



Arts-Based Socio-Educational Intervention in Residential Settings: A Grounded Theory Study with Unaccompanied Migrant Children Using Graphic Narratives

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Abstract

Unaccompanied migrant children in residential settings face complex psychosocial challenges stemming from structural instability, linguistic diversity, and fragmented migration trajectories. Within this framework, it is necessary to develop applied interventions that promote emotional expression, social inclusion, and identity reconstruction. This study analyzes a socio-educational intervention program based on *arts-based* methodologies and graphic narratives, implemented in reception centers in Spain. The study adopts a multi-method qualitative design, grounded in constructivist grounded theory, integrating visual productions, semi-structured interviews, and observational records. The analysis identifies key processes through which artistic mediation operates in these contexts, including adaptive engagement under conditions of instability, emotional articulation through visual resources, the symbolic reconstruction of migration trajectories, and the emergence of forms of situated agency that lead to collective recognition. The findings highlight the role of *arts-based* methodologies as relational and process-oriented tools within protection systems, transcending their merely expressive function. The study proposes a theoretical model that integrates structural conditions, mediation processes, and psychosocial outcomes, offering relevant implications for the design, implementation, and evaluation of socio-educational programs.

Keywords Unaccompanied migrant children · Arts-based intervention · Graphic narratives · Residential care · Psychosocial well-being · Social inclusion

Introduction

The increasing presence of unaccompanied migrant children in protection systems has placed this group at the center of debates on socio-educational intervention and child well-being. Their migration trajectories are characterized by processes of rupture, uncertainty, and administrative precariousness that directly impact their psychosocial well-being, the construction of their identity, and their prospects for inclusion in host contexts (Tangelder et al., 2025; Santinho & Krysanova, 2024; Bernard & Perales, 2022). In this context, child and youth care systems face the challenge of developing interventions that go beyond welfare-based approaches and address the emotional, relational, and educational dimensions of these processes in an integrated manner (Mijić & Parzer, 2022; Pérez-Caramés, 2025; Mata-Codesal & Otazu, 2025). Following the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, we use ‘children’ to refer to all persons under 18; the term ‘minors’ is retained only when

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referring to the legal-administrative category used within the Spanish protection system.

In this context, arts-based methodologies have gained increasing relevance as intervention strategies aimed at fostering emotional expression, processing migration experiences, and developing resilience resources (Heinonen et al., 2018; Huss & Bos, 2022). Various studies have shown that artistic practices, especially those of a participatory and visual nature, create safe spaces where children can externalize difficult experiences, process traumatic situations, and construct alternative forms of expression (Oepen & Gruber, 2024; Fragonas & Sudres, 2023; Meyer DeMott et al., 2017). In particular, the use of graphic narratives helps overcome the limitations of verbal language in contexts of linguistic diversity, facilitating processes of symbolic communication and emotional expression (Bagnoli, 2009; Moralli, 2024; Kamm & Meyer, 2024).

Beyond their expressive dimension, these methodologies contribute to identity construction and the development of a sense of belonging by allowing participants to reinterpret their migration trajectories and generate their own narratives through interaction with others. In this sense, artistic practices act as mediating devices that enable the reframing of experience and the articulation of personal and collective narratives (Uribe Bardon et al., 2022; Jekli, 2025; Kourti & Pesli, 2021). Likewise, their participatory nature fosters relational dynamics based on co-creation, mutual recognition, and the shared construction of meaning, fundamental elements in processes of social inclusion (Shahrokh & Treves, 2020; Jeffery et al., 2019; Khorana, 2022). From a relational wellbeing perspective, creative and collaborative practices such as shared drawing have been shown to support young refugees' integration by strengthening the relationships through which safety, belonging, and hope are co-constructed (Kohli et al., 2023).

From a methodological perspective, visual and narrative approaches have expanded the possibilities for research and intervention in migration contexts by providing access to experiential dimensions that cannot be captured through exclusively verbal methods. Techniques such as drawing, collage, or graphic narrative facilitate processes of memory, symbolization, and reconstruction of experience, especially in contexts of vulnerability (Bagnoli, 2009; Moralli, 2024; O'Neill, 2025). These approaches are grounded in narrative conceptions of identity, which understand the migration experience as a process of meaning-making over time (Nunn, 2017; Golovina, 2025; Iannone & Murdock, 2025).

However, despite the development of this field, the literature shows limited integration of these methodologies into institutional contexts of child protection. Most studies have been conducted in specific educational or therapeutic settings, often as one-off initiatives, with little integration into

structured programs within service systems. Furthermore, there is less attention paid to the design, implementation, and evaluation processes of these interventions in real-world care settings, as well as to their impact on key dimensions for services, such as psychosocial well-being, inclusion, or the development of agency (Moralli, 2024; Mijić & Parzer, 2022; O'Neill, 2025).

In this regard, it is necessary to move toward approaches that analyze arts-based practices as intervention tools integrated into care systems. This need is particularly relevant in residential settings, where interventions take place under conditions of instability, cultural diversity, and institutional complexity (Jeffery et al., 2019; Khorana, 2022; Shahrokh & Treves, 2020).

In response to this context, the present study focuses on the analysis of a socio-educational intervention program based on artistic mediation and graphic narratives, implemented in reception centers for unaccompanied migrant children. This program is approached as an intervention tool within the youth protection and welfare system, aimed at fostering emotional expression, the narrative reconstruction of the migration experience, and the development of processes of inclusion and agency.

The research question guiding the study is: How can an arts-based intervention program, grounded in graphic narratives, be designed, implemented, and evaluated within protection and reception services for migrant children, and what are its effects on their psychosocial well-being, expression, and sense of inclusion?

Materials and Methods

Study Design

The methodological design adopts a multi-method qualitative approach, aimed at analyzing the processes and effects of a socio-educational intervention based on artistic practices in reception contexts for migrant children. This type of approach responds to the growing recognition of the potential of arts-based and participatory methods to explore complex dimensions of the migration experience, especially in relation to identity, belonging, and social inclusion (Moralli, 2024; O'Neill, 2025; Jeffery et al., 2019).

The study is framed within an interpretive perspective that combines visual, narrative, and observational techniques, allowing access to the meanings constructed by participants through multiple expressive languages. In this sense, visual methodologies expand traditional qualitative research formats by facilitating the expression of experiences that cannot always be articulated through verbal language (Bagnoli, 2009; Moralli, 2024).

Likewise, the adopted approach fosters the construction of situated narratives that articulate the emotional, identity-related, and biographical dimensions of the migration experience. The combination of visual and narrative languages allows for a deeper exploration of processes of agency, self-representation, and meaning-making in contexts of vulnerability (Kamm & Meyer, 2024; Shahrokh & Treves, 2020; Escaño et al., 2021).

This approach is grounded in the tradition of constructivist grounded theory, which directs the analytical process toward the inductive generation of categories from the data and the understanding of the meanings constructed by participants within their specific contexts (Charmaz, 2021). From this perspective, the design iteratively integrates data production and analysis, allowing for the capture of the complexity of processes of expression, narrative reconstruction, and socio-educational integration.

Finally, the articulation between artistic practices and personal narratives creates a space for the co-construction of knowledge in which participants not only describe their experience but also reinterpret and redefine it through multiple languages. This approach aligns with contemporary arts-based methodologies, which view artistic production as a means to challenge dominant narratives about migration and generate situated knowledge grounded in the subjects' own experiences (Moralli, 2024; Jeffery et al., 2019). At the same time, this type of approach fosters processes of expression, emotional processing, and meaning-making

that are relevant in the context of socio-educational interventions with migrant children.

