

# MEN4DEM

## COUNTERING ANTI-DEMOCRATIC MASCULINITIES: STATE OF THE ART OF EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS

### DELIVERABLE D5.1

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## ABOUT MEN4DEM

MEN4DEM (2025-2027) is an innovative co-creation project that involves six partner universities, a theatre group and a gender justice organization. The consortium studies various manifestations of masculinities in politics. Based on mixture of academic, activist and artistic knowledge MEN4DEM will develop concrete tools to support democratic masculinities in Europe. The project was funded by the European Union under Horizon Europe research and innovation programme (grant number 101177356). The project website is: [www.men4dem.eu](http://www.men4dem.eu)

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents a systematic review of intervention strategies designed to counter anti-democratic masculinities and to prevent the radicalization of young men in Europe. Utilizing PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines, we synthesize scientific evidence on interventions that address violent, hierarchical, and exclusionary models of masculinity linked to gender-based violence, radicalization, and backlash against gender equality. The growing appeal of authoritarian and reactionary ideologies among young men can be traced to two dynamics: structural economic decline and resistance to progressive gender norms. As traditional roles, tied to male economic dominance, erode, anti-democratic movements exploit discontent by promoting nostalgic, patriarchal visions of masculinity and by framing feminism and gender equality as threats. This scapegoating narrative fosters hostility toward women and undermines democratic values.

The review focuses on evidence-based interventions in three key areas:

- 1) **Reduction of Gender-Based Violence:** aimed at challenging norms that legitimize violence against women and marginalized groups.
- 2) **Reframing Masculinity:** aimed at fostering non-hegemonic, caring, and cooperative models of masculinity based on empathy, emotional expression, and mutual respect.
- 3) **Bystander Empowerment:** aimed at training individuals to recognize and interrupt harmful behaviors presented by others to prevent cycles of violence and complicity.

Findings highlight the importance of shifting away from short-term or symbolic actions toward structural and sustained approaches that are: research-based (ensuring replicability and long-term effectiveness); context-sensitive (tailored to the cultural, and economic realities of the target population); group-based and participatory (utilizing peer learning to foster emotional literacy and reflection); inclusive (involving all genders in meaningful change, recognizing that masculinity is shaped through relationships with others).

The results show the need for long-term investment in facilitator training, program evaluation, and adaptive learning processes. Programs must address intersectional dimensions – such as race, class, and geography – to resonate authentically and respond effectively to systemic inequalities.



The report calls for integrated, rigorous, and inclusive approaches to support the development of healthier masculinities and democratic resilience among young men.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report provides a systematic overview of scientifically tested intervention techniques aimed at countering masculinity defined by hierarchy, hegemony, and dominance over women, while also fostering competencies that support more caring and equality-oriented engagement in gender relations. The review procedure ensures rigorous findings that can serve as a sound basis for the development of new interventions. The analysis includes research on interventions targeting anti-democratic masculinities, for example to tackle violence, radicalization, gender stereotypes, and prejudice.

The growing support for the authoritarian and reactionary ideologies among young European men can be traced both to economic decline - particularly among working-class young men without university degrees - and to a cultural backlash against feminism tied to the defense of traditional masculinity (Carbonell, 2025). Structural economic changes, rising inequality, and the erosion of stable employment have made it increasingly difficult for young men to fulfill the traditional provider role, long associated with markers of masculine identity. Anti-democratic movements and parties have exploited this frustration by offering regressive but emotionally resonant visions of masculinity. For example, they do so by framing stereotypical gender roles - with the submissive role of women - as central to national identity, promoting visions of society closely tied to patriarchal family values, and arguing that Western liberal democracy undermines both masculinity and national strength (Kováts, 2017; Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017). These movements often portray gender issues as a zero-sum game. Meaning that gains for one gender (typically women or gender minorities) necessarily come at the expense of another (typically men). In other words, it's the belief that gender equality is a zero-sum game - if women gain more rights, status, or power, men must be losing theirs. Furthermore, women's rights and the advancement of feminism are often depicted as a "war on men."

This anti-gender backlash is a cross-national phenomenon (Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017), with cross-cultural research showing that such zero-sum framing is associated with lower support for gender equality (Kosakowska-Berezecka et al., 2020). Blaming gender equality, feminism, and women who reject traditional visions of masculinity based on hegemony, dominance, and inequality for young men's current challenges can lead to a range of negative outcomes. For example, it can create a justification for radical actions against advocates of equal rights and feminist movements, and

foster the perception of women in general as adversaries. This moral framing - seeing women as enemies - can reinforce a conviction that they must be opposed or even "defeated," which contributes to the prevalence of gender-based violence (Pérez-Martínez et al., 2023). These dynamics occur against the backdrop of much broader economic and cultural transformations. Indeed, experts and practitioners working in the area of masculinity and gender norms, associate anti-democratic masculinities with attitudes and behaviors that mirror this picture. For example, data gather by Bjarnegård and Mügge show that the words mostly associated with anti-democratic masculinities are: violence, dominance, aggressive, oppression, and power (Bjarnegård & Mügge, 2025).

In the recent discussion paper from the European Policy Centre, entitled *"From Provider to Precarious: How Young Men's Economic Decline Fuels the Anti-Feminist Backlash"*, Carbonell (2025) pointed out that one of the reasons for the attractiveness of anti-democratic movements among young men is that, as traditional masculine roles tied to economic success weaken, far-right actors frame feminism and progressive societal changes as scapegoats, offering a nostalgic and exclusionary ideal of masculinity. The article makes a strong case for actions to counter this trend. These actions should adopt a twofold strategy.

First, they should tackle the material roots of discontent through bold economic reforms - expanding access to affordable housing, strengthening education and vocational pathways, securing stable employment, and promoting wealth redistribution aimed especially at young men without university degrees. Second, they should transform the narrative around masculinity by championing positive, inclusive models of manhood and fostering cultural narratives that empower young men without falling back on patriarchal ideals. Progressive visions must not only challenge outdated norms but also offer young men meaningful aspirations, a sense of belonging, and new pathways to dignity and self-worth.

As this report is linked to the goals of MEN4DEM project to more fully understand factors that allow to develop more inclusive democratic models of masculinities, we address the second strategy. We focus on scientifically validated efforts to counter the negative consequences of adherence to visions of manhood based on the justification of gender-based violence, gender inequality, dominance, and pressure to conform to restrictive societal masculinity norms and ideals. Radicalization among young men threatens to erode support for democracy. In response,

we focus on validated strategies for reducing radicalization in its broadest sense. We define radicalization as a process that can lead to violent behavior, anti-democratic attitudes, and a willingness to engage in or support radical actions that undermine the values and principles upheld by the European Union, such as human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

Our approach goes beyond political radicalization in the narrow sense and addresses a wider range of anti-democratic tendencies. In our overview we include research conducted within three broader categories of interventions: (1) to reduce adherence to gender-based violence, (2) to create competences that allow men to move beyond masculinity defined by hierarchy building, hegemony, dominance over women, and socially less-privileged groups, and (3) to build awareness and strengthen bystander effects to support the victims of the violence, abuse, mistreatment.

In this report, we consider gender-based violence as refers to any harmful act directed to someone based on their gender and any type of violence that is based on someone's gender, from physical to emotional, to financial to reproductive violence (Bjarnegård & Mügge, 2025). It disproportionately affects women, girls, and marginalized gender groups (UN Women, 2021; World Health Organization, 2021). Gender-based violence is sustained by cultural norms, institutional practices, and social silence, often underpinned by traditional notions of masculinity and entitlement (Lomazzi, 2023).

The second group of interventions are designed to develop competences that allow men to move beyond masculinity defined by hierarchy building, hegemony, dominance over women, are especially differentiated. Some described interventions aim at developing more self-awareness, communication skills or perspective taking. Other interventions are planned as more ambitious way to introduce ideas for emerging models such as more caring and “non-dominant” masculinity, where men reject dominance, aggression, and emotional suppression in favor of empathy, care, cooperation, and relational accountability (Elliott, 2016; Messner, 2016; Scambor et al., 2014). These alternatives foster healthier identities for men and support broader social efforts toward equity and nonviolence.

Finally, third group of interventions include research on the bystander effect (that people are less likely to help when others are present), that was originally observed in emergency contexts. This concept has been expanded to violence prevention frameworks to emphasize the role of witnesses in challenging or perpetuating harm. When bystanders are empowered - through

awareness, skill-building, and social support - they are more likely to act in defense of victims and disrupt cycles of violence (Banyard et al., 2007; Powell, 2011).

In addition to dividing the research on the intervention into three parts based on common themes and conceptual focus, we also present qualitative and quantitative studies separately. This distinction is essential due to the fundamental methodological differences between these two types of research and the nature of the outcomes they produce.

Quantitative studies rely on numerical data and standardized measurement tools to test hypotheses and evaluate the effects of interventions. They allow for formal statistical comparisons between control and experimental groups, providing objective evidence of whether observed differences are statistically significant. In contrast, qualitative studies use methods such as interviews, focus groups, or open-ended observations to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and meaning-making processes. These studies do not aim to quantify effects or test statistical significance. Instead, they offer in-depth insights into how and why certain changes occur, highlighting processes, contexts, and subjective understandings that may not be captured by quantitative measures.

Because only quantitative studies can provide formal statistical evaluation of the differences between control and experimental groups, and because the goals and outcomes of qualitative studies are inherently different, it is both methodologically appropriate and analytically useful to present them separately. This separation enables us to respect the unique contributions of each approach while offering a clearer, more coherent account of the interventions' overall impact.

## 2. METHOD AND PROCESS OF DATA GATHERING

This report is based on a structured review of scientific literature to examine the effectiveness of interventions targeting, directly or indirectly, anti-democratic masculinities. For this we used the PRISMA method (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses), as it provides a structured and transparent approach for conducting and reporting systematic reviews. It includes a checklist that help researchers clearly document each stage of the review process, from the identification and screening of studies to their final inclusion. PRISMA emphasizes the importance of comprehensive search strategies, and clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. By standardizing the review process, PRISMA enhances the transparency, reproducibility, and overall quality of systematic reviews, making them more useful for evidence-based decision-making. It is widely used in the health and social sciences and is considered a best practice in reporting systematic evidence syntheses (Moher et al., 2007). The analysis includes scientific articles on interventions that focus on masculinity and tackle violence, radicalization, dehumanization, gender stereotypes and prejudice.

This approach allows for the synthesis of existing empirical findings to identify consistent patterns and theoretical implications. The literature search was conducted using the following databases accessed through the EBSCOhost platform: Academic Research Source eJournals, APA PsycArticles, ERIC (Education Resource Information Center), and Sociology Source Ultimate. We selected the databases that yielded the highest number of relevant results, as the other databases mainly contained duplicated entries. The search included peer-reviewed articles published in English between 2000 and 2025. Keywords and search phrases were tailored to the specific research question and included terms ‘masculinity’ or ‘men’ or ‘male’ AND ‘radicalization’ or ‘violence’ or ‘extremism’ AND ‘intervention’ or ‘workshop’ or ‘prevention program’.

