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## Women empowerment in Portuguese rural municipalities: Outcomes from a project

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**Title:** Women empowerment in Portuguese rural municipalities: Outcomes from a project

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## **Women empowerment in Portuguese rural municipalities:**

### **Outcomes from a project**

#### **Abstract**

The work presented here is based in a set of outcomes from a project developed in four rural municipalities of the center of Portugal, with the names Vouzela, Mangualde, Seia and Guarda. This project was supported by the National Support Reference Framework (NSRF) and had the objective of the women empowerment. The NSRF is a framework financed by Portuguese and European funds and has a duration from 2007 to 2013. The objective of this work is, using the information that it was possible obtain with this project, to analyze the dynamics, essentially, of the women in rural areas, namely at the empowerment level. For that it was examined, specifically, the expectations of different groups of namely women about the possibility of valorization and more society participation at several levels. It is possible to conclude about the weak expectations of public in general in the rural zones about the possibilities of empowerment, namely because social, cultural and economic contexts.

**Keyword:** Women empowerment, rural municipalities, women expectations, internal and external contexts.

**Acknowledgments:** ACCIG (Association of the Culture and Knowledge for the Gender Equality) and NSRF (National Support Reference Framework).

## 1. Introduction

Initiatives like the project developed for the women empowerment in four rural municipalities of the Center of Portugal and considered in this study, are welcome, because improve the social and economic development in these disadvantaged zones.

Sometimes the weak empowerment of the women begins inside the house, not only because questions related with the domestic violence, but also for the reason that in family decision making. In Mexico the planning services are positive related with the women empowerment, namely at the level of the women decisions to use the contraceptive (Estrada et al., 2008).

Indeed, the gender equality is not a reality in many countries today, even in developed countries the women are not empowered enough for that their opinion is heard. For the European countries, in the period from 2000 to 2007, Guisan and Aguayo (2011) analyze the women participation in social and economic activities and conclude about strong stagnation of opportunities for greatly prepared women in the decision making processes.

In not developed and in developing countries the situation is worse. Inside of the countries the context changes from one zone to another. However, the situation is better today than in some years ago, anyway the processes related with the gender equality are not easy and are dependent of many factors. In the Northern Nigeria Tegbaru et al. (2010) found evidences that the gender equality process is a complex phenomenon based in the individual interests, motivations and relationships, fixed in the people historical and cultural situations. In this context Njoh and Akiwumi (2012) found, for example, a relationship between the women empowerment and the religion. The personal characteristics and the personality, also, affect the empowering process. Kempen (2009) conclude about the unrealistic expectations, as working against the women valorization and economic and social participation.

In other way, in some countries the gender equality and the women empowerment increase the fertility, because is a manner to decrease the opportunity costs of having and raising children. So, in this perspective it can be said that where the gender inequality is lower is, also, where the fertility is highest (Toulemon, 2011).

Is important to continue to implement several initiatives (economic, social, etc) which increase the people empowerment, namely between the women. The economic independence is a determinant factor to empowering the people and specially the women. In some countries, the implementation of programs that facilitate the credit access are decisive to the social equality (Abedi and Khodamoradi, 2011).

The women empowerment must have the men participation, because Rahman et al. (2011) found for the Bangladesh that the women promotion without the men participation may increase the risk of intimate partner violence.

## **2. Information analyze**

The information that will be analyzed in this section is from a project developed in four rural municipalities of the Center of Portugal, in the period from 2010 to 2012. The project has an English title more or less like *Women in the Society: Empower to Participate*. This project had many sessions, but here will analyze only four (because for two actions no surveys were collected) of the six divulgation actions and their respective sessions. These sessions were some only for women and other for women and men. It is pretended look at the expectations of different groups of women and men, namely women, about the empowerment and the information for this was obtained by survey from the participant in each session. The survey was many questions, but here it will only analyzed the answers to the following two questions: expectations about the workshop; and opinion about the issues addressed. Following it will be presented a section by divulgation action and inside will be analyzed the information for all respective sessions. Each section will be the name of the divulgation action.