Consistent with constructivist grounded theory, the study did not depart from a predefined theoretical model; rather, a set of sensitizing concepts (artistic mediation, participatory methodologies, and the educational and therapeutic dimensions of arts-based practice) oriented the initial design and the researchers' theoretical sensitivity (Charmaz, 2021). Figure 1 summarizes these sensitizing concepts as a heuristic device; the theoretical model of the study emerged inductively from the data and is presented in the Results and Discussion.

Context and Participants

In the Spanish child protection system, reception centers (*centros de acogida*) are residential facilities in which the regional public administration exercises legal guardianship over children deprived of family care, including unaccompanied migrant children. They provide accommodation, board, schooling, healthcare access, and socio-educational support, normally operating as a transitional resource between arrival, or emergency first reception, and more stable arrangements such as supported emancipation. Their transitional character, in which children live while their administrative situation, schooling, and life projects are being defined, makes them a particularly relevant setting for socio-educational intervention.

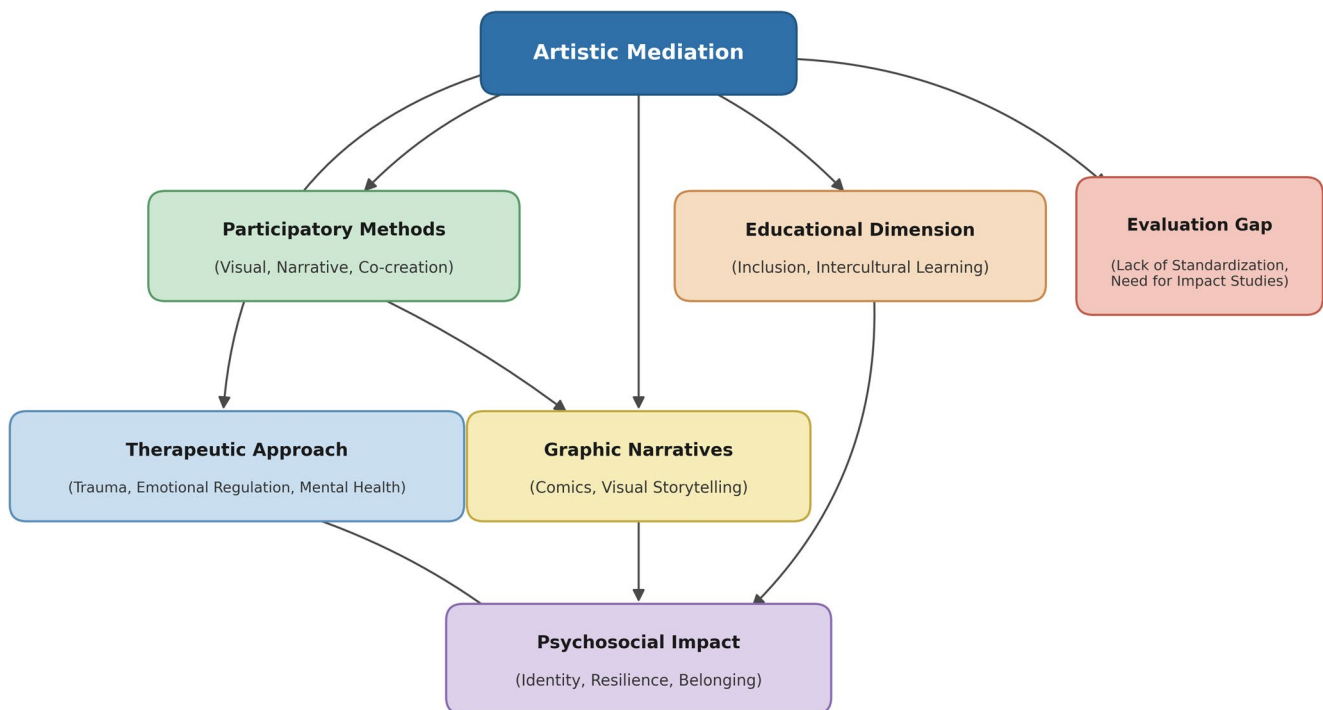


Fig. 1 Sensitizing concepts guiding the study design: artistic mediation in migration contexts. *Note.* Own elaboration

The study was conducted in reception and protection centers for unaccompanied migrant children located in the Community of Madrid (Spain), managed by third-sector organizations in collaboration with the public protection system. These residential facilities house adolescents in an irregular administrative situation who are at different stages of the migration and integration process, offering socio-educational support, psychosocial accompaniment, and guidance toward educational and labor market integration.

The intervention context is characterized by high levels of socio-emotional and organizational complexity, stemming from factors such as administrative instability, uncertainty about the future, economic pressure on families, and frequent turnover among residents. These conditions result in dynamics marked by inconsistent participation, variable attendance, and the occurrence of unforeseen situations that affect the conduct of activities. Furthermore, there is notable linguistic heterogeneity (Wolof, Bambara, Dariya, among others), which reinforces the need to employ methodologies that are not exclusively verbal.

The sample consisted of 53 male migrant children, aged between 14 and 18. The participants are mainly from countries in West Africa and the Maghreb/Sahel, with Mali (30.19%) and Morocco (30.19%) standing out as the main countries of origin, followed by Senegal (18.87%), Mauritania (18.87%), and Guinea (1.89%). This distribution reflects diverse migration profiles, with trajectories marked by experiences of prolonged displacement, irregular transit, and conditions of structural vulnerability.

Participants exhibited widely varying levels of Spanish proficiency, as well as differing degrees of access to institutional and community support networks. At the start of the program, three broad profiles could be distinguished: recently arrived children with little or no Spanish, who communicated mainly in Wolof, Bambara, or Dariya, with French or Modern Standard Arabic sometimes serving as bridge languages; children with basic conversational Spanish acquired during transit or in previous placements; and a smaller group with functional Spanish, who often acted as informal interpreters for their peers. These differences shaped the program in concrete ways: instructions were delivered visually and modeled with examples; interpreters and peer translation were used systematically; verbal sharing was always optional; and interviews were recorded through expanded field notes rather than verbatim transcription. Language proficiency also conditioned participation in the public dissemination of the works, with children with less Spanish tending to participate through their visual pieces rather than through oral presentation. In this regard, the use of artistic methodologies and visual narratives is justified as an inclusive strategy that facilitates communication, reduces expressive barriers, and promotes the active

participation of children; the implications of this heterogeneity are further addressed in Sects. 4 and 5.

Access to participants was achieved through collaboration with center staff (social educators, integration specialists, interpreters, and technical staff), who acted as institutional mediators and facilitated the program's implementation. Participation was voluntary and flexible, adapting to the children's availability and individual circumstances at any given time, which explains the variability in session attendance.

Taken together, the context and characteristics of the sample create an intervention setting marked by vulnerability, cultural diversity, and discontinuity, elements that not only shape the program's development but also constitute a central dimension for understanding its effects and viability within the framework of child and youth protection systems for migrants (de Smet et al., 2024; Hamouda et al., 2024; Papathanasiou et al., 2025).

Procedure and Intervention

The study is structured around the design and implementation of a pedagogical approach based on participatory artistic methodologies, aimed at facilitating the expression of migration experiences in contexts of linguistic diversity and emotional vulnerability. This approach falls within the framework of arts-based and visual methodologies, which enable the co-construction of knowledge and access to experiential dimensions that are difficult to address through exclusively verbal languages (Moralli, 2024; Oepen & Gruber, 2024). Furthermore, these methodologies have demonstrated their ability to facilitate processes of expression, emotional regulation, and narrative construction without necessarily requiring explicit verbalization (de Smet et al., 2024; Hamouda et al., 2024; Espiñeira, 2025).