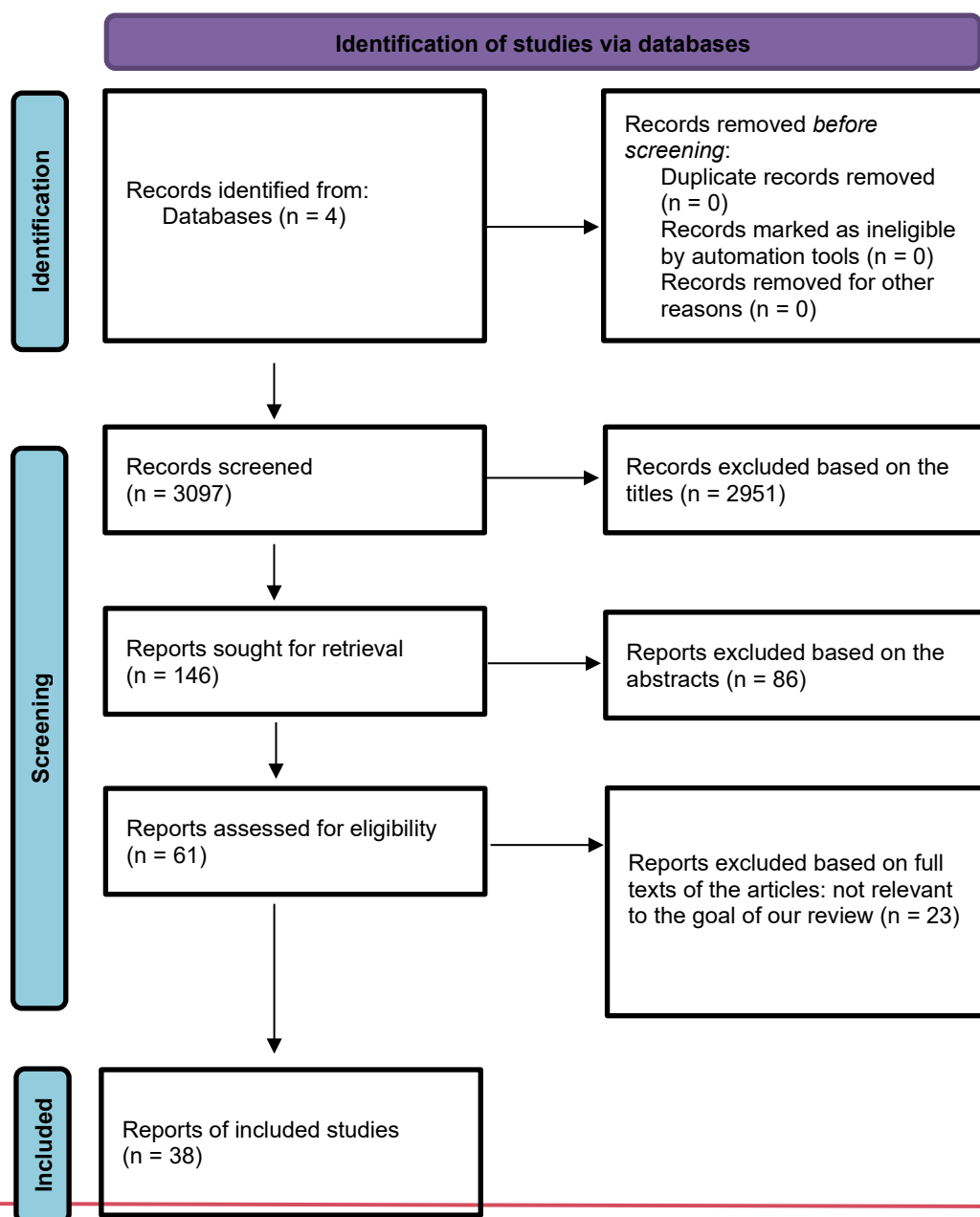
Inclusion criteria focused on empirical studies (quantitative, qualitative and mixed method), systematic reviews and meta-analyses relevant to the chosen topic. Studies were excluded if they lacked methodological transparency, were only correlational, were not peer-reviewed, or did not address the topic of gender, masculinities or radicalization. Several studies addressed topics such as violence from another theoretical perspective, without reference to gender or masculinity. Consequently, they were excluded from the review. Other publications described research on interventions related to masculinity and femininity (e.g., in the context of mental health), but



these were not connected to radical behavior, anti-democratic attitudes, or gender-based violence. As such, they were also excluded from the review. Flow diagram of records through the systematic review process is presented in Figure 1.

Data were extracted and organized thematically, focusing on the aim of the intervention investigated in the studies. Most analyzed interventions were aimed at one of three goals: preventing gender-based violence, changing gender attitudes and promoting alternative masculinities or improving bystander efficacy and allyship. Therefore, the decision was made to organize the analyzed studies into those categories.

**Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram of Reports Selection**



### 3. AN OVERVIEW OF INTERVENTIONS ON PREVENTING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to harmful acts directed at individuals based on their gender, encompassing physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse (UN Women, 2021). Intimate partner violence (IPV), a prevalent form of gender-based violence, involves behaviors by a current or former partner that cause physical, sexual, or psychological harm. Gender-based violence not only violates fundamental human rights but also undermines the health, safety, and agency of individuals across diverse contexts. Understanding why some men engage in violence requires looking beyond individual traits and examining the broader social norms and power dynamics that shape behaviour. Many men are socialized into ideals of masculinity that reward control, toughness, and dominance -values that, when combined with feelings of entitlement or power imbalance, can legitimize coercion and violence in intimate relationships. Violence often becomes a means to assert authority, respond to perceived disrespect, or cope with emotional vulnerability (Jewkes et al., 2015). Preventing GBV therefore requires disrupting these harmful scripts and offering alternative ways for men to express identity, resolve conflict, and relate to others with respect and equality.

The interventions analyzed in this section aim to prevent gender-based violence by engaging men and boys in structured, often gender-transformative processes that challenge violence-supportive norms and behaviors. These initiatives were delivered across school settings, community spaces, and institutional programs. They employed a range of strategies, including facilitated group discussions, role-plays, media campaigns, and psychosocial support. Their common goals are to disrupt rigid masculinities, enhance self-reflection and emotional regulation, foster accountability, and promote respectful, non-violent relationships. Across the twelve studies reviewed, interventions varied in scope, duration, and delivery mode. However, all placed a central emphasis on transforming attitudes and behaviors that contribute to interpersonal violence, particularly intimate partner violence, by working directly with male participants either as perpetrators or as members of high-risk or under-resourced communities.

## 3.1. QUANTITATIVE INTERVENTIONS

Stevenson et al. (2021) evaluated the 'Shape-Up' intervention, a culturally responsive, barbershop-based violence reduction program targeting heterosexual cisgender African American men aged 18–24 years in the United States. The study utilized a cluster-randomized attention-control design, comparing a violence retaliation reduction intervention (Shape-Up) to an HIV/STI risk reduction control program. Across two personalized sessions delivered over three weeks, barbers - trusted figures within the Black community - facilitated one-on-one discussions using interactive digital content and printed materials. While both groups reported reductions in violent behaviors over time, the intervention group demonstrated greater improvements three months post-intervention. Mediation analysis indicated that reductions in hypermasculinity beliefs and increased Black male vulnerability awareness were key mechanisms of change. These findings underscore the importance of culturally grounded interventions delivered through familiar community settings.

Salazar and Cook (2006) conducted a pre-post, controlled evaluation of a five-session intimate partner violence prevention program for adjudicated African American adolescent males in the United States. Participants, primarily in grades 7-12, were randomly assigned to either an intervention group or a waitlist control group. The intervention, guided by feminist theory, utilized culturally tailored materials and targeted patriarchal beliefs and violent attitudes. Measures included the 'Wife Beating Is Justified' subscale and the 'Seventh Grade Inventory of Knowledge and Attitudes.' Results showed that while overall relationship attitudes did not significantly differ between groups, participants with a history of witnessing high levels of parental violence experienced notable reductions in patriarchal beliefs. These findings suggest that prior exposure to family violence may moderate intervention effectiveness, and that intimate partner violence prevention efforts should consider the complex background experiences of participants.

McHale et al. (2022) evaluated a six-session 'Focused Coparenting Consultation (FCC)' program designed for unmarried Black expectant parents living in low-income neighborhoods in the United States. The intervention, delivered by Black male-female mentor dyads, aimed to promote gender-equitable attitudes, strengthen coparenting relationships, and enhance early father involvement. Utilizing a randomized controlled design, the study compared FCC participants to a treatment-as-usual group receiving only standard community services. Short-term results were promising, with

intervention families demonstrating improved communication, increased father caregiving involvement in the early postpartum period, and reduced psychological aggression within couples. However, by 12 months postpartum, many of these gains diminished, and the intervention had no significant impact on reducing physical intimate partner violence. These findings highlight the potential of culturally tailored, relationship-focused programs to promote early change, while also underscoring the need for sustained and intensive engagement to produce long-term behavioral shifts.

## 3.2. QUALITATIVE INTERVENTIONS

Graaff and Heineken (2017) conducted a qualitative case study of the ‘One Man Can (OMC)’ intervention, a masculinities-focused workshop series implemented by Sonke Gender Justice in South Africa. The intervention targeted harmful gender norms among men through participant observation at workshops, focus groups, and individual interviews with both facilitators and participants. Men engaged in discussions that challenged traditional constructions of masculinity, power, and violence. Although involvement in OMC workshops led to increased critical questioning of gendered norms and reduced overt acceptance of violence, deeper beliefs, such as victim-blaming attitudes, remained resistant to change. Findings highlight that while participatory, dialogue-based interventions can initiate important cognitive shifts, short-term workshops may be insufficient for achieving more profound normative transformations.

Turhan et al. (2024) performed a process evaluation of group-based domestic violence perpetrator interventions in Turkey, employing semi-structured interviews and direct observation methods. The intervention, delivered through offline group sessions, emphasized fostering accountability, encouraging self-reflection on abusive behavior, promoting peer confrontation, and building emotional regulation skills. Participants’ narratives revealed mixed outcomes: some men internalized non-violent relational strategies and expressed remorse, while others maintained minimization, justification, or outright denial of their violent behaviors. Group dynamics emerged as a crucial determinant of change; supportive environments enabled growth, whereas resistant peer attitudes sometimes reinforced denial and rationalization. The findings underline the essential role of skilled facilitation and peer influence in perpetrator intervention processes.

Paradkar et al. (2024) qualitatively evaluated a large-scale violence prevention program led by the ‘Society for Nutrition, Education and Health Action (SNEHA)’ across informal settlements in

Mumbai, India. Utilizing focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with men, women, and NGO staff, the study explored gendered patterns of engagement in violence prevention activities. Results showed that women became empowered agents of change, often mediating disputes and supporting survivors through counseling referrals. Conversely, men remained hesitant to intervene, perceiving gender-based violence as primarily a women's issue. Fear of social stigma and perceptions of SNEHA's bias towards women were key barriers limiting male engagement. These findings emphasize that while community-based interventions can foster female empowerment, deliberate strategies are needed to engage men as active allies.

