolution of problems are often associated as a cause and result of violence. Adolescents are excluded from both their family environment and society itself and end up using aggression and violence to respond to this condition²².

The role of educators/monitors of these institutions that are often the reproducers of violence towards adolescents is grounded on relations of domination, inequality and

injustice. These professionals usually develop works based on the disciplinary logic, using punishments to maintain the order^{22,23}.

Patrimonial violence was studied with a focus on the victims of theft of robbery²⁶. The meanings were analyzed by the victims regarding the damage they suffered, as well as the way in which the authors are seen by the judicial system. The sentences pursue restitution of the object and there is no psychological embracement to the offended persons that contemplates the repercussions that the violent act caused them.

Only one study addressed domestic violence against women as the main topic. These victims are marked by loneliness, shame because of being beaten, and marginality for being a victim³¹.

As to the characteristics of group practices^{20,21} it is possible to criticize the nomenclature used by Zimmerman⁸, but also recognize the validity of the distinction he proposes, as indicative of the existence of substantial technical differences, in the studies considered here.

Moreover, it can be questioned that there are divergences among experts of theories and techniques in the sphere of group processes, about what would characterize them^{8,20,21}. This would make it difficult to debate the type of work or the group process reported in the analyzed studies that are often "practical" professionals rather than "scholars on the theme", in the broad sense of the term.

CONCLUSÃO

The studies illustrated group practices that motivated researches with an interface with situations of violence and Brazilian legal contexts, published in scientific journals indexed in national and international databases.

To that extent, they can be possible models for professionals who work directly with people involved in this reality, as well as inspirations for the development of new research in the academic field and, perhaps, on ways of integrating these two work fronts.

In contrast, the study found that there has been a lack of publications in the last 17 years, a period in which, in theory, group

practices in institutional settings experienced a resumption of interest and professional prestige in the national scenario.

Finally, it can be inferred that the observed results are due to two main factors. The first is related to a characteristic of the Brazilian Psychology, where there is a historical recognition of the distance between "practices" and "researches".

In the case of group work, the abovementioned characteristic is potentiated, because this is a tool used with remarkable frequency by psychologists who work in institutions of the socio-welfare field. However, comparatively little has been explored in the scientific literature, considering those works published and indexed in the databases explored in the present study.

This first hypothesized factor seems reasonable in view of the increasing demands for attention to the mental health of people, in environments that permeate the judicial system nowadays.

The second factor is based on the extent to which the legal environment has been refractory or inappropriate to group practices, to the detriment of dual practices. This fact, however, needs to be weighed because of the methodological limitations of the study and requires new investments to be clarified (for example, through field surveys). It is also noteworthy that the very identity of Brazilian psychologists working on this front remains in a frank process of construction until the present day.

The studies analyzed here are characterized as empirical researches. Nevertheless, they show the production found in a positive way, since this characteristic grant academic and social relevance, because it is linked to the production of knowledge.

It is noteworthy as well the need for theoretical studies addressing the structure and dynamics of the group processes investigated and how they can be implemented in the Brazilian legal scenario.

The emphasis of the articles on works carried out "in the practice" can also show that the judiciary - and the group practices linked to it - can be characterized as a field of action

far from the academy. This can be due to the overload of professionals, the bureaucratization of the access of researchers to these environments, and the limited space that group practices find in academia (both in training and research).

Regarding the limitations of this review, the time period considered was from 2000 to 2016. Although this was a wide interval, the search in the chosen databases resulted in a low number of articles. Thus, new investigations contemplating different databases and focused on group processes linked to situations of violence that extrapolate the Brazilian judicial domain can also contribute to a broader picture than that presented here.

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CONTRIBUTIONS

Juliana de Oliveira, Camila Aparecida Peres BorgeseTales Vilela Santeiro contributed in the delineation, analysis and interpretation of the data, revision and writing. **Pablo de Carvalho Godoy Castanho** participated in the analysis and interpretation of data, revision and writing.

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