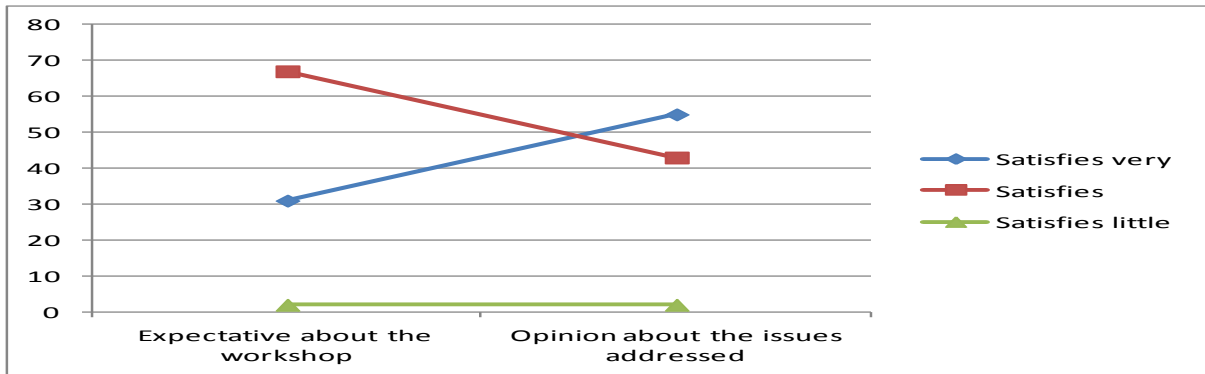
### **2.1. Show red card to the domestic violence**

This action was the following objectives: give actualized information about the domestic violence and gender equality; indentify the several universes of the victims; and give to know the different forms of domestic violence and the diverse tools to avoid that. This action was two sessions, one in Mangualde and other in Seia, and had the format of seminar.

In Mangualde the session was public and opens for all persons and was duration of 6 hours. Were presents 80 undifferentiated persons and 30 techniques related with these questions. In the total of the 110 persons, 70% were women and 30% men.

In Seia the seminar was duration of 3 hours, was open to all persons and were presents 174 persons, 160 participants and 14 specialized persons (techniques), where 65% were women and 35% men.

From Mangualde answered to the survey 42 persons with the following opinions:



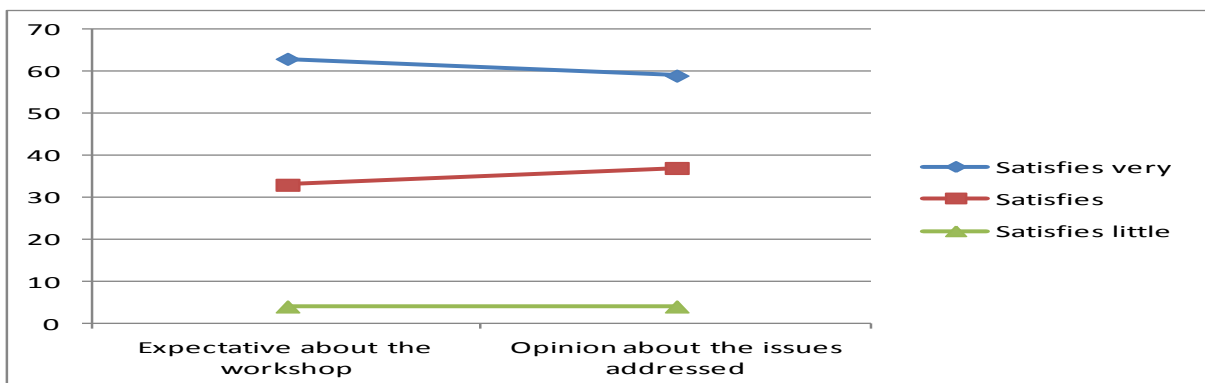
**Figure 1: Opinions about the session in Mangualde “show the red card to the domestic violence” (%)**

Considering the figure 1 above, all the persons present in the seminar had a weak expectation about these issues that improved with the seminar.

## 2.2. Say no to submission

In this action was realized several sessions with duration of an average of 3 hours and a participation of about 462 persons, where 79 were persons specialized and 70% were women.

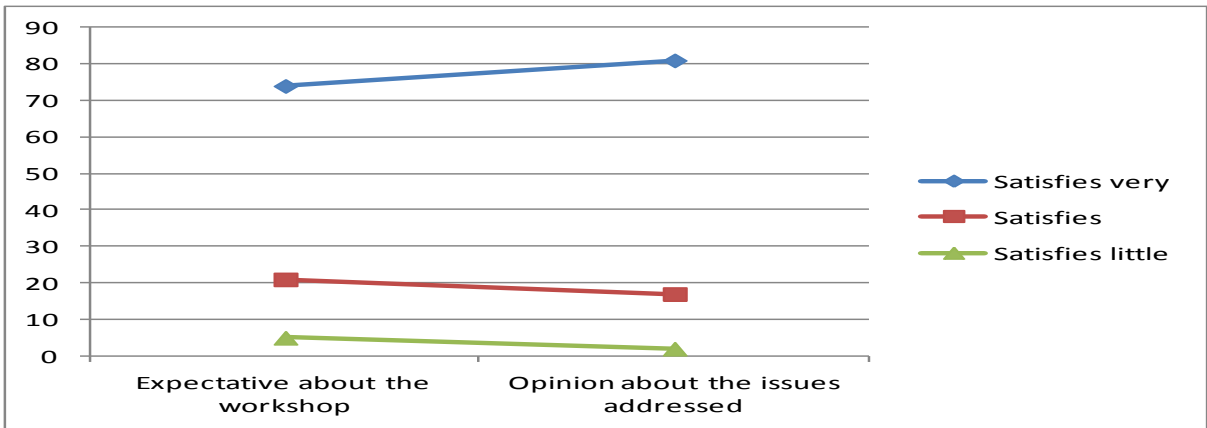
One session was realized in the secondary school of Mangualde with students, teachers, fathers, ..., and was the title *How to make an effective communication of values*. Were presents 70 persons and gave their opinion 27 participants, as presented next:



**Figure 2: Opinions about the session in Mangualde “how to make an effective communication of values” (%)**

In this group the expectations were already high and decrease lightly with the workshop. In this case the group of persons was different, are participants essentially from the school community and of course have another perspective about these questions.

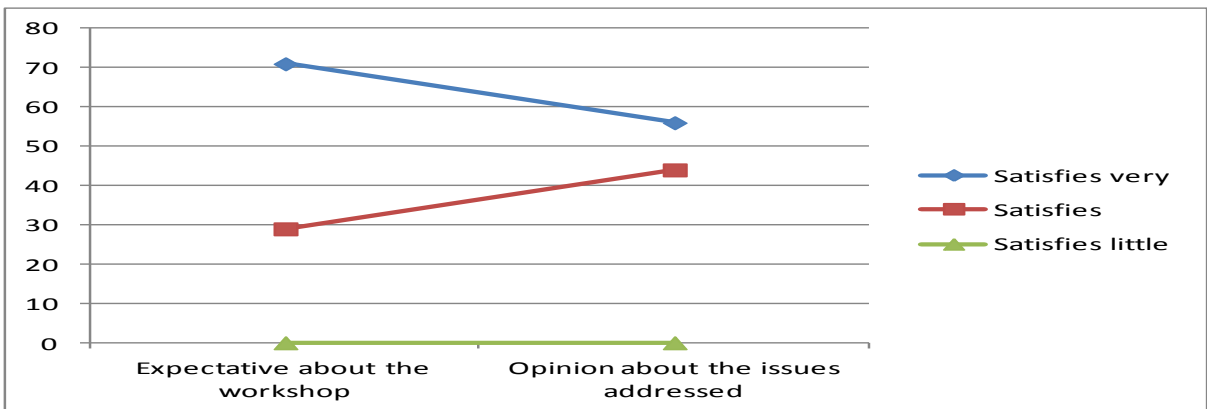
Other session with the title *Risks – combating and preventing* occurred, also, in the secondary school of Mangualde, was for the same target public. Were presents 70 persons and 43 participants gave the next perspective about the questions presented:



**Figure 3: Opinions about the session in Mangualde “risks – combating and preventing” (%)**

In this case the expectations are already high and still improved with the workshop. Comparing the opinions from the figure 2 and 3, what influence the differences should be the subjects addressed.

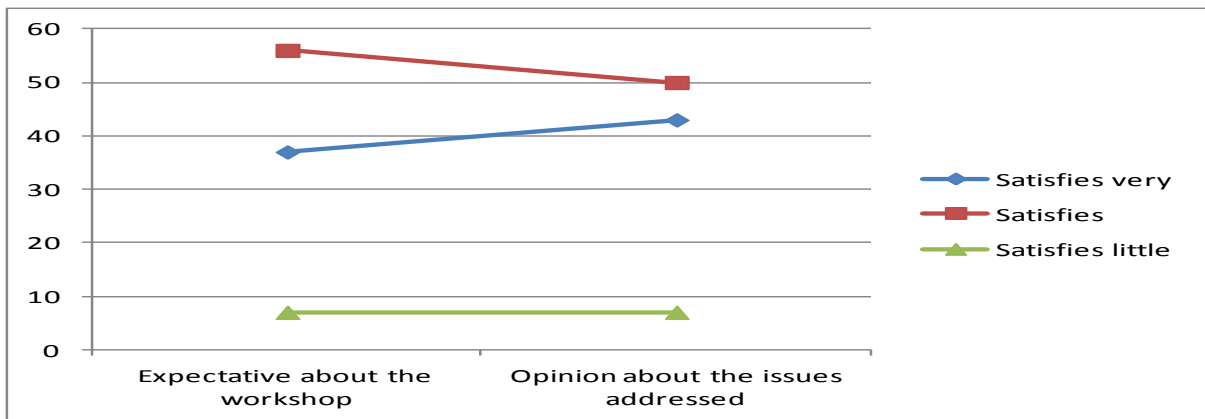
Yet in the secondary school of Mangualde was developed another session with the title *Dimensions and behavioral patterns* for the same target group. Answered 51 participants with the following perspectives:



**Figure 4: Opinions about the session in Mangualde “dimensions and behavioral patterns” (%)**

Here it is found another situation where the expectations are already high and decrease lightly. Again, the subjects addressed to have influence.