Corbin and Omona (2020) conducted a qualitative evaluation of community dialogue groups implemented in the post-conflict districts of Nwoya and Gulu in Northern Uganda. Facilitated by trained community members, the intervention aimed to strengthen family relationships and rebuild community cohesion disrupted by conflict. Group discussions focused on gender roles, family dynamics, violence prevention, and livelihood challenges. Participants reported improved empathy, communication, and mutual support within families, alongside reduced acceptance of gender-based violence. However, the lack of robust quantitative measures limits definitive conclusions about the program's long-term impact. These findings suggest that structured community dialogues can promote psychosocial healing and indirectly contribute to violence reduction in post-conflict contexts.

### **3.3. MIXED-METHODS INTERVENTIONS**

Hossain et al. (2014) evaluated the 'Men and Women in Partnership Initiative', a community-based violence prevention program conducted in rural Côte d'Ivoire. Utilizing a mixed-methods cluster randomized controlled trial combined with qualitative interviews, the intervention involved 16-session men's discussion groups designed to challenge inequitable gender norms and improve conflict resolution skills. Quantitative findings showed modest improvements in male involvement in household tasks, conflict management skills, and intentions to reduce intimate partner violence, although changes in reported intimate partner violence incidents were not statistically significant. Qualitative data suggested that participants developed greater critical reflection on traditional masculinity norms. Despite logistical challenges associated with the post-conflict context, the results indicate the potential of structured, group-based interventions to promote attitudinal and behavioral shifts.

Ging et al. (2024) assessed the impact of sexual and gender-based violence workshops delivered in secondary schools across England and Ireland, combining pre-post surveys with focus group interviews. The intervention, delivered by trained educators from external organizations, consisted of two-hour sessions using relatable real-world scenarios and informal language to engage students. Survey data indicated substantial increases in students' knowledge of sexual violence, particularly among girls. However, qualitative findings highlighted defensive, anxious, and occasionally hostile reactions among many boys, suggesting resistance to gender-transformative content. While the workshops were effective at raising awareness, the persistence of defensive masculinities underscores the need for longer-term, multi-level engagement strategies within school settings.

Powell-Williams et al. (2020) evaluated a PROMUNDO-adapted school-based intervention for African American boys aged 9-12 in a low-income United States district. Through pre-post assessments and qualitative interviews, the program sought to challenge traditional masculine norms, support emotional expression, and build non-violent conflict resolution skills. While quantitative measures revealed no statistically significant changes, qualitative data indicated that participants developed greater comfort with expressing emotions and resolving conflicts without violence. School staff also observed behavioral improvements among the boys. These findings highlight the potential for early gender-transformative work to shift emotional competencies, even when immediate measurable attitudinal change is not observed.

Veale et al. (2020) conducted a mixed-methods evaluation of the 12-week 'Engaging Men' program among Syrian refugees and Lebanese men in Lebanon. Focus groups, peer interviews, and family visits were complemented by limited quantitative monitoring. The intervention provided a safe emotional space for participants to discuss family dynamics, gender roles, and non-violent communication practices. While psychosocial wellbeing and family interactions improved, significant changes in entrenched gender norms were not observed. A major limitation was the absence of structured accountability mechanisms for violence perpetration. These findings underscore the importance of addressing both emotional wellbeing and accountability in interventions aimed at shifting gender dynamics.

Hatcher et al. (2020) evaluated the 'Sonke CHANGE intervention', a community mobilization program aimed at reducing intimate partner violence in peri-urban South Africa. Through a mixed-



methods process evaluation, researchers assessed workshops, advocacy efforts, and community dialogues conducted over two years. Although some individual-level transformations among volunteer activists were reported, the intervention did not lead to community-wide reductions in intimate partner violence. Structural barriers - including poverty, illiteracy, and entrenched gender norms-severely limited program impact. The findings emphasize that while grassroots activism is critical, sustained structural support and deeper community engagement are necessary for meaningful gender norm change in disadvantaged settings.

## 3.4. SUMMARY

The summary points are based on the body of research presented in the chapter and derived through a careful synthesis of recurring themes, outcomes, and recommendations found across the reviewed studies. Our goal was not to simply aggregate findings, but to identify the patterns that emerged most consistently and were emphasized as particularly meaningful or impactful by the original authors. In doing so, we looked for convergence across studies-especially where similar conclusions or implications appeared in different contexts, populations, or methodological designs. The points included in the summary reflect those that were most frequently repeated and highlighted across multiple sources. For instance, conclusions that were supported by both qualitative and quantitative evidence, or that were emphasized in large-scale, methodologically robust studies, were given particular weight. That said, not all studies were treated equally in shaping the final summary. While all studies reviewed informed our understanding of the field, we did consider the relative strength, scope, and relevance of each when synthesizing findings. Studies with limited scope, unclear outcomes, or methodological weaknesses were treated more cautiously and did not serve as primary anchors for our conclusions-unless their findings were supported by other, more robust evidence. However, such studies were still acknowledged, particularly when they offered unique perspectives or helped to illustrate context-specific variations.

Based on the analysis of the reviewed interventions, we concluded that the most effective strategies for preventing gender-based violence combine culturally tailored approaches, the creation of safe spaces for emotional reflection, and sustained, voluntary engagement. Programs led by trusted facilitators that encourage critical examination of masculinity norms, emotional regulation, and accountability were particularly successful in fostering both attitudinal and

behavioral change. Context sensitivity - including adaptation to local norms, addressing structural barriers such as poverty or stigma, and grounding interventions in participants' lived experiences - consistently emerged as a determinant of effectiveness.

At the same time, the findings highlight important limitations. Short-term, fragmented interventions without sufficient depth, programs that relied solely on information provision without emotional engagement, and efforts that failed to build community trust or confront power dynamics often proved less effective or even reinforced defensive masculinities. The lack of mechanisms to address perpetrator accountability further weakened some initiatives. Together, these results suggest that lasting change in gender norms and violence prevention requires holistic, relational, and structurally aware strategies rather than isolated or superficial efforts. Another notable limitation of the current body of evidence is the underrepresentation of interventions conducted in European contexts. This geographic gap raises concerns about the transferability of findings to sociocultural settings where gender norms, policy frameworks, and support systems may differ significantly.

The tables 1, 2 and 3 provide a comparative synthesis of all 12 interventions discussed above. They highlight effectiveness, and key mechanisms and determinants of change that contributed to the success or limitations of each program.

**Table 1. Quantitative Studies on Preventing Gender-Based Violence**

Citation	Country	Type of Intervention	Mechanism & Key Determinants of Change	Effectiveness
Salazar & Cook (2006)	USA	Five-session IPV prevention program; culturally adapted; school-based	Role-playing and discussion exercises; feminist theoretical framework; effectiveness moderated by exposure to family violence	+
Stevenson et al. (2021)	USA	Shape-Up program; two sessions in 3 weeks; barbershop setting; peer-facilitated	Trusted barbers as facilitators; cultural resonance; addressing hypermasculinity and vulnerability; immediate reduction of violent behaviors	++
McHale et al. (2022)	USA	Focused Coparenting Consultation (FCC); six prenatal sessions; dyadic, community-based model	Improved communication and coparenting cooperation; short-lived effects; stigma around caregiving roles among men	+

**Note.** ++ fully achieved aim; + partially achieved aim; - aim not achieved/harmful effect

**Table 2. Qualitative Studies on Preventing Gender-Based Violence**

Citation	Country	Type of Intervention	Mechanism & Key Determinants of Change	Effectiveness
Graaff & Heineken (2017)	South Africa	One Man Can workshops; 3 workshops; NGO-led; participant observation and group discussions	Dialogue-based questioning of masculinity; limited depth of sessions; persistence of victim-blaming attitudes; NGO credibility important	+
Turhan et al. (2024)	Turkey	Group-based domestic violence perpetrator intervention; ongoing sessions; offline	Peer confrontation; accountability promotion; emotional regulation training; resistance by some participants; facilitator confrontation essential	+
Paradkar et al. (2024)	India	SNEHA's community-based GBV prevention; multiple years; focus groups and public campaigns	Women's empowerment strategies; men hesitant due to stigma; NGO authority critical for community trust	+
Corbin & Omona (2020)	Uganda	Community dialogue groups; ongoing facilitated discussions; post-conflict community rebuilding	Open sharing and group reflection; promoted empathy and mutual understanding; lack of quantitative measurement	+

**Note.** ++ fully achieved aim; + partially achieved aim; - aim not achieved/harmful effect

**Table 3. Mixed-method Studies on Preventing Gender-Based Violence**

Citation	Country	Type of Intervention	Mechanism & Key Determinants of Change	Effectiveness
Hossain et al. (2014)	Côte d'Ivoire	Men & Women in Partnership Initiative; 16-session men's discussion groups; community-based; 2 years	Critical reflection on gender norms; improving conflict resolution skills; high engagement due to community facilitators and structured curriculum; post-conflict challenges	+
Ging et al. (2024)	England and Ireland	School of Sexuality Education workshops; 2 hours; external facilitators; digital and real-life scenario use	Relatable scenario-based learning; increased knowledge; male defensiveness encountered; importance of relatable delivery methods	+
Powell-Williams et al. (2020)	USA	PROMUNDO-adapted school program; weekly 1-hour sessions; school-based; over one semester	Emotional expression skill-building; non-violent conflict resolution; cultural adaptation; small sample size; positive emotional development reported	+
Veale et al. (2020)	Lebanon	Engaging Men program; 12 weeks; community group model; peer facilitators	Safe emotional space; reduced psychological stress; weak impact on entrenched gender norms; accountability mechanisms missing	+
Hatcher et al. (2020)	South Africa	Sonke CHANGE program; community workshops and advocacy; 2 years	Community mobilization; volunteer-driven; poverty, illiteracy, and mistrust hindered community impact	-

**Note.** ++ fully achieved aim; + partially achieved aim; - aim not achieved/harmful effect

## 4. AN OVERVIEW OF THE INTERVENTIONS TO CHANGE GENDER ATTITUDES AND TO PROMOTE ALTERNATIVE MASCULINITIES

Understanding changing gender attitudes and promoting alternative masculinities requires recognizing that gender norms and masculine identities are not innate or fixed traits, but are shaped by various psychosocial factors and the mechanisms through which society socializes individuals. In other words, conceptions of gender and associated role behaviors are products of a broad network of social influences, both within families and across the many societal systems encountered in everyday life (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). These deeply embedded influences help sustain dominant – i.e., traditional or hegemonic-masculinity ideology that promote dominance, power, and emotional suppression-traits linked to gender-based violence and inequality (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). *Changing gender attitudes*, therefore, involves encouraging men and boys to critically reflect on these norms and question beliefs that justify male superiority, entitlement, or violence. *Promoting alternative masculinities* means offering and validating new models of manhood that are emotionally expressive, nurturing, respectful, nonviolent, and supportive of gender equality.