The program was carried out between October 2024 and May 2025 through a workshop series structured as progressive group sessions, combining artistic production, collective reflection, and narrative construction. Activities included the creation of visual and performative artifacts, drawings, maps, performances, photographs, and audiovisual compositions, aimed at exploring the migration experience through multiple expressive languages.

From a methodological standpoint, the program was organized around three interrelated micro-phases, exploration, narration, and re-signification, which did not operate linearly but rather as a dynamic continuum adapted to the group's conditions. This structure aligns with constructivist qualitative approaches that prioritize the situated construction of meaning and the flexibility of the research process (Charmaz, 2021).

As shown in Fig. 2, each microphase articulates specific objectives, types of activities, and learning processes that enable a transition from initial expression to narrative elaboration and the reframing of the migration experience. In the exploration phase, self-identification is promoted through accessible visual resources; in the narration phase, personal and collective narratives are developed through graphic and performative languages; and in the resignification phase, these experiences are integrated into processes of projection, agency, and collective recognition.

The figure illustrates the sequential and relational organization of the program, including associated activities (e.g., symbolic self-portrait, timeline, group performance, collective composition) and their corresponding learning processes (identity exploration, narrative elaboration, and meaning-making). The model reflects a flexible and non-linear intervention design adapted to the conditions of migrant children in residential care contexts.

From a methodological standpoint, the procedure was based on a logic of situated intervention, in which the program's development was adapted to the participants' emotional, social, and institutional conditions. This type of approach aligns with contemporary arts-based methodologies, which emphasize the need to adapt intervention strategies to complex and dynamic contexts (Huss & Bos, 2022; Moralli, 2024; Oepen & Gruber, 2024). This involved adapting the pace of work, reformulating instructions, and addressing unforeseen situations that arose during the sessions. This flexible nature is part of a process-oriented conception of qualitative research (Charmaz, 2021).

The role of the professionals involved, an artist-teacher and a social educator, was fundamental to sustaining the mediation process. Both acted as facilitators, creating a safe space for expression, supporting the creative processes, and encouraging participation from a relational perspective. As Jeffery et al. (2019) point out, this type of intervention requires mediators capable of sustaining spaces of trust, symbolic negotiation, and the co-construction of meaning in contexts marked by vulnerability.

The construction of these bonds of trust was deliberate and progressive rather than assumed. Access was mediated by center staff, social educators, integration specialists, and interpreters, who were already reference figures for the children and who introduced the team and the program, framing the workshops as voluntary spaces without evaluation or administrative consequences. During the sessions, trust was sustained through a set of stable relational practices: recognizable routines of opening and closing; shared rules that distributed authorship and protected each participant (taking turns to choose the music that accompanied the work, continuing the collective trace where the previous participant had ended); the continuity of the same two facilitators throughout the program; the explicit principle that no one was obliged to speak, to draw about their own life, or to show their work; and the systematic mediation of interpreters and peer translation. Given the turnover of residents and the discontinuity of attendance, trust could not be built as a linear accumulation within a stable group; it had to be re-established at each session through these recognizable routines, the constancy of the facilitators, and the visible permanence of the works displayed in the space, which

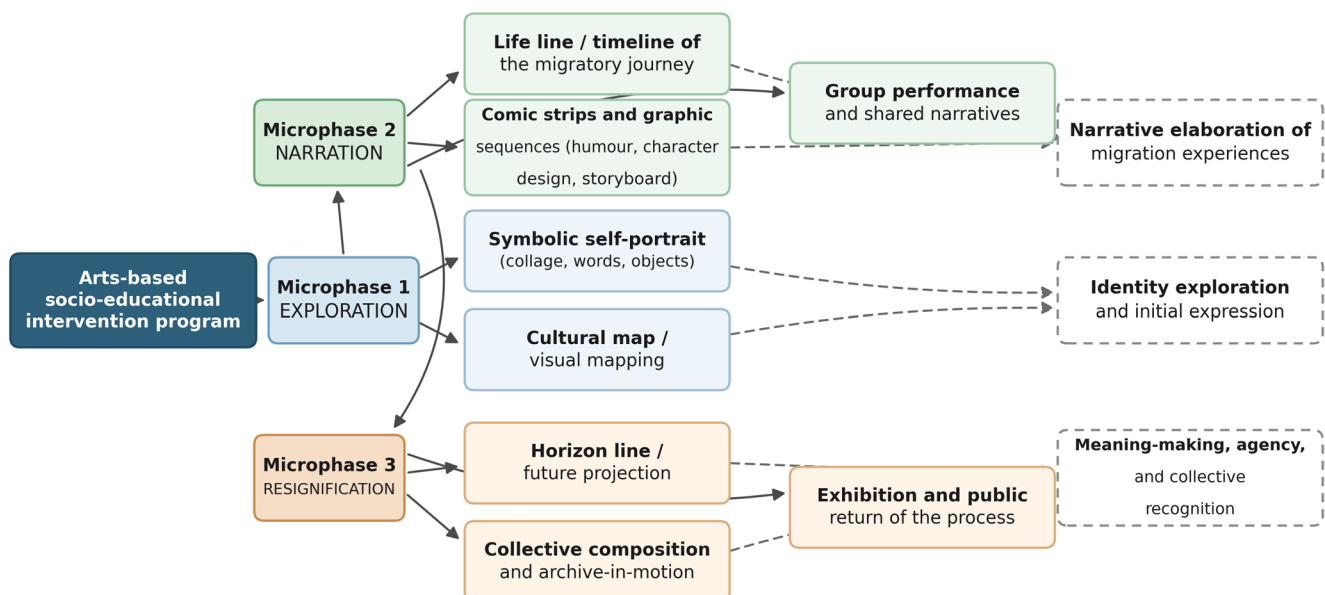


Fig. 2 Arts-based socio-educational intervention model structured in three microphases (exploration, narration, and resignification). *Note.* Own elaboration

functioned as anchors of relational continuity for both returning and newly arrived participants. This support facilitated the emergence of personal narratives and promoted dynamics of collaboration and mutual recognition within the group, shaping the initiative as a space for the collective production of meaning. The tension between instability and trust is examined analytically in Sect. 3.1.

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Data collection was structured through a combination of three main instruments, designed to generate a multimodal corpus composed of visual, narrative, and observational materials.

First, the visual works created by the participants during the program were collected. This corpus included symbolic self-portraits, cultural maps, graphic stories, lifelines, and collective compositions. All productions were documented, digitized, and systematically archived for subsequent analysis. These pieces were treated as units of primary information, taking into account both their formal elements (composition, symbols, sequences) and the associated meanings expressed by the participants during their creation (Bagnoli, 2009; Moralli, 2024). This type of material provides access to experiential and emotional content that is difficult to verbalize in contexts of linguistic diversity (Escaño et al., 2021; Kamm & Meyer, 2024).

Each type of production was elicited through simple, visually supported instructions, presented orally in plain Spanish, modeled with examples by the artist-teacher, and reinforced by interpreters and peer translation. In the initial sessions, participants were invited to introduce themselves ‘with lines and words,’ composing symbolic self-portraits from cut-out words, images, colors, and traced silhouettes, in some cases outlined with the help of a peer, without any requirement to produce a realistic likeness or to write their name. For the graphic stories, participants were asked to tell a story, their own or an imagined character’s, in three or four sequenced scenes (storyboard format), which allowed emotionally charged content to be approached indirectly. The lifelines and collective journey drawings followed a continuous-line rule: each participant traced a fragment of the journey and the next continued where the previous one had ended, with music chosen by the participants in turns guiding the rhythm of the trace. For the intervened maps, the instruction was to mark places where something important had happened to them using a symbol, pictogram, or script of their own choosing, with explicit permission to keep the meaning private and no requirement to name or verbalize the place. In all cases, it was emphasized that there were no right or wrong ways to draw, that participation in any given

activity was voluntary, and that each author decided what to share, with whom, and how.