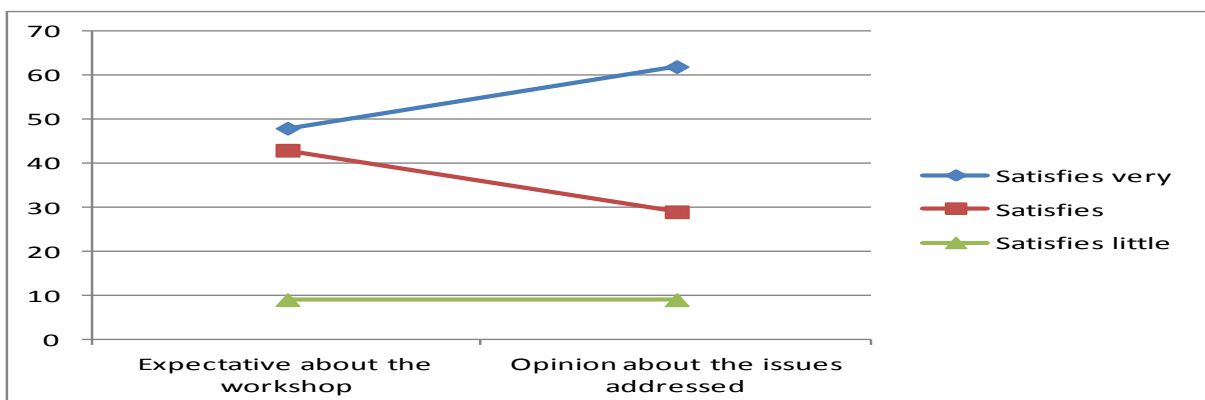
Also in Mangualde and as closing session for the previous sessions in this divulgation action, was developed another activity with the title *Violence in the school universe*. Was a session opens to all persons and were presents 40 participants and 27 gave the following opinions:



**Figure 5: Opinions about the session in Mangalade “violence in the school universe” (%)**

Comparing the opinions presented in the figure 5 and in the others figures, it is verified that the school public have more expectations about this issues than the public in general. This undifferentiated public in general improve it opinion with the workshops.

In a second phase and later were realized a several set of sessions in Mangualde. One first session was developed in the secondary school, but was open for all persons, and was the title *How to make an effective communication of values*. Were presents 23 participants that answer to the questions of the survey with the next results:

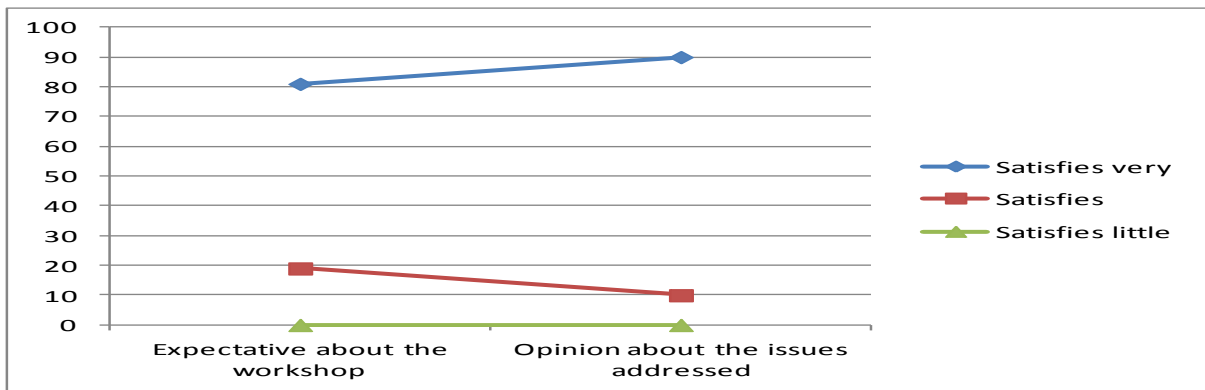


**Figure 6: Opinions about the session in Mangalade “how to make an effective communication of values” (%)**

Again in the public in general the expectations are weak but improve with the workshop. This is in line with what it was verified in the preceding figures.