The aim of the interventions across the studies is to transform harmful gender norms and promote gender equality by engaging men and boys in reflective, experiential, and educational processes tailored to their sociocultural contexts. Whether through structured group education, community-based outreach, psychodrama, life skills coaching, or participatory storytelling, these interventions sought to shift attitudes toward masculinity, encourage emotional expression, increase empathy, challenge justifications for abuse, and promote equitable behaviors in relationships and households.

Fourteen papers, including six quantitative and eight qualitative studies, reporting interventions aimed at changing gender attitudes and promoting alternatives, were identified. Although some studies addressed multiple issues, they were classified into this category if the researchers placed greater emphasis on examining changes within these specific areas in their investigations.

### 4.1. QUANTITATIVE INTERVENTIONS

Craig et al. (2006) conducted a pre-post quasi-experimental study with a control group to assess changes in beliefs about partner violence and gender roles among heterosexual male veterans in

the U.S. The intervention group consisted of 58 participants with a mean age of 45, assigned to the Batterers Intervention Program (BIP), while the control group included 71 participants with a mean age of 49 in the Substance Abuse Treatment Program (SATP). The BIP group completed a 26-week program based on the Duluth Model, combining cognitive-behavioral therapy with educational workshops that utilized tools such as the Power and Control Wheel. The SATP group, on the other hand, participated in a Cognitive Behavioral Therapy based treatment for substance use disorders. Over time, both groups demonstrated improvements in their attitudes toward domestic violence, with participants becoming less likely to justify partner abuse or view it as beneficial to victims. However, neither group showed significant changes in their willingness to take personal responsibility for abusive behavior, which presents a considerable challenge to the effectiveness of interventions. Notably, the BIP group improved more in reducing ambivalent sexism than the SATP group. The results highlight that while cognitive-behavioral and educational interventions can reduce justification of partner abuse and ambivalent sexism among veterans, fostering personal responsibility for abusive behavior remains a persistent challenge.

Galvin et al. (2023) assessed the effectiveness of the 'EFFECTS Trial (2018-2019)', which aimed to evaluate the independent and combined effects of engaging couples and bundling nutrition and parenting interventions on gender equality and women's empowerment in Tanzania. A cluster-randomized 2 × 2 factorial trial involved 80 village clusters, with community health workers delivering a bi-weekly 24-session gender-transformative behavior change program through hybrid peer groups and home visits. The content covered infant and young child feeding, food access, water, sanitation, and hygiene; stress management; couples communication, decision-making, gender norms, positive masculinity, and responsive caregiving. Data were collected from 957 mothers and 913 fathers at baseline, and 815 mothers and 733 fathers at endline. Throughout the study, outcomes related to gender equality and women's empowerment were assessed. Compared to mothers only, the results showed that engaging couples significantly increased paternal and maternal gender-equitable attitudes, paternal time spent on domestic chores, and maternal decision-making power. Researchers found that, compared to a nutrition behavioral intervention engaging only mothers, both gender-transformative approach to engaging fathers and couples (promoting positive fatherhood and equitable intimate partner relationships) and the inclusion of parenting sessions focused on responsive caregiving, positive discipline, and play and



communication contributed uniquely to the advancement of gender equality and women's empowerment.

The intervention by Santhya et al. (2019) – a cluster randomized controlled trial with panel surveys - aimed to transform gender attitudes and reduce violence against women and girls among young men aged 13–21 attending sports clubs in rural India. Delivered through a gender-transformative life skills education and sports coaching program, it involved weekly sessions combining life skills (focused on gender equality, respect, and rejecting violence) and cricket coaching. The program included participatory learning methods like role-play and group discussions to challenge gender norms and build leadership skills. Over 42 weekly sessions across 18 months, the program promoted egalitarian gender attitudes, with community events reinforcing these messages. The intervention successfully modified young men's attitudes compared to those who attended the sports clubs but received no intervention. Participants in the intervention showed more progressive views on gender roles, controlling behaviors, and violence against women. They were also more likely to believe their peers would respect them for acting in gender-equitable ways. Regular participants, in particular, demonstrated stronger shifts in these attitudes, while irregular participants showed no significant change compared to the control group. The results highlight that a gender-transformative life skills and sports program can successfully promote more egalitarian gender attitudes and reduce acceptance of violence among young men in rural India, especially among regular participants.

Schmidt et al. (2007) conducted a pre-post study in the United States to evaluate the 'Domestic Abuse Education Project (DAEP)', a court-mandated domestic violence intervention program based on a pro-feminist and cognitive-behavioral approach. The 27-session group-based program, modeled after the Duluth curriculum, aimed to motivate behavior change and shift attitudes toward women among male offenders convicted of domestic violence-related crimes. 278 participants aged 18-73 with a mean age of 33 completed the pre-test, and 165 completed the post-test. As the authors explain, participants may have missed the post-test due to dismissal from the program, low literacy skills, or because study participation was not mandatory in the DAEP program. Participants showed positive shifts in attitudes about abusive behavior and stereotypical beliefs about women, and reported greater motivation to change due to concerns about family relationships, although beliefs linking violence to jealousy, insecurity, and substance use persisted.

Schwartz and Waldo (2003) developed an intervention to address gender role conflict among men attending partner abuse prevention groups at a domestic violence shelter in the United States. Fourteen men (Mage = 31) participated in two intervention groups that focused on resolving gender role conflicts across four areas: work-family relations, restricted emotionality, affectionate behavior between men, and issues of success, power, and competition. The intervention lasted 8 weeks, with sessions structured around defining each conflict, and teaching relevant coping skills. The intervention groups were compared to a control group of seven men with a mean age of 33 receiving standard Duluth Model treatment, which focuses on male socialization, patriarchy, and holding men accountable for abusive behaviors. After the intervention, the intervention group had a significant reduction in restrictive emotionality and restrictive affectionate behavior between men. No significant changes were found in the emphasis men place on achievement, career success, authority and control over others, or conflict between work and family. The results highlight that addressing gender role conflicts directly, particularly restrictive emotionality and affectionate behavior between men, can produce greater emotional growth than traditional Duluth-based interventions.

A study by Stephens and George (2003) examined how men's past sexual coerciveness influenced the effectiveness of an anti-rape educational video. Forty-five male undergraduates with a mean age of 19, classified as either sexually coercive (n = 22) or noncoercive (n = 23), were randomly assigned to watch either an anti-rape or a neutral control video. The anti-rape videotape significantly reduced rape-myth acceptance among noncoercive men, but did not affect sexually coercive men. However, there were no significant changes in attitudes toward women for either group. In terms of alcohol expectancies, noncoercive men who watched the anti-rape video showed lower overall sex-related alcohol expectancy scores compared to those who watched the control video. Sexually coercive men showed no change in alcohol expectancies. The findings highlight the importance of considering individual risk factors when designing rape-prevention programs.

## 4.2. QUALITATIVE INTERVENTIONS

Chakraborty et al. (2020) employed ethnographic methods-including 15 group observations and 9 focus group discussions with 20 men aged 18-35 to explore how 'Male allies engaged with a

violence against women and girls (VAWG)' prevention program in urban informal settlements in India. The intervention consisted of interactive group meetings lasting 45 to 60 minutes, based on a manual, including discussion-based sessions covering topics such as gender, sexuality, and reproductive health, violence, and HIV/AIDS prevention. The qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis, which involved transcription, coding, and identification of themes and patterns. Participants often described their involvement as an opportunity to gain "knowledge" and "awareness" about sex, gender, masculinity, and consent. Many reported increased comfort discussing sexual health and recognizing concepts like mutual consent and shared responsibility for contraception. However, while some participants acknowledged that gender is socially constructed, many still held paternalistic or misogynistic views, highlighting the ambivalence between progressive ideals and dominant gender norms. By framing violence primarily as a result of ignorance rather than structural patriarchy, the intervention sometimes reinforced an "us vs. them" binary between the "aware" and the "unaware," which limited deeper critical reflection. These findings underscore the need to move beyond surface-level changes in attitudes or behaviors and instead situate men's engagement within their lived realities, material conditions, and the spatial dynamics of informal communities. Young men often navigate multiple, contradictory masculinities shaped by entrenched sexism and economic frustration, while the persistence of the public–private divide further inhibits their recognition of VAWG as a public concern.

Fahmi et al. (2023) investigated the impact of culturally contextualized sociodrama and psychodrama interventions on young men's attitudes and behaviors related to gender-based violence in an urban slum in Bangladesh. The intervention aimed to address toxic masculine norms and reduce gender-based violence by promoting empathy, emotional regulation, and more equitable gender attitudes through role-play, dramatization, and perspective-taking exercises. Out of a total of 80 male participants aged 18-29, 40 men received the intervention, while the remaining 40 formed a control group that participated in four weekly sessions involving sociometric activities and games that deliberately excluded any gender-related content. The intervention group took part in various sociodramatic sessions, such as *Bouke Shashon Kora* (chastising the wife), *Adorsho Bou/Ma* (ideal wife/mother), and *Shat Bhai Champa* (seven brothers and a sister; see Rizwan et al., 2020). Twelve men from the intervention group were selected for in-depth interviews, along with 20 close female family members to gain a more holistic

understanding of the intervention's impact. Findings from the interviews indicated behavioral and attitudinal shifts among male participants, including improved empathy, increased respect for family members and coworkers, better anger and temper management, greater involvement in household chores, more favorable attitudes toward condom use, and a reduction in sexual harassment and drug use. Female family members corroborated these observations, reporting positive changes in household dynamics and reduced aggression. The study underscores the potential of psychodrama and sociodrama as gender-transformative tools and provides evidence for their integration into broader gender-based violence prevention strategies in similar socio-cultural contexts.

Gibbs et al. (2015) evaluated the 'Stepping Stones and Creating Futures program'-an integrated behavioral intervention aimed at reducing gender-based violence and improving economic well-being among young men in South Africa. The *Stepping Stones* component focused on communication, assertiveness, reducing gender violence, and issues around sex and love, while *Creating Futures* supported economic empowerment through sessions on employment, CV writing, budgeting, and saving. The full intervention spanned 21 single-sex sessions (three hours each), facilitated by trained peer leaders in groups of around 20 participants. Data were drawn from a longitudinal qualitative cohort study involving in-depth interviews (IDIs) with 19 men from the intervention group, conducted at baseline, six months, and twelve months post-intervention. Two additional men were added post-intervention through convenience sampling. Interviews explored livelihoods, relationships, violence, and reflections on the intervention. IDIs were also conducted with the male participants' main female partners at baseline and twelve months, contingent upon informed consent and with attention to participants' safety. Analysis followed a two-pronged approach: thematic coding focused on key domains of change (livelihoods and gender relations), and in-depth case studies captured nuanced individual trajectories. Findings revealed that the intervention created safe social spaces that fostered critical reflection, peer support, and emotional openness-enabling some men to challenge dominant masculine norms rooted in emotional control, aggression, and risk-taking. Positive outcomes included increased participation in the formal/informal economy, improved financial habits, and greater emotional expression and empathy. Some men demonstrated reductions in intimate partner violence, improved communication, and a shift toward more engaged fatherhood. However, the study also highlighted the limits of gender transformation; while overt

violence declined for some, subtler forms of control persisted, and economic provision often reinforced patriarchal roles. Not all participants embraced or sustained change, with contextual barriers-such as poverty, unemployment, peer pressure, and ingrained masculine ideals-remaining significant constraints.

