









Original article

Violence against LGBTQIAPN+ women university students

Violência contra mulheres universitárias LGBTQIAPN+

Violencia contra las mujeres universitarias LGBTQIAPN+

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Abstract

Objective: to (re)cognize the violence perpetrated against LGBTQIAPN+ women university students. **Method:** qualitative, descriptive, and exploratory research conducted with 47 women university students at seven higher education institutions. Data collection was carried out in May 2023 and March 2024 using a semi-structured questionnaire, and the data were analyzed using content analysis. **Results:** women face physical, moral, and psychological violence in the academic environment, which should be welcoming, inclusive, and conducive to learning. Political actions and interventions are inadequate in Brazilian educational institutions, which leads to a feeling of helplessness among women university students when dealing with the fear of imminent violence and the impunity of aggressors. **Conclusion:** Universities must promote safety and assistance, in an inclusive and equitable manner, to the diversity of their student body, ensuring dignified student retention as an essential part of the right to education for all, with a specific focus on historically marginalized groups, such as LGBTQIAPN+ women.

Descriptors: Sexual and Gender Minorities; Violence against Women; Universities; Violence; Public Health

Resumo

Objetivo: (re)conhecer as violências perpetradas contra mulheres universitárias LGBTQIAPN+. **Método:** pesquisa qualitativa, descritiva e exploratória realizada com 47 mulheres universitárias, em sete instituições de ensino superior. A coleta de dados foi realizada em maio/2023 e março/2024, com questionário semiestruturado e os dados foram analisados por meio da análise de conteúdo. **Resultados:** as mulheres enfrentam violência física, moral e psicológica no espaço acadêmico, que deveria ser de acolhimento, inclusão e conhecimento. As ações e intervenções políticas são precárias nas instituições de ensino brasileiras, o que gera o sentimento de desamparo das universitárias ao lidar com o medo da violência iminente e a impunidade dos agressores. **Conclusão:** as Universidades devem promover segurança e assistência, inclusiva e equitativa, a pluralidade de seu corpo discente, para permanência

estudiantil digna, como parte essencial do direito à educação para todos, com a especificidade aos grupos historicamente marginalizados, como as mulheres LGBTQIAPN+.

Descritores: Minorias Sexuais e de Gênero; Violência contra a Mulher; Universidades; Violência; Saúde Pública

Resumen

Objetivo: (re)conocer las violencias perpetradas contra las mujeres universitarias LGBTQIAPN+.

Método: pesquisa cualitativa, descriptiva, y exploratoria realizada con 47 mujeres universitarias, en siete instituciones de enseñanza superior. La recopilación de datos se llevó a cabo en mayo de 2023 y marzo de 2024, con un cuestionario semiestructurado, y los datos se analizaron mediante el análisis de contenido. **Results:** las mujeres sufren violencia física, moral, y psicológica en el ámbito académico, que debería ser un espacio acogedor, inclusivo, y de conocimiento. Las acciones e intervenciones políticas son precarias en las instituciones educativas brasileñas, lo que genera un sentimiento de desamparo entre las universitarias al enfrentarse al miedo a la violencia inminente y a la impunidad de los agresores. **Conclusión:** Las universidades deben promover la seguridad y la asistencia, de manera inclusiva y equitativa, a la pluralidad de su alumnado, para una permanencia estudiantil digna, como parte esencial del derecho a la educación para todos, con especial atención a los grupos históricamente marginados, como las mujeres LGBTQIAPN+.