Second, individual interviews were conducted with the 53 participants using an ad hoc psychographic questionnaire. The interviews were semi-structured and aimed at gathering information on migration trajectories, expectations, emotions, coping strategies, and perceptions of the host context. The interviews were recorded using expanded field notes, due to linguistic and contextual limitations, and subsequently organized as narrative units for analysis. The use of this instrument allowed for the contextualization of the visual productions and the establishment of relationships between verbal discourses and graphic representations (Shahrokh & Treves, 2020; Jeffery et al., 2019).

Third, a field journal was maintained throughout all program sessions. This instrument included systematic records of group dynamics, levels of participation, interactions among participants, and emerging situations relevant to the intervention’s development. Entries were made continuously and expanded upon after each session, incorporating detailed descriptions and preliminary analytical reflections. The field journal allowed us to contextualize the data produced and capture the relational and situated dimension of the observed processes (Ní Laoire, 2016).

The three data sources, visual productions, interviews, and observational records, were organized into an integrated analysis system, which enabled the establishment of a process of methodological triangulation. This procedure facilitated comparison among different types of materials and helped reinforce the study’s consistency and credibility (Mijić & Parzer, 2022; Moralli, 2024).

Taken together, the data collection system was configured as an operational framework geared toward the generation and organization of multimodal information, enabling a coordinated analysis of the visual, narrative, and contextual dimensions of the migration experience within the context of the intervention.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted following the principles of constructivist grounded theory, understood as an inductive and interpretive approach aimed at generating analytical categories from the data and understanding the meanings constructed by participants in specific contexts (Charmaz, 2021).

The analytical process was conducted in an iterative and comparative manner, integrating the various sources of information, visual productions, psychographic interviews, and observational records, into a single interpretive framework. This approach allowed us to address the complexity of migration experiences from a multimodal perspective, in

which visual and narrative data are analyzed in a complementary manner (Moralli, 2024; O'Neill, 2025). The process was supported by ATLAS.ti software (version 23), which facilitated the organization, coding, and systematic retrieval of data from the various sources.

In the first phase, an initial open coding was conducted to identify emerging units of meaning in the various materials. This phase included both the analysis of verbal discourse and the interpretation of visual elements, symbols, compositions, and graphic metaphors, following approaches characteristic of arts-based and visual methodologies (Bagnoli, 2009; Moralli, 2024).

Subsequently, an axial coding was carried out, in which relationships were established between the emerging categories, grouping them into broader analytical dimensions linked to the migration experience, emotional expression, identity construction, and integration processes. This process allowed for progress toward a more structured organization of the corpus, while maintaining sensitivity to situated meanings (Charmaz, 2021).

In a third phase, selective coding was developed, aimed at integrating the categories into central interpretive axes that structure the study's results. This process was supported by constant comparison across cases, techniques, and materials, allowing for the identification of recurring patterns, divergences, and processes of transformation throughout the intervention.

The integration of visual, narrative, and observational data was carried out through a process of analytical triangulation, which allowed for the comparison of different sources and reinforced the interpretive consistency of the study (Mijić & Parzer, 2022; Moralli, 2024). In this sense, the artistic productions were considered forms of knowledge in themselves, capable of revealing experiential, affective, and symbolic dimensions of migration (Bagnoli, 2009; Kamm & Meyer, 2024).

The analytical process was documented through the systematic creation of analytical memos in ATLAS.ti, in which interpretive decisions, emerging relationships between categories, and reflections by the research team throughout the process were recorded. This procedure ensured the traceability of the analysis and established an audit trail that accounts for the evolution of the categorical system.

Likewise, internal validation strategies were incorporated through cross-checking of codes and categories among the researchers, as well as constant comparison between the different data sources. This process helped reinforce the interpretive coherence and credibility of the analysis.

Finally, the analysis incorporated a reflexive dimension, acknowledging the research team's role in interpreting the data and constructing knowledge, in line with participatory

and situated approaches in research with migrant populations (Jeffery et al., 2019; O'Neill, 2025).

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted from a critical and reflective ethical perspective, acknowledging the situated nature of knowledge and the research team's responsibility in intervention contexts involving vulnerable populations. The research was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Valladolid (PI 23–3402 NO HCUV, November 2023), ensuring compliance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki.

Given that the research involved unaccompanied migrant children, specific protective measures were adopted. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained through the institutions responsible for their guardianship, ensuring the right to withdraw at any time. Likewise, confidentiality was guaranteed through the anonymization of data. Visual materials reproduced in this article were reviewed to remove identifying information prior to publication; where works included participants' names, these were blurred. The display of works within the center and their reproduction for research purposes were covered by the informed consent obtained through the guardianship institutions.

The study design prioritized a safe, non-intrusive, and culturally sensitive environment. In this regard, the use of artistic methodologies allowed for addressing potentially sensitive content indirectly, respecting the participants' pace and boundaries (Moralli, 2024; Khorana, 2022). This approach was complemented by a relational ethics perspective, based on building bonds of trust, care, and mutual recognition (Jeffery et al., 2019; Shahrokh & Treves, 2020).

Likewise, arts-based practices served as a protective strategy by facilitating non-directive forms of expression that reduce the pressure to verbalize sensitive experiences and allow participants to decide what to share and how to do so (Moralli, 2024; de Smet et al., 2024).

Results

Throughout the Results, verbatim quotations are identified with alphanumeric codes to preserve participants' confidentiality. PM_PRC1_nn and PM_PRC2_nn refer to male participants from Protection and Reception Centers 1 and 2, respectively. In Sect. 3.5, where the analysis addresses the collective rearticulation of trajectories, quotations are identified by country of origin (P-MALI, P-SEN, P-MAUR, followed by the participant number). AD refers to the artist-teacher and E to the social educator, whose reflections are drawn from the field journal.

Adaptive Engagement in Conditions of Instability: Viability as a Processual Achievement

The analysis identified the category of adaptive engagement under conditions of instability as the explanatory framework for the program's viability in residential protection settings. Far from depending on structural continuity, the implementation of the arts-based approach emerged as a process-oriented and situated achievement, conditioned by the fluctuating availability of participants, institutional dynamics, and the socio-emotional conditions of the context.

This category was constructed through the triangulation of field diary entries, participant narratives, and research team observations, consistently demonstrating that instability constitutes a structural condition of the intervention context. The data document high linguistic diversity ("Wolof, Bambara, Dariya"), irregular attendance patterns, and a significant emotional burden associated with uncertainty and frustration. Within this framework, the use of visual and artistic methodologies served as a mediation strategy that reduced dependence on verbal language and facilitated participation, as the artist-teacher notes: "verbal language will be just one of the tools, not the main one" (AD).

Significantly, the program's viability did not rest on fidelity to the initial design, conceived as a six-month progressive sequence, but on its capacity to adapt to discontinuity as a structural condition rather than an exception. The field journal records canceled sessions, fluctuations in the group's composition, and uneven levels of engagement, leading to a key analytical reformulation: the intervention "is embedded in real life, not in a laboratory" (AD). This situation required a constant recalibration of activities based on the participants' "emotional and material availability," shifting the focus from planning toward a logic of relational and situated response.