The case study by Hong (2000) employed participant observation, interviews, and document analysis to explore the experiences of 8 male executive board officers from 'Men Against Violence (MAV)', a college-based peer-support organization in the United States. MAV provides a supportive space for men to alleviate the stress and anxiety associated with dating relationships and daily life, not by reinforcing traditional masculine norms, but by cultivating shared values of nonviolence, empathy, and open communication. Without a control or experimental group, the study focused on documenting personal changes relative to normative gender expectations. Through a thematic analysis, the research identified a deliberate reconstruction of hegemonic masculinity among participants as a means to disrupt the cultural association between masculinity and violence. The findings emphasize that to effectively end violence against women, it is essential to engage men in prevention efforts. It critiques campus interventions-like date rape seminars-that target only surface-level factors (e.g., alcohol, firearms) without addressing the root cause: hegemonic masculinity.

Namy et al. (2015) conducted a qualitative study to examine how and why specific elements of the 'Young Men Initiative (YMI)' influenced adolescent boys' perceptions of gender norms across four Balkan countries: Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia. The YMI program aimed to challenge harmful conceptions of masculinity through three components: school-based group education sessions led by youth facilitators, optional residential retreats, and "Be a Man" clubs promoting peer-led social marketing campaigns. The researchers conducted 37 in-depth interviews and 11 focus group discussions with male students aged 14-16, youth facilitators, and teachers. Data were analyzed thematically. The study identified five key factors that contributed to the program's effectiveness: personal reflection, experiential learning, strong facilitator-student relationships, formation of new peer groups, and the use of aspirational messaging. While some boys continued to express patriarchal views, many reported greater awareness of gender norms and described beginning to reimagine alternative masculinities. The study highlights the importance of trust-building, relatable facilitators, and immersive learning environments in

promoting gender-transformative change, while also acknowledging the limits of such interventions in deeply patriarchal contexts.

Peretz et al. (2020) evaluated the 'Men's Story Project (MSP)', a gender-transformative intervention using live public performances of personal narratives by 17 people addressing issues such as homophobia, violence, emotional suppression, and identity. Held at a U.S. public university with around 350 attendees, the event aimed to challenge hegemonic masculinity and promote gender equality. The study involved six focus groups with 31 audience members aged 18-36, including 11 men and 20 women, conducted two weeks after an MSP event. Thematic analysis of participant responses revealed that the performance encouraged critical reflection on hegemonic masculinity, including rigid gender roles, emotional suppression, and the normalization of violence. Two weeks after the event, participants reported: reconsidering rigid gender roles and emotional suppression, rejecting hegemonic masculinity in favor of more inclusive, diverse forms, developing a more intersectional understanding of masculinity, acknowledging the social costs of traditional masculinity, reflecting on the role of masculinity in perpetuating violence and health risks. The study highlights personal storytelling as a powerful tool for promoting healthy masculinities and fostering social change.

Torres et al. (2012) conducted a qualitative study to explore how young Nicaraguan men involved in NGO-led educational programs conceptualized masculinity and engaged in efforts to prevent violence against women. Data were collected through six focus groups and two in-depth interviews with 62 young men (aged 17-24) who voluntarily participated in training sessions on sexual and reproductive health and gender equality. Participants' involvement with NGOs ranged from one to four years. The analysis revealed a transformative process termed "Expanding your mind," which reflected a growing awareness of gender inequities, the adoption of respectful and responsible values, and the development of critical thinking and agency at individual, social, and political levels. Belonging to peer groups that upheld gender-equitable norms emerged as a key external factor supporting these changes. The development of gender-equitable attitudes and behaviors was experienced not merely as the acquisition of information but as a deeper process—one that involved cultivating respect for others' views and sexual choices, assuming responsibility for one's sexual behavior, and learning to apply new skills such as agency, critical thinking, and political engagement. The study concluded that multiple forms of progressive masculinity can



emerge in such contexts. However, achieving meaningful shifts in attitudes toward gender equity and violence prevention requires more than conventional health education-it demands sustained, values-based engagement with the norms of patriarchy and masculinity.

The study by York (2014) explored the impact of a 12-month transformative education program involving eight young Zulu men (aged 18–24) in rural South Africa. Using focus groups, in-depth interviews, and participant observation, the program engaged participants in experiential learning activities across four separate three-day camping workshops. Topics included Ubuntu, trust-building, gender norms, power, violence, and attitudes toward rape. The aim was not to transmit new information, but to foster reflection and critical thinking among participants, creating an environment where genuine internal and collective shifts in perception and values could occur, and new schemas could emerge. Thematic analysis revealed a shift from traditional masculinity toward more equitable gender roles, supported by culturally grounded reflection through the concept of *Ubuntu*-an African philosophy and worldview emphasizing shared humanity, compassion, and interconnectedness. This study underscores the effectiveness of culturally appropriate transformative education in reshaping masculinities and promoting gender equality. The incorporation of Ubuntu enabled reflection and cultural resonance, contributing to reductions in gender-based violence and risk-taking behaviors, as well as improvements in self-esteem, communication, and community involvement. However, the study also emphasizes that meaningful transformation requires long-term, trust-based engagement and must be part of broader community efforts. Isolated change risks misunderstanding, backlash, and marginalization.

## 4.3. SUMMARY

Based on the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative studies, it can be concluded that effective interventions for changing gender attitudes and promoting alternative masculinities should combine long-term, voluntary engagement with the creation of safe and supportive spaces that encourage personal reflection and accountability, along with the use of group learning and immersive techniques such as sociodrama, psychodrama, or public speeches. Furthermore, strong facilitator-participant relationships can help foster active participation and reduce skepticism. Tailoring the interventions to specific groups (i.e., veterans, teenagers), adopting a gender-mixed approach, tailoring interventions to local norms, values, and language, and addressing structural

inequalities and social norms will increase the likelihood of sustained, meaningful change. In this section, only Namy et al. (2015) conducted interventions in Europe – highlighting once again the scarcity of European-based interventions targeting gender attitude transformation. This limitation reduces our understanding of how such interventions function within the region’s unique sociocultural and policy landscapes.

The tables 4 and 5 provide a comparative synthesis of all interventions discussed above. They highlight mechanisms and key determinants of change that contributed to the success or limitations of each intervention.

**Table 4. Quantitative Studies on Changing Gender Attitudes and Promoting Alternative Masculinities**

Citation	Country	Type of Intervention	Mechanism & Key Determinants of Change	Effectiveness
Craig et al. (2006)	U.S.	Batterers Intervention Program (BIP) - a combination of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and educational workshops rooted in the Duluth Mode	Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) elements, the use of tools such as the Power and Control Wheel, group-based discussions; peer Influence and group support, participants' willingness to take personal responsibility	+
Galvin et al. (2023)	Tanzania	EFFECTS program - hybrid peer groups and home visits delivered by community health workers	Group meetings with home visits, and the participatory and reflective nature of the sessions, engagement of both partners rather than mothers alone, the integration of gender equality, nutrition, and parenting content	++
Santhya et al. (2013)	India	gender-transformative life skills education and sports-coaching programme	Inclusion of both life skills and sports elements, regular attendance, the interactive and participatory nature (e.g., role-play and group discussions) of the sessions, and community events serving as an extension of the intervention	++
Schmidt et al. (2007)	U.S.	Domestic Abuse Education Project (DAEP) - a combination of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and educational workshops rooted in the Duluth Mode	Personal motivation rooted in concern for the well-being of partners and children, a desire for healthier relationships, and acknowledgment that abuse is wrong, rather than fear of short-term, self-centered consequences like arrest or financial loss	+
Schwartz & Waldo (2003)	U.S.	Partner abuse prevention programs - educational workshops based on interpersonal learning during intimacy skills practice	Information and socializing techniques (including interpersonal learning, family reenactment, or catharsis) to address gender role conflicts nonviolently	+
Stephens & George (2004)	U.S.	Watching an anti-rape educational video	Informative (rape statistics and educational information) and	+

			persuasive video (personal testimonies and interviews) message with critical analysis (rape myths debunking); individual characteristics of participants, particularly their past sexual coerciveness	
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**Note.** ++ fully achieved aim; + partially achieved aim; - aim not achieved/harmful effect

**Table 5. Qualitative Studies on Changing Gender Attitudes and Promoting Alternative Masculinities**

Citation	Country	Type of Intervention	Mechanism & Key Determinants of Change	Effectiveness
Chakraborty et al. (2022)	India	VAWG (violence against women and girls) prevention program	Knowledge-sharing in group discussions and facilitated reflection, the role of pre-existing gender norms and masculinities, social norms, structural inequalities, and conceptual framing (violence as an ignorance)	+
Fahmi et al. (2023)	Bangladesh	Sociodrama and psychodrama intervention on gender-based violence	Use of sociodrama and psychodrama fostering emotional immersion, a nonjudgmental, supportive space, tailoring the intervention to local norms, values, and language, the role of peer and family dynamics in supporting or validating behavioral change, trained facilitators in sociodrama  and psychodrama with prior trainings in clinical psychology	++
Gibbs et al. (2015)	South Africa	Stepping Stones and Creating Futures Program - a behavioral intervention combining HIV-prevention with the pursuit of greater gender equality	Supportive peer groups, structured discussions and exercises, integrated economic empowerment, skills building, trained peer leaders; constraints: persistent poverty, high unemployment, and social expectations	+
Hong (2000)	U.S.	Engagement in Men Against Violence (MAV) - student organization	Supportive peer environment, voluntary participation, campus context	+
Namy et al. (2015)	Balkans	Young Men Initiative (YMI)-a school-based program	Experiential activities and immersive retreats, strong facilitator-student relationships, formation of new peer groups, aspirational messaging and fun, youth-friendly branding promoted engagement, constraint: initial level of skepticism	+
Peretz et al. (2020)	U.S.	Men's Story Project (MSP)	First-person, candid storytelling, stories highlighted how masculinity intersects with race, sexuality, class, and trauma	++

Torres et al. (2012)	Nicaragua	Engagement in NGO-led educational programs	Belonging to gender-equitable peer groups, exposure to feminist discourse and protest femininities, internalization of value-based accountability, constraints: internalized machismo and fear of social reprisal; contextual factors influencing the willingness to intervene in violence (e.g., perceived severity, personal safety, social proximity)	+
York (2014)	South Africa	A 12-month transformative education program	Cultural framing through Ubuntu, interactive, emotionally engaging activities, a safe, trust-based group environment, and a long-term intervention	++

**Note.** ++ fully achieved aim; + partially achieved aim; - aim not achieved/harmful effect

## 5. AN OVERVIEW ON IMPROVING BYSTANDER EFFICACY AND ALLYSHIP

Bystander efficacy refers to belief in men's ability to effectively recognize and intervene in situations involving sexism or potential sexual violence. Allyship involves actively supporting efforts to prevent sexual violence and promote gender equality through behaviors such as attending educational programs, participating in feminist activism, or joining antirape protests. According to theory, enhancing bystander efficacy and allyship encourages men to actively challenge harmful behaviors and serves as an effective strategy for the primary prevention of sexual assault. This approach is linked to decreased levels of sexism and sexist actions among men, as well as greater involvement in feminist activism and a stronger dedication to ending sexual violence.