Another session was realized in the secondary school, with the name *Sensory maps. The 5 senses*, for the school community, and related persons, and participated 21 persons with the following opinions about the session:



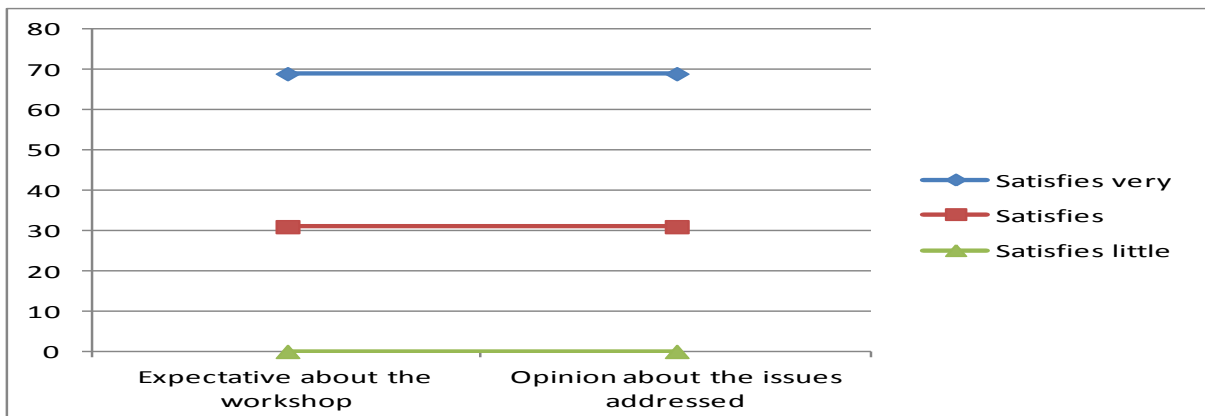


**Figure 7: Opinions about the session in Mangualde “sensory maps. The 5 senses” (%)**

The objective of this session was to work the five senses and the expectations and the opinions about the activities, as it can be seen in the figure 7, are very good.

### 2.3. Woman and the arts

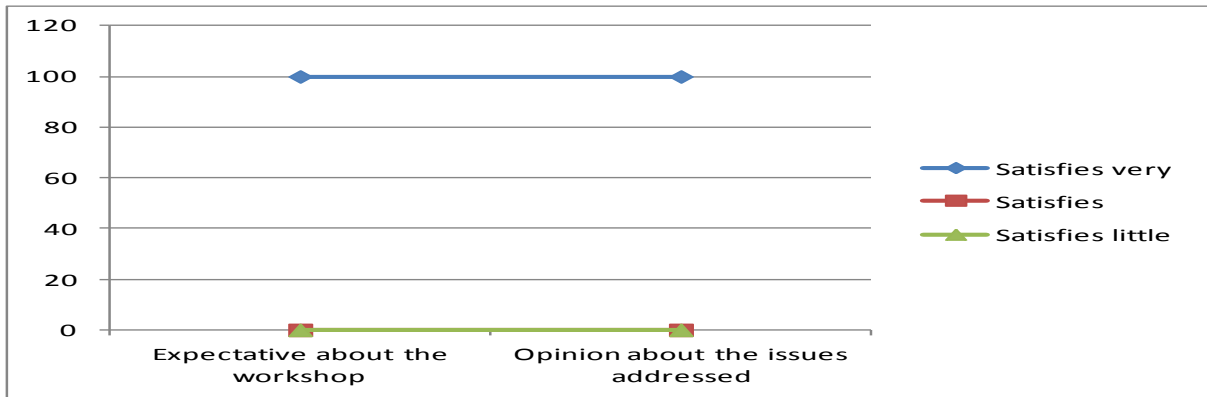
The divulgation action was several sessions of 3 hours each and the first was realized in Seia and was a music concert with a woman pianist. Participated 89 persons, where 9 were techniques and 60% were women. Was an open session for everyone and was possible collect 13 surveys with the next results:



**Figure 8: Opinions about the session, in Seia, inside the action “woman and the arts” (%)**

In this case the expectations were more or less good and did not improve with the workshop, maybe because was an activity with an artist more or less known for these persons.

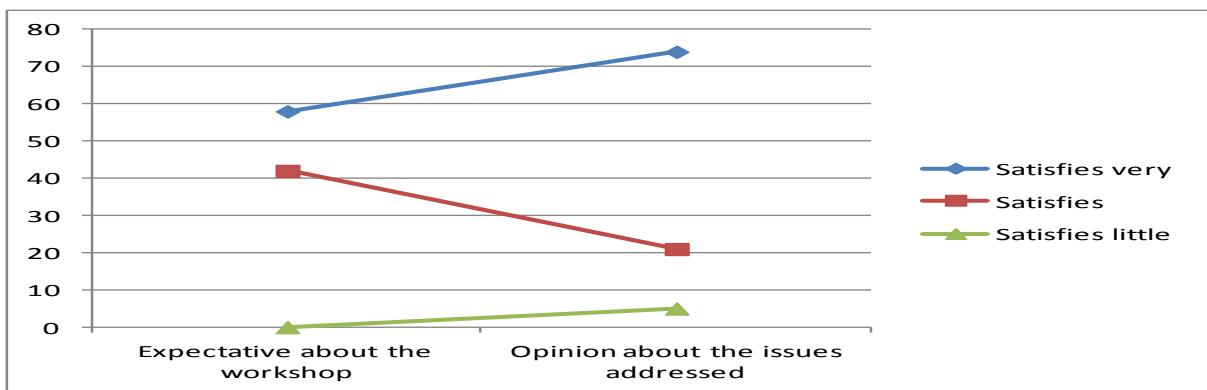
Other session was developed in Mangualde with the name *History of Fado* and was present a known Portuguese artist related with the *Fado*. Was an open activity and were presents 80 persons, where 11 were techniques and 75% women. Answer 22 participants:



**Figure 9: Opinions about the session in Mangualde “history of Fado” (%)**

Like was said for the figure 8, in the case is another situation of a known artistic and because this, the expectations and the opinion about the workshop are very good.

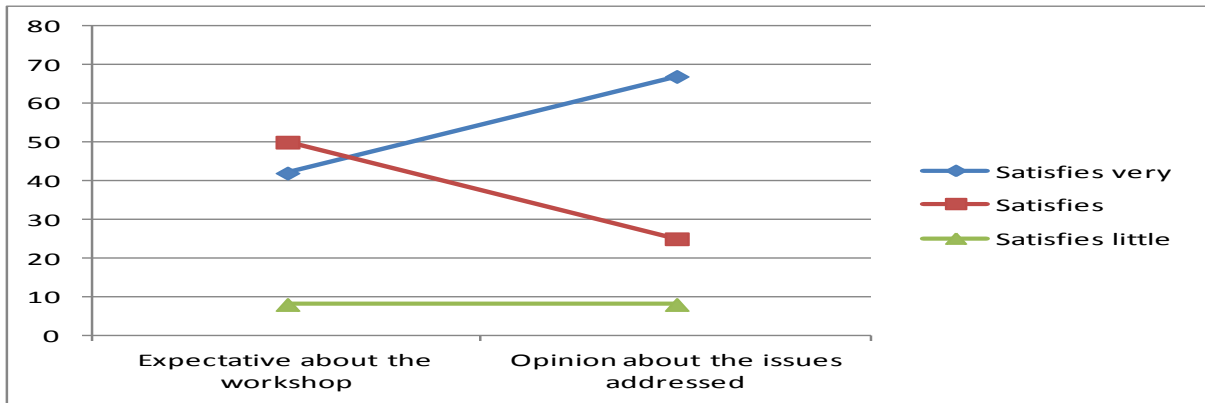
Another session was developed in Guarda, was a seminar and was directed for the school community. Were presents 30 persons, all women, where 6 were techniques and answer to the survey 19 women:



**Figure 10: Opinions about the session, in Guarda, inside the action “woman and the arts” (%)**

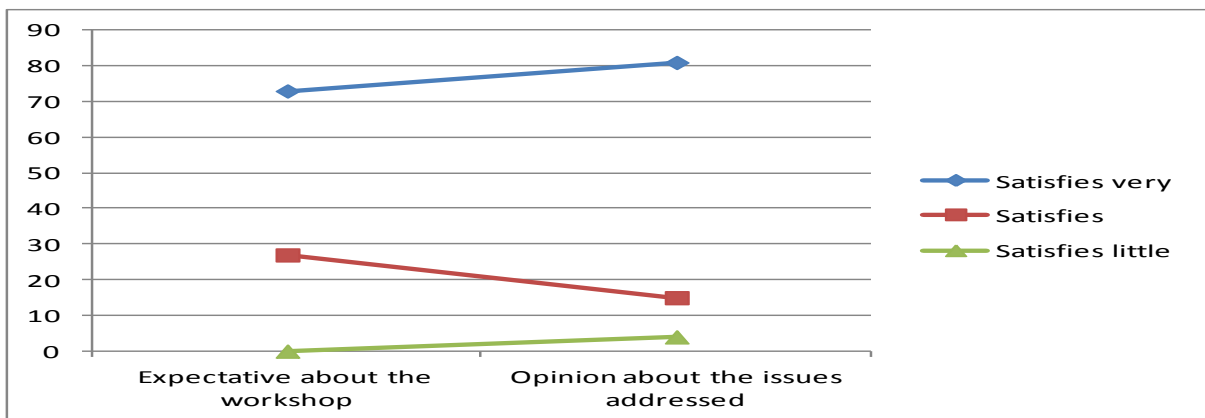
The school community in Guarda (a big town district capital), was a weak expectations about these issues and improved with the workshop. This is lightly different from what was seen for other smaller municipalities like Mangualde.