Descritores: Minorías sexuales y de género; Violencia contra la mujer; Universidades; Violencia; Salud pública

Introduction

Violence against women is a serious violation of human rights, with political, economic, social, psychological, and cultural consequences.¹ Despite the progress previously made in this field, there is still a lengthy journey ahead to transform the current reality. This fact can be seen in the growing number of victims, especially in relation to LGBTQIAPN+ women, in the gaps in reports of violence, which often ignore information regarding gender identity and sexual orientation, leading to the invisibility of the problem and hindering the creation of effective policies for monitoring and combating it, and in the silencing and concealment of this violence in certain social spaces, such as universities.¹⁻²

Regarding victims, the 15th Brazilian Public Security Yearbook 2021 showed a 45% increase in cases of femicide nationwide between 2016 and 2020.³ Meanwhile, the study “Visible and Invisible: the victimization of women in Brazil” showed a marked increase in all forms of violence against women in 2022 and estimated that approximately 18.6 million Brazilian women were victims of violence that year, with those with lower levels of education, lower income, black women, and separated or

divorced women being the most vulnerable. However, the correlation between greater vulnerability and identifying as an LGBTQIAPN+ woman was not established.⁴

In this context, it is worth noting that Brazil is one of the countries with the highest number of cases of violence resulting in the death of LGBTQIAPN+ people, with one death occurring every 29 hours. In addition to the high number of fatal cases, this population faces a significantly higher risk of violence, with more than double the chances of other groups. Within this scenario, LGBTQIAPN+ women are the most vulnerable, with the highest prevalence of all forms of aggression.⁵⁻⁶

In addition, in relation to the spaces and social environments in which women are most often abused, it is widely agreed that the household environment is one of the places with the highest incidence of this type of violence.⁷ Consequently, it was the first to be explored, being the theme of most published studies and associated with the greatest advances ever achieved by society, such as Law No. 11340, popularly known as the Maria da Penha Law. However, violence is not restricted to the home environment, but follows women's bodies into other social spaces, such as the workplace, maternity wards, public spaces, social networks, and academic environments. Nevertheless, there is still a veil that covers the countless forms of violence in these spaces, responsible for naturalizing, trivializing, or suppressing them, largely due to distorted ideas of gender roles and women's submission. This situation is related to the fact that research and studies are still slow to advance in these fields, as is the case in universities.⁸

In this context, focusing on higher education institutions, it is necessary to consider that, despite the greater purpose of these institutions as agents of social change, they still function as spaces for the reproduction and naturalization of the structure and functioning of society. In these spaces, gender hierarchies, binary thinking, and the inferiorization and hostility towards those who deviate from heteronormativity are reproduced, implicitly or explicitly, by the entire faculty, student body, and staff.⁹

Further to this, despite knowledge of the reproduction of social patterns in these spaces, violence against women in universities can be described as a silenced and concealed issue that lacks awareness and protection, due to its recurrence, underreporting, and consequences.¹ In international databases, the issue is slowly being debated. However, most of these studies have focused on white cisgender

heterosexual students, failing to address the intersectional dimensions of the issue and disregarding the diversity of exposure to it.¹⁰ Furthermore, research related to the topic also highlights the scarcity of bibliographies focusing on the situations experienced by female academics both in Brazil and abroad.^{1-2,11-12} In the case of LGBTQIAPN+ women, this gap becomes even more pronounced.¹³ This finding, therefore, exposes yet another silence to be unveiled, which again results in invisibility, trivialization of cases, and a range of impacts on all aspects of the lives of women who have been abused in these institutions.¹²

Therefore, when reflecting on the aforementioned gaps, it is understood that it is necessary to interrupt this invisibility, unveiling this reality and conferring voice to this audience. Thus, this study aims to (re)cognize the violence perpetrated against LGBTQIAPN+ university women. In this way, it intends to contribute to a better understanding of how this issue is experienced by these women in this space, which will enable the implementation of improvements in conducting and combating these acts.

Method

The present study consists of qualitative, descriptive, and exploratory research to explore the complexity of social, cultural, and individual contexts in the participants' experience.¹⁴ This article addresses the potential or actual violence suffered by LGBTQIAPN+ women university students in the university context and how they identify and feel in this regard. The exploratory and descriptive methods enable, respectively, greater familiarity with the problem, making it more explicit, and describing characteristics and gathering opinions, among other possibilities, regarding the phenomenon studied.¹⁵

Women enrolled in any higher education course participated in the study. Initially, the following inclusion criteria were considered: identifying as an LGBTQIAPN+ woman, being enrolled in an undergraduate course, and being 18 years of age or older. The only exclusion criterion was a lack of proficiency in Portuguese.