Eight papers, including five quantitative, one qualitative, and two mixed-method studies reporting interventions aimed at improving bystander efficacy and allyship, were identified. Although some studies addressed multiple issues, they were classified into this category if the researchers placed greater emphasis on examining changes within these specific areas in their investigations.

### 5.1. QUANTITATIVE INTERVENTIONS

Foubert (2000) evaluated The Men's Project, an 11-week, offline sexual assault prevention program for college men in the United States, combining social norms education, empathy-building, and bystander intervention strategies. Thirty-six students (ages 18–22) participated in the intervention, there was no control group. The program was divided into three sections: understanding masculinities and privilege, exploring sexual assault's emotional impact, and developing individual and institutional bystander strategies. Using paired-samples t-tests, significant decreases were found in hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, rape myth acceptance, and marginally in gender-biased language. Significant increases were noted in bystander efficacy, collective action willingness, and feminist activism, with medium to large effect sizes for attitudes and large effects for behaviors. According to authors, the results provide evidence that the Men's Project is effective in encouraging men to challenge sexual violence. Although it remains unclear which program components were most influential, because of the integrative character of the intervention, the holistic approach appeared transformative, emphasizing the importance of addressing socialization and bystander education.

Kilmartin et al. (2008) tested a brief social norms intervention to reduce male sexism through two experiments using a control versus intervention design. Participants were male undergraduates from a predominantly Caucasian, mid-sized college in the United States, with 65 students in Experiment 1 and 63 students in Experiment 2. The intervention involved a 20-minute presentation on social norms and bystander intervention, addressing misconceptions about peer behavior and encouraging proactive responses to sexism. Measures included 'Hostile Sexism', 'Benevolent Sexism', 'Adversarial Sexual Beliefs', and 'Discomfort with Sexism', assessed pre- and three weeks post-intervention. Results from Experiment 1 showed improvements across all measures for participants who were mostly strangers to one another. In Experiment 2, where participants knew each other, only perceptions of Hostile Sexism and Discomfort with Sexism improved. It is unclear why the estimations of Benevolent Sexism and Adversarial Sexual Beliefs did not change. Effect sizes were larger in Experiment 1 ( $d = .74$ ) than in Experiment 2 ( $d = .41$ ). Authors suggest that the overestimation of peers' sexism is thought to underlie men's reluctance to voice their disapproval of disrespectful behavior. Thus, developing an intervention that addresses this cognitive distortion should result in a greater willingness to challenge peers' expressions of sexism. Overall, the intervention effectively corrected misperceptions of peers' sexism, but was more successful among men unfamiliar with one another, highlighting the complexities of addressing sexism within established social groups.

Case (2015) examined a behavioral intervention aimed at reducing sexism in college men in the United States. Forty-three male undergraduates (ages 18–24) participated in the experiment, with the experimental group ( $n = 23$ ) engaging in role-playing and writing a letter confronting a hypothetical peer's sexist remarks, while the control group ( $n = 20$ ) completed an assertiveness skills exercise. Measures included the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) and Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMA), assessed from both self and peer perspectives. Results showed that only the intervention group exhibited a significant reduction in ASI scores post-intervention, while the control group showed no change. Participants consistently rated others as more sexist than themselves, both before and after the intervention. Although the specific mechanisms behind the change remain unclear, the study highlights the potential effectiveness of combining cognitive dissonance, induced compliance, and social norms strategies to reduce sexist attitudes among college men.

Eriksen (2021) evaluated the leadership education potential of sexual assault prevention training by examining the 'Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP)' program at a large public university in Southern California. The study involved 239 student leaders (47% men, 53% women) - including student-athletes and resident assistants - who participated in a one-day, nine-module offline training combining information on gender violence, interactive exercises, leadership discussions, and real-life bystander scenarios. Surveys administered before and after the training assessed sociodemographic backgrounds, leadership readiness, bystander efficacy, and willingness to act. Results from paired-sample t-tests and regression analyses showed that MVP training effectively built leadership readiness and bystander confidence across genders, with women showing greater post-training gains in bystander confidence compared to men. Resident assistants demonstrated larger improvements in bystander confidence and willingness to intervene than student-athletes. Importantly, students' pre-training scores and prior leadership experience significantly predicted post-training outcomes. Overall, the study highlighted the effectiveness of feminist-inspired bystander education in promoting leadership competence and empowered action against gender violence.

Sihyun and Yejung (2021) conducted a qualitative study evaluating the effectiveness and sociocultural feasibility of a social marketing campaign, 'With-Us', designed to promote bystander intervention in cases of dating violence on a South Korean university campus. The intervention involved a social campaign based on five themes related to dating violence ( 1: What is dating violence?; 2: Distinguishing between behaviors of love and violence; 3: awareness of dating violence in relationships around you; 4: How to support DV victims; 5: Helpful resources for DV victims in the community), disseminated through posters, booths, booklets, and Instagram, and was developed collaboratively by volunteer students and faculty. A total of 166 participants (mean age 24.1 years; 71.7% female) were divided into an intervention group (N=99) and a control group (N=67). Measures included readiness and intention to help, bystander efficacy, gender stereotypes, and experiences of dating violence. Effectiveness was assessed through t-tests, chi-square tests, and ANOVA, comparing those who engaged with the campaign, those who ignored it, and the control group. Results showed that participants who paid attention to the campaign reported significant improvements in readiness to help and action-oriented behaviors. Younger participants, females, and those with lower patriarchal attitudes were more likely to engage with the campaign. However, the study also highlighted concerns about whether the changes observed

were solely due to the intervention or if participants were already predisposed to help, emphasizing the importance of carefully considering dissemination strategies and cultural factors.

## 5.2. QUALITATIVE INTERVENTIONS

Hammock et al. (2020) conducted an exploratory qualitative study to understand undergraduate men's perspectives on sexual violence bystander education, focusing on students who had completed either an 8-hour 'Green Dot' training or a mandatory campus training in the United States. Using focus groups with 24 college men, the study explored discourse patterns and thematic content through qualitative analysis, supplemented by some quantitative questions about knowledge of digital sexual violence. Participants reflected on their learning experiences from Green Dot's interactive workshops, which teach safe intervention techniques without labeling individuals and emphasize collective responsibility. The analysis revealed key themes: participants felt that statistical information was less impactful than personal stories, recognized that women could also be aggressors, valued practical bystander intervention skills, and highlighted that Black men face particular risks when intervening. These findings offer insight into how bystander education can be made more relatable and effective for diverse groups of college men.

## 5.3. MIXED-METHOD INTERVENTIONS

Grimmett et al. (2021) conducted a mixed-methods documentary intervention research study (DIRS) to examine the effects of the short educational film 'My Masculinity Helps (MMH)' on Black male high school students' attitudes toward rape myths and their intent to help friends. The documentary, featuring Black men and boys, aimed to challenge traditional gender roles, masculinity, and power dynamics while promoting bystander intervention and support for sexual violence survivors. Thirty-six Black/African American male students (ages 15–18) from 19 high schools across five urban and rural counties participated. Quantitative measures included the 'Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance (UIRMA) Scale' and the 'Intent to Help Friends (ITHF-Brief Scale)', while qualitative data were analyzed using a deductive coding method based on previous research. Findings showed a significant post-viewing decrease in rape myth acceptance across all subscales and slight improvements in intent to help friends, although the latter had already been high at baseline. Qualitative responses indicated increased awareness of sexual violence, greater



empathy toward survivors, a sense of personal responsibility to intervene, and recognition of the importance of male engagement in violence prevention efforts.

Thompson et al. (2021) conducted a mixed-methods pilot study to evaluate an online sexual violence prevention program designed for college athletes. During the development stage, qualitative focus groups informed the program content, while the intervention stage used a cluster quasi-randomized design, assigning sports teams to either an intervention or waitlist control group based on their age. The 45-minute online program, grounded in situational and social norms theories, included education on sexual violence definitions, consent, risk factors, the relationship between alcohol and sexual violence, bystander intervention, and campus resources, with tailored normative feedback for athletes. The sample included 146 student athletes (62% women). Quantitative measures assessed SV knowledge, consent beliefs, peer approval of forced sex, heavy drinking, bystander intentions, and campus resource knowledge. Mixed models and stratified gender analyses evaluated program effects. Results showed that the intervention group demonstrated greater increases in sexual violence knowledge, improved perceptions of peer norms against forced sex, and stronger bystander intentions compared to controls. Although reductions in heavy drinking were assessed, they were not emphasized as a major finding. Participant feedback indicated high satisfaction with the program.

## 5.4. SUMMARY

A common thread across the studies is the importance of bystander intervention-empowering individuals to recognize and address sexual violence in their communities. Effective interventions often involve educational frameworks that challenge harmful gender norms, raise awareness about sexual violence, and provide participants with the skills needed to intervene safely and effectively.

The tables 6 and 7 provide a comparative synthesis of all interventions discussed above. They highlight mechanisms and key determinants of change that contributed to the success or limitations of each program.

**Table 6. Quantitative Studies on Improving Bystander Efficacy And Allyship**

Citation	Country	Type of Intervention	Mechanism & Key Determinants of Change	Effectiveness
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Foubert (2000)	U.S.	The Men's Project, which integrates social norms, empathy, and bystander education programs into one program (11-week program)	Unclear which specific aspects led to observed changes, with prior studies suggesting that content on sexual assault and bystander education are key to effective interventions	++
Kilmartin et al. (2008)	U.S.	20-min presentation overing key topics on social norms and bystander intervention	Social norms interventions can reduce sexism by addressing cognitive distortions and encouraging men to challenge disrespectful behavior	+
Case (2015)	U.S.	Workshop including role-playing and written paper	Role-playing may have influenced college men's sexism by highlighting the issue or prompting a change in self-presentation, leveraging cognitive dissonance, induced compliance, and social norms to drive measurable change.	+
Eriksen (2021)	U.S.	Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) program (a one-day MVP leadership training)	Leadership development, interactive discussions, and feminist-inspired principles to empower bystanders in sexual assault prevention.	++
Si Hyun and Yejung (2021)	South Korea	Social marketing campaign, With-Us	Social campaigns can affect a larger population, but the authors are not sure if it is more effective that focused-education format and avoiding depicting primarily women as those who experience violence	+

**Note.** ++ fully achieved aim; + partially achieved aim; - aim not achieved/harmful effect

**Table 7. Qualitative and Mixed-Method Studies on Improving Bystander Efficacy And Allyship**

Citation	Country	Type of Intervention	Mechanism & Key Determinants of Change	Effectiveness
Hammock et al. (2020)	U.S.	Green Dot - 1.5–8 hour interactive workshops	Key conclusions what would work better: using local rather than national statistics, incorporating scenarios that explicitly discuss female perpetration and male victimization and training on the intersection between sexual violence and racial discrimination	+
Grimmett, Rowley, Williams, and Clark (2021)	U.S.	A short educational film My Masculinity Helps (MMH)	Education about sexual violence, training about students' potential role in the #MeToo movement, counselors are expected to promote environments that positively impact multiculturalism and respectful communication among peers and administrative personnel. Classroom lessons, small groups, and activities addressing sexual violence prevention and response.	++
Thompson et al. (2021)	U.S.	Online 45-minute sexual violence prevention program for college athletes	Using a social norms approach to correct misperceptions about peer attitudes and behaviors related to SV and alcohol use, providing interactive	++

			activities to increase knowledge and awareness about SV, and teaching bystander intervention skills through tailored scenarios for the group.	
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**Note.** ++ fully achieved aim; + partially achieved aim; - aim not achieved/harmful effect

## **6. META-ANALYSES**

To build on the findings presented in the previous sections, we now turn to meta-analytical evidence that synthesizes results across multiple studies. A meta-analysis is a statistical method that combines the results of independent studies addressing the same question, allowing for a more precise estimate of effect sizes and the identification of overarching trends. This approach enhances the reliability of conclusions by reducing the influence of individual study limitations and increasing statistical power. By aggregating data from diverse contexts and methodologies, meta-analyses offer a broader and more nuanced understanding of the phenomena under study, helping to clarify patterns that may not be visible in single studies alone. Four articles describing previously conducted meta-analyses were included in our systematic review.