The young people's narratives reinforce this interpretation by situating their participation within the framework of trajectories marked by language barriers, institutional vulnerability, and complex adaptation processes. Expressions such as "it was a little difficult because I didn't know the language" (PM_PRC1_07) or "the hardest part is learning and understanding the language" (PM_PRC2_03) show that involvement in the program cannot be understood apart from these processes. In some cases, experiences of particularly harsh institutional conditions, "I spent two and a half years in prison... it's a complicated situation" (PM_PRC1_02), highlight the fragility of the conditions under which participation takes place.

In this context, pedagogical practice evolved toward what can be conceptualized as a flexible structure, in which continuity ceases to be a given and becomes a negotiated process. The artist-teacher points out the need to "let go"

of the expectation of stability, "inconsistency is the norm" (AD), and to prioritize the construction of a safe space for relationships over strict adherence to the plan. In this way, the participants' commitment takes shape as contingent, emergent, and relational, rather than linear and predictable.

In this context, trust operated less as a precondition than as a processual achievement, renewed session by session. The field journal documents episodes in which external disruptions, such as the relocation of residents to different facilities after an incident in one of the flats, abruptly dissolved bonds that the group had begun to build, requiring the relational fabric of the workshop to be rewoven around its stable elements: the recognizable routines, the facilitators' constancy, and the visible permanence of the works in the shared space. Trust, in this sense, was not accumulated but continually re-enacted, which allowed newly arrived or intermittent participants to join a space that was already recognizable and safe.

As shown in Fig. 3, the progressive display of visual works in the residential space provides material evidence of this process. The self-portraits, handprints, and collages not only document the activity carried out but also indicate a gradual appropriation of the environment and the consolidation of a shared expressive space. From an analytical perspective, these artifacts function as material anchors of continuity, allowing the intervention process to be sustained symbolically and relationally even in contexts of discontinuous participation.

Taken together, this category highlights that, in contexts marked by institutional instability and biographical uncertainty, the viability of socio-educational interventions based on artistic methodologies depends less on programmatic regularity than on their capacity to operate as adaptive, relational, and materially sustained processes of engagement.

Visual Mediation as Emotional Articulation: from Expressive Fragmentation to Symbolic Narrativization

The analysis identified visual mediation as emotional articulation as a second central category, closely linked to the adaptive engagement described previously. In contexts characterized by linguistic diversity and emotional vulnerability, graphic narratives emerged as a mediating mechanism that enables the externalization of experiences that are difficult to verbalize, transforming expressive fragmentation into shareable narrative forms.

This category was constructed through the triangulation of visual productions, participants' accounts, and field notes, which consistently demonstrate the role of the image as a device for emotional translation. As the artist-teacher points out, communication in the workshop relied on visual



Fig. 3 Graphic works created during the first workshop sessions (self-portraits, handprints, and collages) displayed in the residential space. *Note.* The image illustrates the progressive appropriation of the envi-

ronment and the diversity of visual languages mobilized by the participants. Identifying information appearing in the displayed works has been blurred Own elaboration

strategies, “I explain the concepts to them in a very visual way. The interpreters help me”, that allowed for sustained participation in a context of linguistic heterogeneity. In this sense, graphic mediation operated not only as an expressive resource, but as an alternative communicative infrastructure that reduced direct exposure and expanded the possibilities for symbolic elaboration.

A key element in this category is the shift toward indirect forms of expression. Activities that introduced narrative mediations, such as “speaking from the character’s perspective”, facilitated the emergence of emotional content that had remained blocked in direct formats. In this process, drawing and imagery served as a form of symbolic distancing, allowing participants to “speak without fully exposing themselves” and to transform intense experiences into manageable representations.

The young people’s narratives reinforce this interpretation by showing a recurring use of shared visual metaphors to represent the migration experience. Expressions such as “a group of shadows walking silently under the moon” (PM_PRC1_08), “a small boat in the darkness, with terrified faces” (PM_PRC2_04), or “a storm in the desert” (PM_PRC2_11) demonstrate the construction of a common symbolic grammar in which fear, uncertainty, or hope are articulated through images of darkness, transit, and vulnerability. These representations not only make the experience

visible but also transform it into a narrative that can be shared within the group, fostering its collective recognition.

From an analytical perspective, this process involves a transition from fragmented or silenced forms of expression toward a symbolic narrativization of the experience, in which the emotional acquires structure, form, and communicability. As the field diary notes, “when they had to speak, many remained silent; but when they began to draw, stories emerged that they had not been able to tell before” (E), suggesting that visual production not only represents the experience but also brings it forth as a narrative.

In this sense, the image of the intervened space (see Fig. 3) acquires a specific analytical value. The footprints, cut-out hands, and displayed compositions should not be interpreted solely as products of the workshop, but as materializations of processes of emotional externalization in a collective and safe environment. These visual artifacts condense experiences that previously remained scattered or unspoken, functioning as supports for memory, expression, and shared recognition. In light of this, it is observed that this category demonstrates how visual mediation acts as a central mechanism of emotional articulation in contexts of vulnerability, enabling the transformation of silence, fragmentation, and overexposure into symbolic forms that make it possible to narrate, share, and process the migratory experience.

The Migratory Trajectory as a Process of Symbolic Reconstruction: Between Rupture, Memory, and Projection

The analysis allowed us to identify the migratory trajectory as a process of symbolic reconstruction, a unifying category that integrates and provides continuity to the dynamics described above. Rather than a one-time event, migration emerges as a longitudinal process of rupture, transition, and subjective reconfiguration, in which participants progressively construct the relationship between past, present, and future.

This category was constructed through the triangulation of narratives gathered from questionnaires, field diary entries, and visual productions, consistently showing that the migration experience is structured as a discontinuous yet narratively reconstructed sequence. The accounts situate the departure from the country of origin within conditions of structural precariousness, conflict, or the absence of a life horizon: “I didn’t see a future in my country” (PM_PRC1_33), as well as in family responsibility, “I came to Spain so my children could have an education and a future” (PM_PRC2_10), framing the point of departure as a necessary rupture yet one laden with emotional ambivalence.

From an analytical perspective, this initial rupture does not end at the moment of departure, but extends throughout the journey and is re-engraved in the host context. In this sense, trajectories do not appear as linear, but as fragmented, cumulative, and relationally reconfigured processes, in which experiences of loss, uncertainty, and displacement intertwine with strategies of adaptation and projection.

The role of visual methodologies is central to this process, as they enable the lived experience to be transformed into a narrable and symbolically organized sequence. The use of devices such as the timeline facilitates the articulation of scattered episodes into a comprehensible structure, while visual productions act as mediations that make visible the continuity between different biographical moments.

The participants’ visual productions provide analytical evidence of this process of symbolic reconstruction. Figure 4 shows two of the intervened maps produced during the narration phase, in which participants marked places where something significant had happened to them using symbols, pictograms, or scripts of their own choosing, with no requirement to name or verbalize them. Through these devices, scattered biographical episodes are anchored in space and articulated into a narrable sequence: the map operates simultaneously as memory (places lived and left behind), as transit (routes traced and interrupted), and as



Fig. 4 Intervened maps produced by participants: marking significant places through self-chosen symbols and languages. *Note.* Maps produced during the narration phase of the program. Participants marked places where something important had happened to them using sym-

bols, pictograms, or scripts of their own choosing, without any requirement to name or verbalize them. Identifying information, where present, has been removed. Own elaboration

projection (places imagined or desired). As a compositional device, the intervened map, like the timeline, transforms the migratory journey into a meaningful sequence connecting departure, transit, and the present, making visible both rupture and continuity.