However, during the development of the study, it was found that some heterosexual women also responded to the questionnaire. When analyzing the data provided by them, it was found that these women, who are also victims of violence in

the academic context, felt the need to talk about the precarious situation of universities regarding the care of women who have been victims of violence. Due to the relevance of the data, they were included in the universe of participants. During the analyses, the different points of view of both groups were considered, and in response to the primary objective of the study, the focus remained on the experiences of women who identified as part of the LGBTQIAPN+ community. In addition, one participant was removed from the study as she did not meet the age criterion, as she was 17 years old.

The final number of participants was not predetermined, and the sample was defined by the number of women who met the inclusion criteria and agreed to participate during the period for which the questionnaire remained open for responses.

Data collection was carried out using a semi-structured questionnaire, through Google Forms®, at two different times. The first occurred during May 2023 and the second during March 2024. The choice to use the Google Forms® platform was due to the expansion of data collection to universities in different regions of the country, which led to a limitation on face-to-face interviews, since they require more complex human and logistical resources, in addition to higher costs. In addition, due to the greater reach provided by the online platform, it was possible for women from three different regions of the country to participate, which increased the diversity and representation of the participants.

Initially, the invitation to participate was sent via the academic office to the institutional email addresses of students at a single public university in the southern region of Brazil, across its various campuses. In addition, the invitation was also disclosed in student groups, through the WhatsApp application and the Central Student Directory (CSD), through Instagram, both related to the same university mentioned above.

In this sense, as a result of widespread dissemination, the questionnaire reached female university students from other public and private educational institutions in different regions of the country, which led to an expansion of the research scenario. It is believed that this situation was the result of university students' understanding of the importance of the theme, either because they had already experienced, witnessed, or heard reports of violence in the university

environment and/or because they were aware of the precariousness of Brazilian educational institutions in terms of assistance and addressing this reality.

As a result, in order to better understand the reality of the universities mentioned by the participants in this first stage of the research, it was decided to conduct a second data collection. In this second stage, formal invitations were sent, via the academic office, to the other students from all the universities that had participants from the previous first data collection.

Regarding the questionnaire used for data collection, it is a semi-structured questionnaire, consisting of open and closed questions, referring to personal identification, whether the respondent has been a victim of violence in the academic context, the type(s) of violence suffered, the degree of proximity to the aggressor, the impacts on the victim, and whether or not they received any support from the educational institution to deal with the situation. Data collection was concluded after the data saturation criterion was reached, which occurred when the data collected during the research did not present any new information, and there was no further content to be added to the study.¹⁵

The data were analyzed using the content analysis method,¹⁶ which allows for a systematic perception of the qualitative results of the interviews. The following steps were carried out: pre-analysis, exploration of the material with the categorization of text units that were repeated in the reports provided by the participants, processing of the results, and, finally, inference and interpretation of the results.

In the pre-analysis stage, after gathering all the responses obtained in a single file, a cursory reading of the content was performed. Next, the data was grouped in a way that allowed the identification of the core meanings. This was followed by an exploration of the material, a stage in which the adequacy of the previous stages was carefully examined so that the collected data could be coded and categorized. In the coding stage, the units of record were established by theme, and statements were excerpted and grouped according to their relevance to a given theme. From this stage, the categories were constructed, each one being formed by the gathering of related recording units and named with a suitably comprehensive title. In this way, the categories already represent the

transformation of raw data into organized data, allowing for a simplified representation of the results obtained.¹⁶

Still in the exploration stage, the recording units were also enumerated by counting the frequency of occurrence of a given utterance in each category, so that the importance of that utterance was assigned in direct proportion to the frequency of occurrences. In the treatment, inference, and interpretation stage, the data was condensed and the information was arranged in charts and tables, which allowed for easier visualization of the information obtained through the analysis, thus facilitating the interpretation of the results.