### **6.1. OVERVIEW OF META-ANALYSES**

Meta-analysis by Jugl et al. (2021) synthesizes findings from eight quantitative studies evaluating the effectiveness of interventions aimed at preventing or countering extremism. The interventions included a range of formats such as workshops, educational programs, group-based action learning via DVDs, discussions, and collective activities. While most studies employed a basic pre-post (1x2) design, three used quasi-experimental 2x2 frameworks to enhance the validity of findings. The results showed a moderate overall effect size (that is the strength of the interventions that informs how much changes one can observe after the intervention; Cohen's  $d = 0.50$ ), indicating that these interventions can produce meaningful changes. Notably, when considering only psychosocial interventions, the effect size increased slightly to  $d = 0.56$ , suggesting that interventions focusing on psychological and social mechanisms may be especially promising.

The programs primarily targeted ideological forms of extremism-six addressed religious or ethnic extremism, one dealt with nationalist or separatist ideologies, and one covered mixed forms. A common thread across these interventions was their focus on promoting democratic values, strengthening participants' identity and cognitive complexity, and reducing out-group prejudice. These objectives were aimed at dismantling the black-and-white, "us vs. them" mindset often found in extremist worldviews. The authors emphasize that while the initial findings are encouraging, there remains a critical need for more rigorous and comprehensive evaluations to

identify which intervention components are most effective and under what conditions they work best.

This qualitative meta-analysis by Byrt et al. (2023) reviews 11 studies examining interventions for intimate partner violence, with a particular focus on economic abuse. The interventions evaluated include psychoeducation, group therapy, clinical support, and programs aimed at women's economic empowerment. Notably, four of the reviewed studies incorporated microfinance initiatives paired with gender-based training, aiming to promote more equitable financial and social dynamics between partners. Another study critically examined the role of social workers in intimate partner violence contexts, highlighting systemic shortcomings in practice and intervention strategies.

The article presents a critical reflection on current intimate partner violence intervention models, emphasizing the limitations of approaches that focus solely on individual change-particularly that of the victims. Byrt et al. argue for a shift beyond victim-centered empowerment to interventions that also address relational and systemic drivers of abuse. The authors highlight that the analyzed studies tended to emphasize women's self-improvement and, in some cases, the transformation of their partners through indirect means, rather than directly targeting abusive behaviors and the structures that enable them. This points to an urgent need for intimate partner violence strategies that not only empower survivors but also hold perpetrators accountable and address broader socio-economic power imbalances.

The meta-analysis by Wright et al. (2018) synthesizes findings from 29 controlled experimental studies evaluating male-only sexual assault prevention programs. These interventions commonly included bystander training, gender norm education, social norms strategies, empathy-building activities, and cognitive-behavioral components. Conducted primarily in U.S. college campuses, military units, and community groups, the programs were assessed using randomized or quasi-experimental designs, all featuring comparison groups. The results demonstrated small but statistically significant effects in reducing rape-supportive attitudes (Cohen's  $d = -0.24$ ) and future intentions to perpetrate (Cohen's  $d = -0.20$ ), while increasing intentions to intervene (Cohen's  $d = 0.27$ ). However, the effects on rape empathy, knowledge, and actual perpetration were nonsignificant, indicating limited behavioral impact.

Key findings point to the importance of program design and participant characteristics in determining effectiveness. Male-only interventions were generally more effective than mixed-gender ones, particularly in changing attitudes and intentions. Variability in participant risk level also played a role—programs were less effective for high-risk groups like fraternity members or known offenders. Interventions that incorporated active engagement methods such as peer-led discussions, role-plays, and norm-challenging exercises tended to be more impactful than lecture-based formats. These results underscore the value of participatory and context-sensitive approaches in sexual violence prevention, while also highlighting the limitations of current interventions in reducing actual perpetration.

The meta-analysis by Ruvalcaba et al. (2022) examined the effectiveness of sexual assault prevention programs specifically targeting highly masculinized groups, such as fraternity members and male athletes, on U.S. college campuses. It included effects from four studies in the meta-analysis. Programs reviewed featured peer-led workshops, bystander interventions like ‘Bringing in the Bystander’, and the ‘How to Help a Sexual Assault Survivor: What Men Can Do’ initiative. Including only studies with moderate to strong methodological quality, the meta-analysis found a moderate and significant reduction in rape myth acceptance among fraternity members (Cohen’s  $d = 0.59$ ). However, consistent effects on actual behavior change were not reported.

The analysis highlighted several key factors that influenced intervention success. Programs tailored to the cultural and social dynamics of highly masculinized environments, such as fraternities and athletic teams, were notably more effective, suggesting that contextual relevance is crucial. Peer-led delivery proved more impactful than facilitator-led sessions by external professionals, as peer facilitators were better able to foster trust, relatability, and engagement. Additionally, effective interventions focused on challenging rape myths, fostering empathy, and enhancing bystander intervention strategies. Group-based formats encouraged discussion and allowed participants to confront and question harmful norms collectively, which contributed to more meaningful attitude shifts. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of tailoring program content and delivery to the social contexts of high-risk male groups.

## 6.2. CONCLUSIONS FROM META-ANALYSES

The reviewed four meta-analyses of intervention programs addressing extremism and gender-based violence reveal both converging and diverging patterns in effective prevention strategies.

Across these diverse domains-ranging from religious extremism to intimate partner violence and sexual aggression-several common themes emerge regarding program design, delivery, and contextual sensitivity.

**Shared principles of effective interventions.** A central similarity is the emphasis on challenging binary or rigid thinking. As highlighted by Jugl et al. (2021), programs addressing extremist ideologies often aim to dismantle black-and-white worldviews by promoting complex thinking, inclusive identity-building, and democratic values. Similarly, interventions against gender-based violence-especially those analyzed by Ruvalcaba et al. (2022) and Wright et al. (2018)-focus on norm-challenging components such as bystander training, rape myth debunking, and empathy-building, which foster more nuanced understandings of gender and power.

**Importance of peer dynamics and contextual fit.** Across all analyses, contextual targeting and peer-led approaches consistently show stronger outcomes. Programs situated in environments where problematic behaviors are more normalized such as fraternities, sports teams, or male-dominated settings benefit from tailoring content to group norms and using peer facilitators (Ruvalcaba et al., 2022). Wright et al. (2018) similarly found that male-only interventions outperformed mixed-gender ones, particularly when interactive, participatory methods like role-playing and group discussions were employed. These findings align with Jugl et al.'s (2021) observation that altering social norms within specific ideological or group settings is critical for success.

**Differences in theoretical framing and target audiences.** One distinction lies in the theoretical emphasis and level of analysis. While Jugl et al. focus on ideological reorientation at the cognitive and identity level, Byrt et al. (2023) critique intimate partner violence interventions for being overly individualistic and victim-centered, arguing for greater systemic and relational approaches that address the role of abusers and structural inequalities, especially in cases of economic abuse. This perspective urges programs to not only empower victims but also challenge and transform the behavior of perpetrators, a focus less prominent in the extremism literature.

**Need for better evaluation and evidence.** Finally, a shared limitation across studies is the call for more rigorous and comprehensive evaluation methods. Jugl et al. (2021) underscore the lack of robust assessments in extremism prevention, while Wright et al. (2018) and Ruvalcaba et al.

(2022) note heterogeneity in participant profiles and delivery formats, complicating the generalizability of findings.

In sum, effective interventions-across both ideological and gender-based violence contexts-tend to be peer-led, context-sensitive, and norm-challenging, yet future work must better integrate systemic dimensions and employ stronger evaluation frameworks to refine their impact.



## 7. MAJOR CONCLUSIONS & KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

To drive meaningful and lasting social change, in areas related to gender, equity, and radical violent behaviors, it is crucial to go beyond surface-level interventions or isolated awareness-raising campaigns. What is needed is a strategic shift toward comprehensive, theory-driven, and context-sensitive approaches that address the root causes of harmful norms, inequalities, and structural barriers. This means designing programs that are not only informed by robust evidence but also embedded within the cultural, social, and institutional realities of the populations they aim to serve. In this chapter, we focus on recommendations for current and future projects that aim to support the development of more inclusive, democratic masculinities (such as the MEN4DEM project, of which this report is a part). Here, we emphasize the key elements of interventions that should be carefully considered and prioritized.

One key priority is to move from short-term or symbolic efforts to initiatives that promote structural transformation. This includes challenging the broader systems that reinforce inequality and exclusion, along with their adherence to stereotypical masculine norms and anti-feminine behaviors, rather than merely addressing individual attitudes or behaviors in isolation. Theoretical rigor plays a vital role here—not just as an academic requirement but as a foundation for building interventions that are replicable, adaptable, and genuinely impactful across diverse settings. Without this foundation, programs risk becoming inconsistent or ineffective when scaled or transferred to new contexts. Equally important is the format in which interventions are delivered. Group-based models offer unique advantages: they create opportunities for shared reflection, foster emotional literacy, and promote accountability through peer learning. These settings, and the group processes encouraged by such interventions, help participants engage more deeply with the content, explore vulnerabilities, and learn from one another's perspectives. This is especially valuable when working with sensitive or marginalized populations, who may benefit from spaces of mutual support and belonging.

Moreover, addressing gender-related issues requires inclusive strategies that actively engage both men and women. Change is relational—people's identities, attitudes, and behaviors are shaped in interaction with others. Supporting the facilitators of these processes is equally essential. They need resources for sustained training, supervision, and mentorship to navigate complex group

dynamics and maintain a high standard of delivery over time (see also recommendations in Vall et al., 2023).