In another session in Guarda, for the same target group the results are very similar, as it can be seen in the figure 11, presented following. In this session participated 15 women, 3 were techniques, and answer 12:



**Figure 11: Opinions about the session, in Guarda, inside the action “woman and the arts” (%)**

A similar session was realized in Mangualde for the same target group. Participated 33 persons, 99% women and 3 techniques, and answer 26 persons with the following opinions about these addressed issues:



**Figure 12: Opinions about the session, in Mangualde, inside the action “woman and the arts” (%)**

Indeed, in Mangualde, the expectations and the opinions about the workshops are much more positives. This is in the line of what it was observed before.

#### **2.4. And ... behind the mask**

Several sessions were developed in this divulgation action with a duration of more or less 3 hours each. A first session was realized in the secondary school of Mangualde with the title *Dating violence* and the target group was the school community. Participated 60 persons, 58 women and 2 men, and answer 59 persons as is next presented:

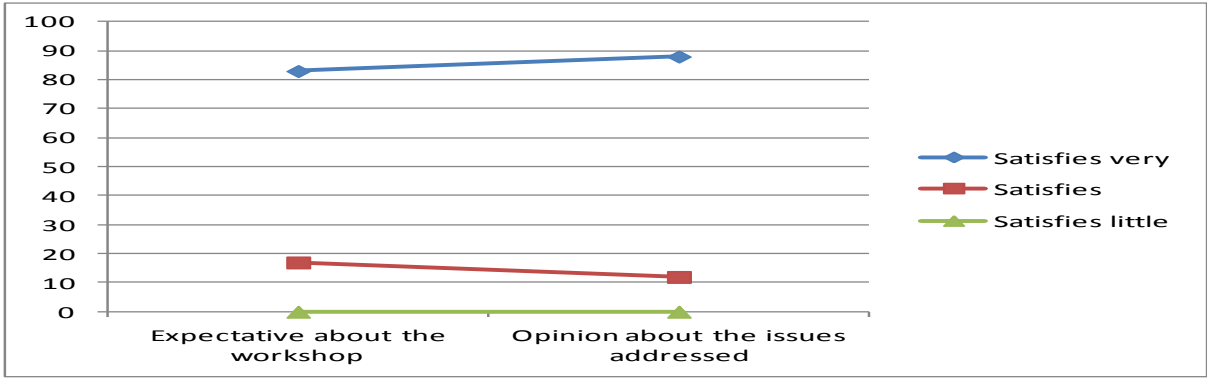


Figure 13: Opinions about the session in Mangualde “dating violence” (%)

This is consistent with what has been said before, in another words, it has been found differences in the answers of target groups and between municipalities for the same groups. The school community has the more positives answers, as well the persons from the secondary school of Mangualde.

Another session is about *No to dating violence*, was developed in Mangualde, was open to everyone, were presents 180 persons and answer 59 with the next opinions:

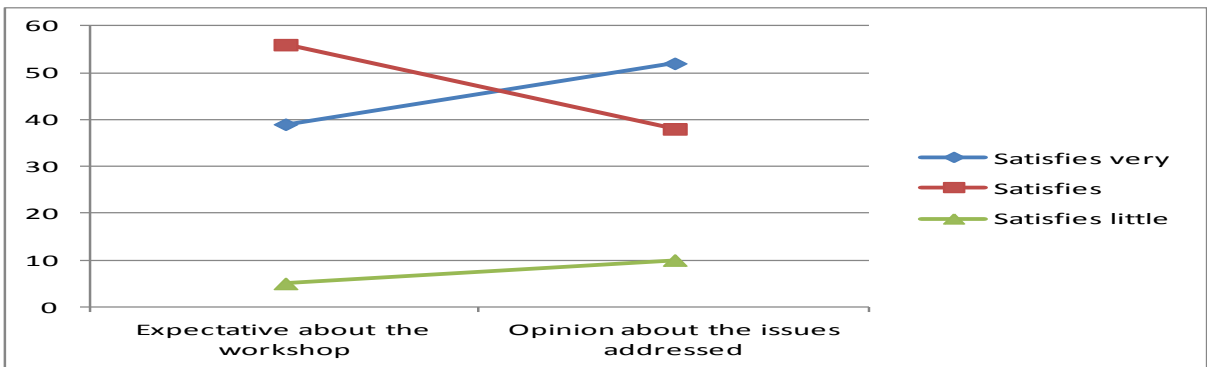


Figure 14: Opinions about the session in Mangualde “no to dating violence” (%)

In Seia were developed two sessions. The first was about *Communicate through art*, was for techniques of the municipality and were collected 12 surveys:

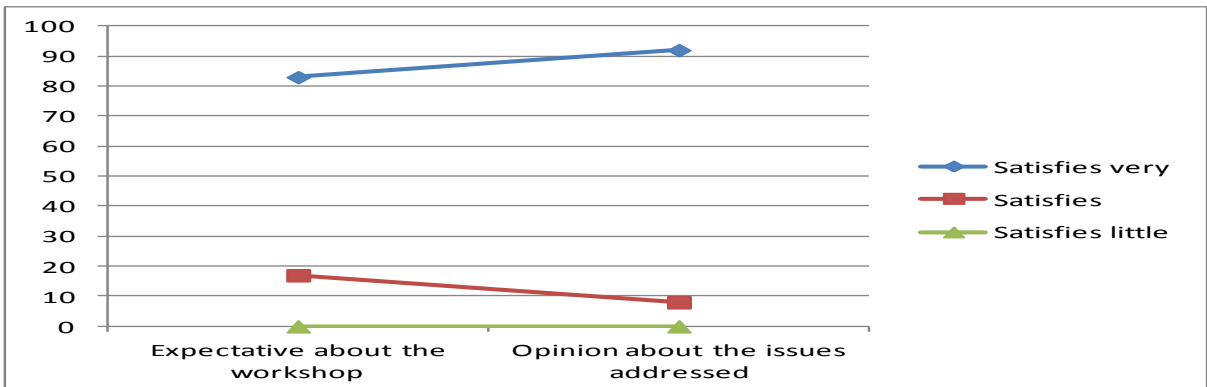


Figure 15: Opinions about the session in Seia “communicate through the art” (%)

These results may be influenced by the composition and dimension of the target group. Anyway the opinions are very good. This session was two parts. The results presented before are for the first part, but the opinions for the second part are very similar.

The second session was about the *Empowerment of self*, was for everyone and were collected the opinions of 12 persons:

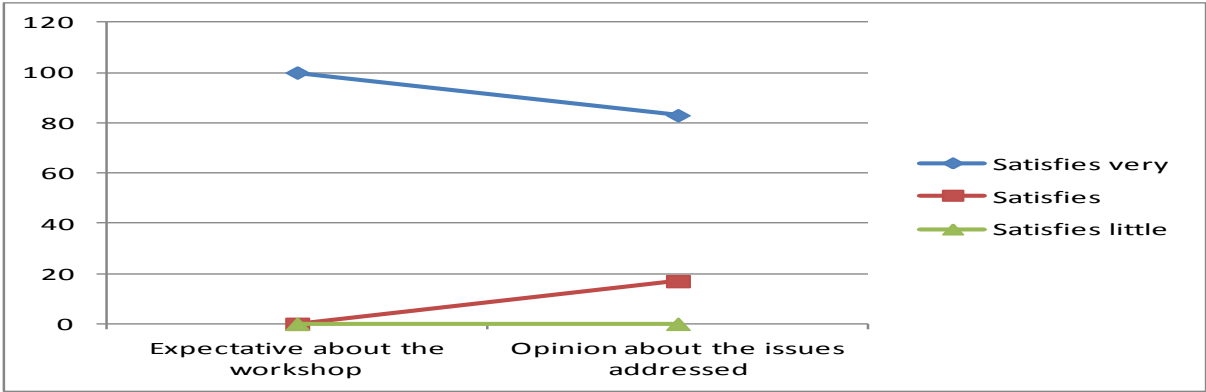


Figure 15: Opinions about the session in Seia “empowerment of self” (%)

Maybe, again, the results are influenced by the dimension of the answers, anyway, again, the opinions are very good.

**3. Conclusions**

The empowerment of the disadvantaged groups in society, namely of the women, is not an easy process, because is influenced by several factors specifically by cultural, spatial, social, familiar, professional, economic, etc.

The cultural factors influence the women empowerment, because sometimes is accepted that the women have a subordinate role in many decisions. These contexts, in general, only change after new generations.

Sometimes the spatial factors are determinant for women positions. It was verified in this work that the women had different opinions about these issues in different municipalities, namely in terms of expectations about the women empowerment.

It was observed, also, which the women opinions changed with the social position, namely was demonstrated that the students from the secondary school had different views about these subjects of the women with weak schooling and adult.

In certain cases, the weak empowerment of the women is visible in trivial situations, as those related with the familiar decisions. These contexts are not readily changeable, because sometimes have generations with these environments.

Finally, it is known that the women have some difficulties to access to top professional occupations, and are in certain cases economically dependent. The economic dependence prevents the women to participate in the decision processes.

It is important to continue with initiatives like that referred in this work, because there is a long way to go in the rural women empowerment in Portugal. When it is seen the adult women with weak expectations about the empowering, is a strong sign of accommodation to the situations and to the contexts, because the problems exist and real, as it can be verified in the Portuguese statistics, namely about the domestic violence.

The empowering processes are long and need some persistence to find some returns, but must be done to improve the society and the quality of life. Because, the low empowerment, in the rural zones, is not only a personal or familiar problem, but is, also, a problem of the society. These problems have effects in the institutions, in the companies, in the schools, etc. This will compromise the future generations.

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