This type of representation dialogues with the field diary entries, which highlight the high emotional burden associated with prior life trajectories and the need to create a safe space for processing them. Within this framework, the intervention not only facilitates the expression of experiences but also promotes their narrative reorganization, allowing participants to situate themselves within their own life trajectory from a reflective perspective.

In this way, migration is analytically configured as a process in which two seemingly contradictory yet interdependent dynamics coexist: on the one hand, the grief associated with loss (family, language, stability); on the other, the projection toward the future (education, work, autonomy). This tension is not resolved but remains a structuring axis of the experience, giving rise to situated forms of agency expressed in actions such as learning the language, rebuilding bonds, or imagining new life horizons.

Taken together, this category shows that migratory trajectories must be understood not as physical displacements, but as processes of symbolic reconstruction in which experience is rearticulated through the interaction between memory, emotion, and projection. In this sense, arts-based methodologies not only allow for the representation of the trajectory, but actively contribute to producing it as a narrative, connecting scattered fragments into a coherent and shareable story.

Agency Under Structural Constraint: Reception as a Field of Tension Between Limitation and Projection

The analysis identified situated agency under structural constraint as a key category for understanding the reception experience and the possibilities for life reconstruction in the context of arrival. In continuity with the previous categories, reception does not emerge as a stabilized phase of the migration process, but rather as a field of tension in which restrictive structural conditions and active dynamics of future projection coexist.

This category was constructed through the triangulation of participants' narratives, materials derived from journey mapping, and field diary entries, consistently showing that integration is conceived as a situated practice of autonomy, linked to concrete dimensions such as language learning, access to employment, administrative regularization, and the possibility of sustaining a life project. Expressions such as "learn Spanish well, get a job, and get my papers" (PM_PRC2_11), "I want to integrate, live well

with my children, and study" (PM_PRC2_04), or "I would like to have my own home and be able to be independent" (PM_PRC1_14) demonstrate that the horizon of integration revolves around pragmatic and relational goals rather than abstract formulations.

However, these horizons are shaped within a context marked by persistent structural limitations. Administrative irregularity emerges as a central axis that shapes trajectories, succinctly summarized in the expression "No papers, no work" (PM_PRC2_07). Other testimonies reinforce this relationship between structure and biographical blockage: "In Spain, I can't work without papers; it's very difficult" (PM_PRC2_15), demonstrating how institutional conditions delimit the participants' scope of action.

From an analytical perspective, these limitations do not nullify agency, but rather reconfigure it into situated forms of persistence, learning, and future orientation. Agency is not expressed here as an autonomous capacity detached from context, but as a practice that emerges in interaction with structural constraints, generating adaptation strategies that allow for sustaining life projects under adverse conditions.

The field diary reinforces this interpretation by noting that many young people arrive "burdened with the future" and that the workshop space had to be sustained as a place where "the story can breathe" (AD). In this sense, artistic mediation acts as a mechanism that allows material and emotional aspirations to be transformed into elaborate narratives, facilitating their articulation and sharing in a collective setting. Especially in contexts of discouragement, the persistence of future-oriented discourses, "they keep talking about working, studying, learning the language" (E), indicates that projection constitutes a structuring dimension of the reception experience.

In continuity with the previous category, this process can be understood as an extension of the symbolic reconstruction of the migratory trajectory, now situated in the context of arrival. The reception experience does not replace the prior trajectory, but rather reconfigures it, incorporating new tensions between limitation and possibility.

In light of these results, it is observed that this category demonstrates how the reception experience must be understood as a dynamic process in which agency is shaped by constant tension with structural conditions, giving rise to situated forms of action that allow for the maintenance of life projections even in contexts of restriction.

Collective Recognition and Public Outreach: from Individual Narratives to the Construction of Shared Knowledge

The analysis identified the production of collective recognition through artistic mediation as an integrative category

that articulates and concludes the analyzed process. In this phase, individual narratives transcend the intimate space of the workshop to take shape as forms of situated knowledge that are inscribed in the collective and public sphere.

This category was constructed through the triangulation of testimonies, collective productions, and field diary entries, demonstrating that the artistic intervention not only facilitates individual expression but also promotes a process of relational rearticulation of the migratory experience. The initially fragmented experiences, marked by loss, risk, and uncertainty (“I had to leave my family behind” [P-MALI-01]; “we suffered from hunger, thirst, and cold” [P-SEN-03]), find in the collective space a form of mutual recognition and shared legitimation.

From an analytical perspective, this process involves a shift from individual narration toward a collective configuration of meaning, in which trajectories cease to be isolated experiences and become integrated into a network of shared meanings. Collective mapping and group dynamics allow individual stories to be reframed as part of a structurally connected experience, as reflected in the testimony: “we supported one another even though we didn’t know each other” (P-MALI-05).

Figure 5 provides material evidence of this process. The participatory installation of red threads forms a physical

framework in which each individual trajectory is represented as part of an interconnected network. The installation was created by the participants during the resignification phase and activated in a public space within a service-learning framework, involving university students, faculty, and reception center staff, the adults who care for and accompany the children, which materialized the projection of their narratives beyond the residential setting. From an analytical perspective, this device not only visualizes the interdependence of experiences but also introduces a performative dimension in which participants inhabit, traverse, and symbolically negotiate their trajectories. The act of tightening, crossing, or holding the threads transforms the representation into an embodied experience, reinforcing the understanding of migration as a relational and dynamic process.

Likewise, the public projection of these narratives expands the scope of the project, shifting the process from the educational sphere to the social space. At this level, the artistic productions function as interventions that challenge simplified narratives about migration, highlighting its emotional and structural complexity. In contrast to homogeneous discourses, stories emerge that combine loss, resilience, and future aspirations: “I want to work to help my family” (P-MALI-06), “I feel proud of what I have achieved”



Fig. 5 Participatory installation of red threads representing connections and collective construction. *Note.* Participatory installation produced during the resignification phase of the program, within a service-learning framework. Each thread represents an individual migratory trajec-

tory as part of an interconnected network. The adults appearing in the image are university students, faculty members, and reception center staff who took part in the public activity; no program participants are identifiable in the image. Own elaboration

(P-MAUR-08), shaping a narrative that articulates vulnerability and agency.

In continuity with the previous categories, this process can be understood as the culmination of a dynamic in which artistic mediation allows a transition from fragmented expression (3.2) and the symbolic reconstruction of one's trajectory (3.3) toward forms of situated agency (3.4) that gain recognition in the collective space.

Taken together, this category highlights that artistic mediation not only facilitates individual expression or elaboration but also acts as a mechanism for producing collective recognition, in which migratory experiences are transformed into shared, socially visible, and politically significant knowledge.

Discussion

The results demonstrate that artistic mediation in reception contexts is not limited to functioning as an expressive tool, but operates as a situated socio-educational mechanism that articulates processes of participation, expression, narrative reconstruction, agency, and recognition under conditions of structural vulnerability. In this sense, the findings reinforce the potential of *arts-based* methodologies to address complex dimensions of the migration experience, as previous research has noted (Moralli, 2024; O'Neill, 2025; Jeffery et al., 2019), and make a specific contribution by demonstrating its function as an intervention integrated into protection systems, beyond its consideration as a one-off or experimental practice.

Taken as a whole, these findings respond directly to the research question guiding the study: the design proved viable when structured as an adaptive, relational process; implementation relied on visual mediation and deliberate trust-building; and evaluation was articulated through the integrated analysis of visual, narrative, and observational data. In doing so, the study provides knowledge applicable to the improvement of professional practices and the design of public policies in child protection.