Finally, interventions must be designed with both depth and duration in mind. This means using participatory and interactive methods that are engaging and relevant, while also investing in longitudinal efforts that allow for follow-up, adaptation, and continuous learning. Embedding content within real-life contexts-accounting for intersectional factors such as race, class, and geography-enables programs to resonate more deeply and to address the indirect pathways through which change often occurs.

Taken together, these recommendations offer a roadmap for building more effective, inclusive, and sustainable programs-ones that do not settle for superficial impact but strive for genuine transformation at both the individual and societal levels. They are grounded in evidence from our systematic review and reflect key lessons on what works in shaping more democratic forms of masculinity, preventing radicalization, and fostering civic engagement among men and boys. These insights are particularly valuable for a wide range of stakeholders involved in designing and implementing social interventions. Public institutions, government bodies, European institutions, and NGOs working with civil society can all benefit from these findings, especially those developing programs that aim to promote gender equality, strengthen democratic values, and support inclusive citizenship. By highlighting effective strategies, common pitfalls, and contextual considerations, these recommendations provide a practical foundation for stakeholders committed to building healthier, more equitable societies.

Below, we outline specific recommendations derived from the systematic review, offering concrete guidance for those working to develop and implement transformative interventions.

- **Prioritize structural change**

The study by Gibbs et al. (2015) concludes that while brief participatory interventions can foster incremental shifts in masculinities and behavior, broader structural change is necessary to disrupt deeply rooted cycles of gender inequality and violence. Similarly, Chakraborty et al. (2020) emphasize the need to move beyond surface-level changes in attitudes or behaviors and instead situate men's engagement within their lived realities, material conditions, and the spatial dynamics of informal communities. Hong (2000) critiques existing campus interventions-such as date rape seminars-that target only surface-level factors (e.g., alcohol, firearms) without

addressing the root cause: hegemonic masculinity. Hong calls for a transformative strategy in higher education that reshapes gender norms and promotes holistic student well-being. This recommendation is also highlighted in the previous systematic reviews we analyzed. For example Dworkin et al. (2013) recommend to incorporate gender-transformative strategies into broader health, education, and economic programs to address the multifaceted nature of HIV risk and intimate partner violence.

- **Ensure theoretical rigor**

A strong theoretical foundation is essential for ensuring that interventions are systematically designed based on evidence-based principles of change. This enhances replicability and scalability across diverse settings. For example, principles from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy provide a robust framework for reshaping beliefs. This is especially critical given that some earlier models, such as the Duluth model, have been criticized for lacking scientific rigor (Craig et al., 2006; Schmidt et al., 2007).

- **Apply group-based formats**

Group-based methods are highly effective in gender-transformative work with men. These settings provide opportunities for shared learning, emotional expression, peer accountability, and norm-challenging behavior (Craig et al., 2006; Fahmi et al., 2023; Gibbs et al., 2015; Schmidt et al., 2007; Schwartz & Waldo, 2003). In this line, Corbin and Omona (2020) suggest that structured community dialogues can foster psychosocial healing and, indirectly, help reduce violence in post-conflict settings. There is currently a lack of individually conducted interventions, one-on-one, which prevents us from concluding that such interventions could be equally effective.

- **Target the most sensitive populations**

Tailoring interventions to specific populations is crucial, as different groups face unique barriers related to gender norms, power dynamics, and access to resources. Veterans, for example, may need trauma-informed interventions (Craig et al., 2006), while low-resource communities benefit from programs that address both economic vulnerability and social empowerment (Galvin et al., 2023). Age-specific programming is also necessary, particularly for young men, covering sexual, reproductive, emotional health, and career development (Santhya et al., 2019).

- **Adopt a sensitive approach for gender-specific and gender-inclusive groups**

Although research on mixed-gender interventions is limited, some studies suggest that engaging couples can enhance gender-equitable attitudes. For example, Galvin et al. (2023) found that couple-based programs can promote more equitable relationships and foster positive fatherhood, leading to broader benefits for families. Namy et al. (2023) argue that sustainable, long-term normative change requires gender-synchronized interventions—that is, approaches that engage both women and men while addressing structural inequalities that sustain gender-based discrimination.

At the same time, research also highlights the value of gender-specific interventions. Male-only groups, in particular, have shown promise in creating safe spaces for men to reflect on masculinity, challenge harmful norms, and explore alternative, more open and emotionally expressive forms of masculinity. For example, Wright et al. (2018) found that male-only interventions outperformed mixed-gender ones, especially when they incorporated interactive, participatory methods such as role-playing and group discussions. These formats allowed participants to engage more deeply and honestly, free from concerns about judgment or defensiveness in mixed-gender settings.

Together, these findings suggest that both gender-inclusive and gender-specific approaches can be effective, depending on the context and goals of the intervention. A sensitive, context-driven design—one that considers participants’ needs, social dynamics, and the nature of the targeted norms—is essential for fostering meaningful, lasting change.

- **Support training and self-development of facilitators**

Facilitators play a critical role in intervention success. Effective facilitator-participant connections can promote participation and ease participants’ skepticism. Community health workers and peer mentors must be well-trained, confident, and supported through pre-service and ongoing training (Galvin et al., 2023; Santhya et al., 2019). Effective facilitation enhances engagement and helps reinforce key messages of gender equity. This can be further strengthened by trained facilitators in sociodrama and psychodrama, with prior training in clinical psychology, as demonstrated by Fahmi et al. (2023). Supporting this recommendation, Vall et al. (2023), based on their literature review, stressed the need to prioritize therapeutic alliance and facilitator skills, ensuring consistent, well-trained leaders who can adapt to group dynamics and emotional resistance.

- **Embed content in context**

Context-specific metrics are essential to capture the cultural, economic, and social dynamics of different communities. The concept of Ubuntu—an African worldview centered on compassion and interconnectedness—proved to be a culturally resonant and effective tool in York’s (2014) study, promoting gender equality and community well-being.

Changes in gender attitudes may often lead to indirect outcomes—effects that extend beyond the immediate goals of an intervention. Shifts in men's perceptions of gender roles might influence parenting styles, relationship dynamics, or workplace behaviors in ways not directly addressed by the program. For instance, more equitable beliefs may lead to shared domestic responsibilities, benefiting mental health, family functioning, and child development (Galvin et al., 2023). Life skills and sports programs can reinforce these outcomes by promoting teamwork and leadership in gender-equitable contexts (Santhya et al., 2019). Programs like that of Torres et al. (2012), which trained young men in sexual and reproductive health and gender equality, show promise.

Similarly, indirect interventions that target emotional development, underscore the importance of addressing both emotional wellbeing and accountability in interventions aimed at shifting gender dynamics (Veale et al., 2020). Integrating such content into public education curricula could extend the impact of these interventions.

Last but not least, an intersectional lens is equally important. Factors such as socioeconomic status, education level, ethnicity, and geographic location influence how interventions are received and implemented (Galvin et al., 2023). For example, urban-based gender equality programs may not translate well to rural areas, where access to resources is limited and social norms tend to be more conservative. Without adapting to these differences, rural participants might face barriers to participation or even backlash. Another example involves programs that rely heavily on written materials or complex language, which might exclude participants with lower literacy levels or at least hinder their ability to assess the program’s effectiveness (Schmidt et al., 2007). This can limit their engagement and the overall benefit they gain from the intervention.

Those suggestions are also in line with other systematic reviews outcomes. For example after reviewing 78 articles, (Guthridge et al. (2022) underscore the acknowledgment and management of emotional resistance (as an indirect path to changing behaviors) and suggest to avoid over-

reliance on gender mainstreaming alone. For interventions to be more effective, they must be multifaceted (engage comprehensively across these levels to effect substantial change), and must address emotional responses, particularly among men, to involve them in gender equality initiatives.

- **Use interactive and engaging methods**

Interactive and engaging methods have been consistently shown to enhance the effectiveness of interventions, particularly those targeting entrenched social norms and personal belief systems. For instance, integrating explorations of family-of-origin issues early in the intervention process can activate therapeutic mechanisms such as family reenactment, which enables participants to gain deeper self-awareness and emotional insight (Schwartz & Waldo, 2003). Experiential techniques like sociodrama and psychodrama further amplify this emotional engagement by allowing participants to embody and perform complex social roles, as demonstrated in the work of Fahmi et al. (2023). Additionally, live public performances of personal narratives-focused on topics such as homophobia, violence, emotional suppression, and identity-can serve as powerful tools for both expression and social learning (Peretz et al., 2020). These approaches not only deepen participants' reflection on their own experiences but also challenge normative conceptions of masculinity and power. The need for interactive and personally engaging interventions is also stressed as an important conclusion by other literature reviews (Sammot et al. (2021).

The trainings that integrate information on gender-based violence, interactive exercises, leadership discussions, and real-life bystander scenarios, emphasized the effectiveness of informed bystander education in fostering leadership skills and empowering participants to take action against gender violence (Eriksen, 2021). Similarly, the use of role-playing and writing letters addressing a hypothetical peer's sexist remarks has a potential effectiveness of combining cognitive dissonance, induced compliance, and social norms strategies to reduce sexist attitudes among college men (Case, 2015).

To enhance the impact and sustainability of such interventions, collaboration between researchers, practitioners, educators, and creative professionals should be actively encouraged. By integrating psychological theory with embodied performance and narrative practices, interventions can facilitate immersive learning environments that support critical reflection on gender roles, multiple expressions of masculinity, and the recognition of one's own assumptions,

stereotypes, and automatic reactions. This interdisciplinary synergy fosters transformative experiences that are both personally meaningful and socially relevant.

- **Invest in longitudinal interventions and research**

There remains a significant gap in longitudinal research assessing the long-term sustainability of behavior change resulting from gender-based violence prevention programs. Schmidt et al. (2007) found that certain violent attitudes persisted even after participation in short-term interventions, highlighting that deeply ingrained beliefs often require extended and repeated engagement to shift meaningfully. Similarly, while brief interventions-such as the 28-minute anti-rape educational video examined by Stephens and George (2003) - can temporarily increase awareness and knowledge, their enduring influence on attitudes and behaviors is limited. These findings underscore the need for interventions that go beyond one-off sessions and are embedded within long-term educational and community-based efforts. Long term focused interventions are also underscore by systematic reviews (Baptista & Tagliamento, 2021; Graham et al., 2019), where authors recommended ongoing and long-term individualized support for violence against women and their families and voice the need to design and evaluate multi-component, long-term interventions that address both individual and structural drivers of violence. Keith et al. (2022) based on their literature review recommend to design longer, multi-component interventions that include both individual-level and community-level strategies.

To address these limitations, more resources should be allocated to the development and maintenance of sustained intervention programs. Additionally, establishing stronger collaborations between practitioners, facilitators, and academic researchers is essential. Such partnerships can foster the co-creation of intervention content and the design of rigorous, longitudinal evaluation frameworks that assess not only immediate effects but also the durability of behavior change over time. Integrating theory-driven evaluation tools into ongoing practice can significantly enhance the evidence base for what works in preventing violence and promoting equitable, non-dominant forms of masculinity.

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