This study is a subproject that is part of the umbrella research project entitled "Trans people and their journeys in the Unified Health System (SUS): in search of the right to (re)exist", structured, in principle, with the main objective of analyzing the health care of trans people in the Unified Health System (SUS) in the city of Chapecó, Santa Catarina, and the surrounding region, intertwining their life trajectories, educational paths, and care in search of the right to (re)exist. The project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of the Southern Frontier (UFFS), opinion No. 3,547,323, approved on September 2, 2019, CAAE No. 19369019.8.0000.5564.

Results

A total of 47 female university students enrolled in seven higher education institutions located in the southern, southeastern, and northeastern regions participated in the study, with each region representing 89.4%, 8.5%, and 2.1% of the sample, respectively. Among the educational institutions, three are private and four are public. The mean age of the participants was 25.5 years, with a median of 24 years, and a standard deviation of 7.3.

Regarding race/ethnicity, 68.1% identified as white, 23.4% as brown, and 8.5% as black. Regarding current relationship status, 46.8% were single, 44.7% were dating, 6.4% were married, and 2.1% were divorced.

Regarding gender identity, 89.3% of participants are cisgender, 4.3% are transvestites, 4.3% are non-binary, and 2.1% are transsexual women. Regarding sexual orientation, 46.8% of participants identified as bisexual, 23.4% as lesbian, 15% as heterosexual, 10.6% as pansexual, 2.1% as queer, and 2.1% did not know how to respond.

The reality faced by LGBTQIAPN+ women university students in the student contexto

Through the analysis of the data obtained in this study, it was possible to highlight some situations that are part of the daily lives of LGBTQIAPN+ women as members of academic communities in Brazilian higher education institutions.

First, when asked how safe they felt on campus, 65.9% responded that they felt safe, 29.8% felt unsafe, and 4.3% did not know how to respond. However, when asked if they had ever been victims of violence in an academic context, 68.1% stated that they had suffered some form of violence and 31.9% stated that they had not, generating a contradiction in the data, since despite most of them having been victims of violence, a feeling of safety still prevailed among the respondents. However, this inconsistency made sense when the type of violence was analyzed.

Regarding the research on the type(s) of violence suffered, psychological, moral, sexual, and physical violence were mentioned. It was also found that psychological and moral violence ranked first and second, with similar frequencies of occurrence in the interviewees' statements, whereas sexual violence ranked third and physical violence ranked fourth. In addition, among the participants who suffered violence, 56.3% reported having suffered one type of violence, 37.5% two types, 3.1% four types, and 3.1% did not specify.

In this sense, the finding that most of the interviewees shared the feeling of being safe on campus, despite having already suffered some type of violence, highlights the existence of a normalization and trivialization of some types of violence, such as psychological and moral violence.

The confirmation of the contradiction in the data mentioned above was also noted when respondents were asked whether they lived in fear of violence in the academic context: 55.3% reported feeling fear, 31.9% reported not feeling fear, and

12.8% did not know how to respond, despite the fact that most of the interviewees had previously reported feeling safe on campus. This finding may again correspond to the fact that violence tends to be increasingly implicit, falsifying a sense of security, but simultaneously maintaining an emotional and psychological impact on victims. This paradox, in which the victim, on the one hand, feels safe, but on the other, lives constantly under the stigma and risk of violence, is what reinforces the feeling of vulnerability and alertness mentioned by the interviewees.

Regarding the location where the event took place, the classroom was considered the most violent place, with college parties, such as freshman parties and/or gatherings at classmates' homes, as the second most violent place, followed by unspecified "other places", the campus surroundings, the cafeteria/snack bar, and the bathroom, in that order.

Regarding the aggressor, the main reports obtained mentioned students from the same course, followed by teachers, students from other courses, strangers, and other employees of the educational institution, in that order.

Regarding the participants' perception of the relationship between the violence suffered and the victim's gender identity and/or sexual orientation, 65.6% of women who had been abused stated that they believed there was a relationship, 31.3% believed that there was no relationship between the violence suffered and their gender identity and/or sexual orientation, and 3.1% did not know how to respond.