Regarding the program's design and implementation, the analysis shows that the viability of interventions in reception contexts does not depend on structural stability, but rather on the capacity to adapt to instability as a constitutive condition of the context. This approach expands methodological frameworks for participatory research and intervention in migration (Mijić & Parzer, 2022; Mata-Codesal et al., 2020; Moralli, 2024), by demonstrating that discontinuity in participation, linguistic heterogeneity, and institutional uncertainty should not be understood as limitations, but rather as structural elements that require flexible, relational, and situated mechanisms. In this vein, the findings align with

approaches that conceptualize mobility as a phenomenon conditioned by unequal structural regimes (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013; Bernard & Perales, 2022; Mata-Codesal & Otazu, 2025), demonstrating that socio-educational programs must be designed based on a logic of continuous adaptation rather than linear implementation.

Regarding the program's effects, the analysis shows that visual mediation constitutes a central mechanism for emotional articulation in contexts of linguistic diversity and psychosocial vulnerability, confirming previous contributions on the role of visual methods in the expression of complex experiences (Bagnoli, 2009; Kamm & Meyer, 2024; Smets, 2024). However, the study makes a significant contribution by demonstrating that images not only facilitate expression but also act as a device for narrative construction, enabling the transformation of fragmented or silenced experiences into shareable symbolic narratives. This process is linked to narrative theories of identity (Nunn, 2017; Golovina, 2025; Iannone & Murdock, 2025) and with research on artistic practices in intervention contexts (Fragonas & Sudres, 2023; Oepen & Gruber, 2024), offering a more process-oriented understanding by demonstrating how graphic mediation operates as a transition between experience, symbolization, and communication.

Likewise, it is observed that migratory trajectories are not merely represented but are symbolically reconstructed through *arts-based* devices, allowing the experience to be integrated into a coherent narrative that articulates past, present, and future. This finding aligns with approaches that understand migration as a relational and multiscale process (Cresswell, 2010; Massey, 2005; Sheller & Urry, 2006), but makes a specific contribution by demonstrating the active role of artistic methodologies in the reorganization of experience. In this sense, visual and narrative practices not only document the migratory trajectory but also intervene in its construction as a narrative, fostering processes of emotional elaboration and meaning-making.

Regarding inclusion and well-being, the analysis shows that participants' agency does not disappear in contexts of structural restriction, but rather reconfigures itself as situated agency, oriented toward persistence, learning, and future planning. This finding qualifies approaches focused exclusively on vulnerability, consistent with studies on resilience and inclusion in migrant populations (Tangelder et al., 2025; Santinho & Krysanova, 2024; Papathanasiou et al., 2025), demonstrating that agency is constructed in interaction with structural conditions such as administrative irregularity or barriers to accessing resources (Hamouda et al., 2024; de Smet et al., 2024). In this context, artistic mediation acts as a mechanism that facilitates the articulation of expectations, aspirations, and life projects, contributing to psychosocial

well-being not only through emotional expression but also by constructing visions of the future.

Furthermore, the findings highlight that artistic mediation is not limited to the individual dimension but operates as a mechanism for producing collective recognition and public visibility of migration experiences. This process confirms research highlighting the role of artistic practices in the co-creation of meanings and the generation of dynamics of inclusion (Shahrokh & Treves, 2020; Jeffery et al., 2019; Khorana, 2022), and adds an additional dimension by demonstrating their capacity to transform individual narratives into socially shared and visible knowledge. In this sense, artistic productions function as mediating devices between the personal and the social, challenging simplified imaginaries about migration and contributing to the construction of more complex and situated narratives ([Author et al., 2026]; Domínguez et al., 2024).

Taken together, these results advance our understanding of *arts-based* methodologies as intervention tools integrated into care systems for migrant children and youth, reinforcing their potential to generate applied knowledge regarding the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs in real-world reception contexts (Moralli, 2024; Mijić & Parzer, 2022; O'Neill, 2025). From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to articulating a model that integrates structural, processual, and relational dimensions, overcoming the existing fragmentation between approaches centered on expression, identity, or inclusion. From a methodological perspective, it reinforces the value of multimodal approaches and the integration of visual, narrative, and observational data within the framework of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2021; Bagnoli, 2009; Moralli, 2024), demonstrating its potential to generate situated knowledge that is sensitive to the complexity of migration contexts. From a practical perspective, it provides evidence relevant to the design of socio-educational interventions in reception centers, underscoring the need for flexible, culturally sensitive, and multilingual approaches that foster participation, expression, and the construction of meaning.

In this regard, the processes identified allow us to understand the intervention not only as an expressive practice, but also as a framework that can be evaluated from a qualitative and process-oriented perspective. Far from models based exclusively on standardized indicators, the program's evaluation is structured through the integrated analysis of visual, narrative, and observational data, which allows for the identification of transformations in participants' emotional expression, narrative construction, and forms of participation throughout the process. This approach aligns with recent proposals advocating for context-sensitive forms of evaluation in *arts-based* interventions (Moralli, 2024; O'Neill, 2025; Bagnoli, 2009), and allows us to move

toward an understanding of effects not as discrete outcomes, but as emergent processes linked to experience, interaction, and symbolic mediation. Within this framework, evaluation is conceived as an interpretive and situated process, aimed at understanding how meanings are produced and transformed in intervention contexts, rather than at measuring isolated outcomes.

The findings carry direct implications for social work practice in child protection and residential care. First, arts-based mediation can be embedded in the everyday functioning of reception centers as a relational tool that complements, rather than replaces, case management, socio-educational support, and therapeutic referral. For social workers and social educators, it offers a low-threshold, non-verbal channel for building rapport with unaccompanied children whose linguistic resources and trust in institutions are often limited, supporting core professional tasks such as needs assessment, emotional support, and the promotion of participation rights (Heinonen et al., 2018; Huss & Bos, 2022). Second, the notion of adaptive engagement provides practitioners with a realistic framework for planning interventions under conditions of high resident turnover and administrative uncertainty: continuity is sustained relationally and materially, through stable routines, facilitator constancy, and the visible permanence of the works, rather than through rigid programming. Third, the collective and public dimension of the intervention aligns with social work's commitment to social justice, offering practitioners a means of countering deficit-based narratives about migrant children and advocating for their inclusion. Finally, the process-oriented evaluation approach described here offers protection services a feasible strategy for documenting relational and narrative change in settings where standardized outcome measurement is rarely viable.

The main contribution of this study to the literature is the grounded model of arts-based mediation in reception contexts. Whereas previous research has largely examined arts-based practices with migrant children as expressive or therapeutic activities in educational or clinical settings (Fragonas & Sudres, 2023; Oepen & Gruber, ; Meyer DeMott et al., 2017), or as participatory research devices (Bagnoli, 2009; Moralli, 2024), the model articulates artistic mediation as an intervention mechanism embedded in protection systems, specifying the structural conditions (instability, linguistic diversity), the mediating processes (adaptive engagement, visual mediation, symbolic reconstruction), and the psychosocial outcomes (situated agency, collective recognition) through which it operates. Its originality lies in this integration: it links expression, identity, and inclusion, dimensions usually addressed separately, within a single, empirically grounded processual framework that is directly usable for the design and evaluation of socio-educational

programs, in line with relational approaches to refugee children's wellbeing (Kohli et al., 2023).

As a synthesis of the findings, this model (see Fig. 6) integrates the identified processes, in which artistic mediation operates as a mechanism that, under conditions of structural instability, facilitates adaptive engagement, emotional articulation through visual mediation, the symbolic reconstruction of migratory trajectories, and the emergence of forms of situated agency that culminate in processes of collective recognition and public projection. It highlights the role of arts-based methodologies, relational dynamics, and the materiality of visual artifacts as cross-cutting conditions that underpin the process.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study should be interpreted in relation to its context of development, centered on reception centers for unaccompanied migrant children in the Community of Madrid. In this sense, the findings are not intended to be generalizable, but rather transferable to institutional contexts with similar characteristics, especially those marked by instability, linguistic diversity, and socio-emotional complexity.

Likewise, the qualitative approach based on constructivist grounded theory prioritizes an in-depth understanding of processes over standardized measurement of outcomes, which limits the direct comparability with quantitative studies. Similarly, contextual conditions, such as discontinuous participation or variability in attendance, hinder replicability in strictly standardized terms, although they constitute an inherent dimension of the phenomenon under analysis.

Finally, the linguistic heterogeneity of the group, while constitutive of the setting, limited verbatim data capture and may have shaped whose voices are most present in the verbal corpus; future studies should incorporate multilingual research assistants and systematically document how language proficiency mediates participation and dissemination.

Regarding future lines of research, it is pertinent to move toward longitudinal studies that allow for the analysis of the evolution of the identified processes, as well as to develop comparative designs across different institutional contexts. Furthermore, the incorporation of mixed-methods approaches could contribute to strengthening the evaluation of this type of intervention in relation to psychosocial wellbeing, inclusion, and the development of agency in protection contexts.

Conclusions

This study set out to understand how an arts-based socio-educational intervention grounded in graphic narratives can be designed, implemented, and evaluated within residential protection services for unaccompanied migrant children. The findings show that artistic mediation operates as a situated intervention mechanism that sustains participation under conditions of instability, enables emotional articulation beyond verbal language, supports the symbolic reconstruction of migratory trajectories, and fosters situated agency and collective recognition.

Beyond its specific context, the intervention model offers transferable elements for practice. Its key components, a flexible three-phase structure (exploration, narration, resignification); simple, visually supported, non-verbal instructions; stable relational routines and facilitator continuity; the material permanence of the works in the institutional space; and process-oriented documentation, can be adapted to other residential and community settings serving unaccompanied children and similarly vulnerable populations, such as refugee youth in temporary accommodation or children in care facing communication barriers. Three conditions appear critical for implementation: institutional flexibility that treats discontinuous attendance as an expectable feature of the context rather than as failure; the pairing of an arts facilitator with a social educator or social worker who knows the children; and ethical safeguards that protect voluntariness and participants' control over what is shared and displayed.

For protection systems, the study supports three recommendations: integrating arts-based mediation into socio-educational programming as a sustained line of intervention rather than a one-off activity; training social workers and educators in basic visual facilitation strategies; and adopting qualitative, process-oriented evaluation to document relational and narrative change. Future implementation should also involve participants in decisions concerning the public display of their works, reinforcing the link between expression, recognition, and rights."

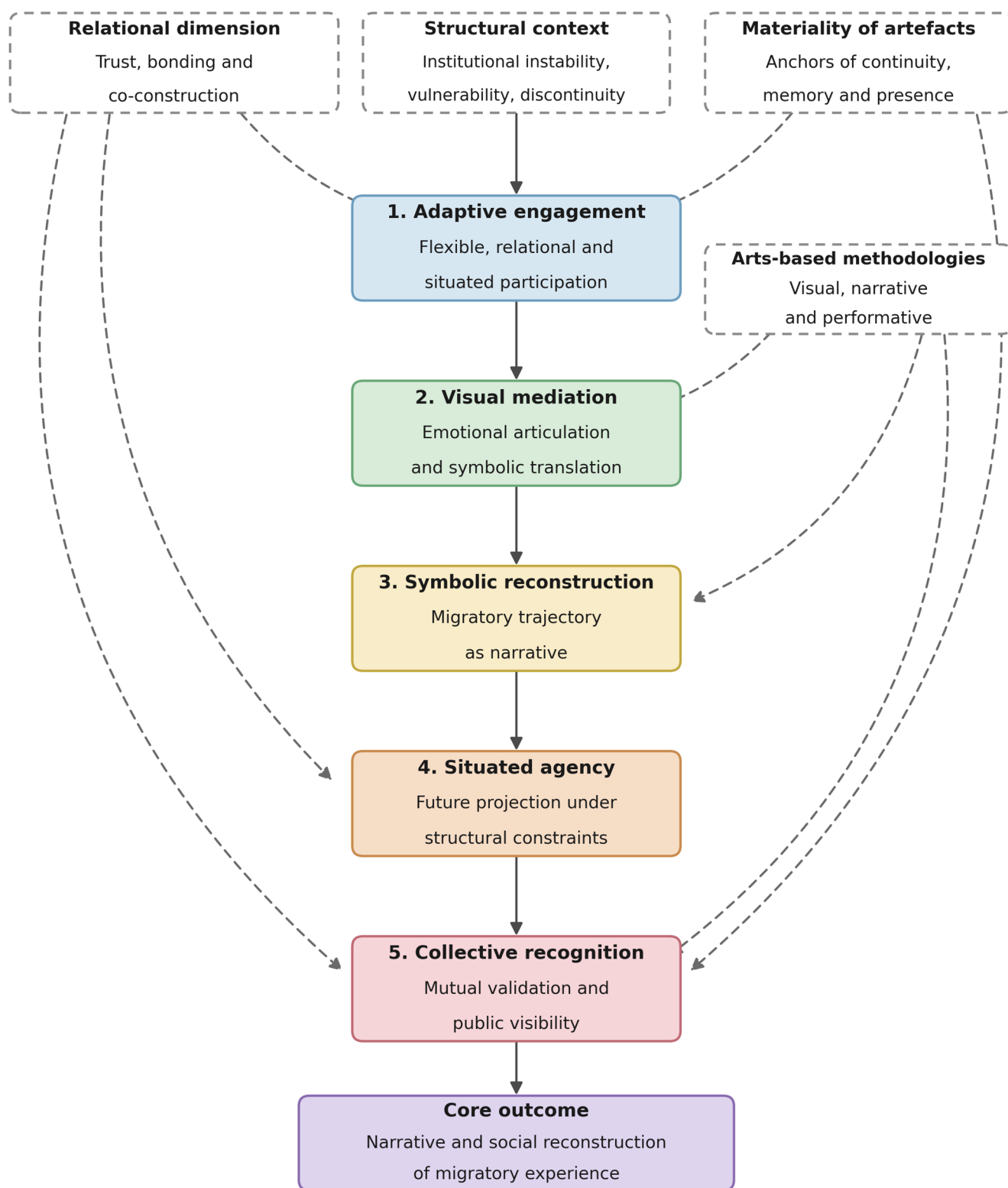


Fig. 6 Grounded theoretical model of arts-based mediation in contexts of migrant reception. *Note.* The model synthesizes the process identified in the analysis: under conditions of structural instability, arts-based mediation facilitates adaptive engagement, emotional articulation through visual mediation, symbolic reconstruction of migratory

trajectories, and forms of situated agency that culminate in collective recognition and public visibility. Arts-based methodologies, relational dynamics, and the materiality of visual artifacts operate as cross-cutting conditions sustaining the process. Own elaboration

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Author Contributions LMR: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Visualization, Writing – original draft. VMV: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review and editing. PGR: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Validation, Writing – review and editing. MRR: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Visualization, Validation, Writing – review and editing.

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Declarations

Competing interests The authors declare no competing interests.

Ethical Approval This study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the East Valladolid Health Area (CEIm Área Este de Valladolid) (Protocol No. PI 23-3402).

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