Finally, regarding knowing another LGBTQIAPN+ woman who had suffered violence in the university context, 55.3% of respondents stated that they knew someone, 40.4% did not know anyone, and 4.3% did not respond. These data also highlight the violent reality faced by these women in academic environments.

The reality of Brazilian higher education institutions

With this study, it was also possible to obtain an overview of how Brazilian universities have been meeting demands and ensuring the rights of LGBTQIAPN+ women.

Questions concerning the victim's attitude after suffering violence and in relation to the reception and actions taken by the institution guided this research. In this sense, when the interviewees were asked about their knowledge of the existence, in their

respective educational institutions, of any services aimed at combating violence and supporting victims, “I don't know/I'm not aware/I have no idea/I don't think so/I've never heard of it/it doesn't have any” were the most common responses.

Regarding the victim's attitude after suffering violence, again through analysis of the frequency with which each attitude emerged in the discourse, it was found that “I didn't tell anyone” and “I didn't do anything” were the most frequent responses. Following this reasoning, “I told friends/family/boyfriend” was the second most frequent attitude among victims. The statement that “it's not worth reporting” also emerged in some statements. However, the act of reporting itself was reported as “I reported it to the ombudsman” and “I reported it to the police” by only two participants. Also, the following statement was highlighted in one of the statements: “I didn't report it for fear of retaliation”.

Among the participants who shared their experiences with someone else, “I didn't feel welcome” was the main perception.

What LGBTQIAPN+ women university students expect from educational institutions

When asked what they believed educational institutions could do to promote a safer environment for LGBTQIAPN+ women and what type of support they expected from the university for victims of violence and for the prevention of new cases, the participants' responses enabled the creation of three groups of measures to be adopted by institutions: Educational activities; Reception/Psychological Support; Creation of protocols to assist/refer/report/punish.

Regarding the implementation of educational activities on diversity within universities, LGBTQIAPN+ women university students highlighted the importance of this action, since the roots of the problem are structural and, therefore, require education to be changed. For them, it is necessary to:

Talk about this violence, without pretending it doesn't happen, because simply increasing the number of guards or installing cameras/streetlights is not enough. Violence has structural and complex roots, and needs to be discussed. (P02)
The only way I consider feasible would be lectures about and support for the cause, because unfortunately we lack the power to change people's entire outlook on life. (P12)

Regarding “Psychological Support/Assistance,” it was found that LGBTQIAPN+ university women feel institutionally abandoned and hope that there will be a space to welcome victims and that a service will be provided with trained professionals, such as psychologists, to help them cope with the situation. These findings can be evidenced in the following statements:

There should be a service dedicated to victims, to welcome them, listen to them, and provide psychological support. (P32)

A specialized reception team — not just interested and willing employees with limited knowledge (P40).

Provide listening spaces with experienced and trained professionals. (P25)

Finally, they also raised the need to create protocols for assisting women in situations of violence, so that there is a defined process to be followed, ensuring that women know where to seek help and also receive all the necessary support. In addition, the need to punish perpetrators was also raised. These demands can be seen in the following statements:

Create a protocol for addressing violence and a multidisciplinary commission to evaluate cases and direct them toward the adequate solution. (P15).

Provide a more assertive and rapid reporting channel that does not doubt the victim and always acts quickly. Punishment for offenders would be ideal, combined with solidarity among the women present at the center. (P45).

Having a safe space for reporting and subsequent punishment (P03).

From this perspective, in light of the above statements, it is clear that there is not only a lack of institutional assistance, but also a tendency to perpetuate these discriminatory practices. The omission of educational institutions contributes to the formation of individuals who are unable to deal with the plurality of subjects and the intersectionalities that comprise it, a situation that reinforces the maintenance of a culture of intolerance.

Discussion

The analysis of the results provided a comprehensive understanding of the complexity of the experiences of LGBTQIAPN+ women in Brazilian universities, marked by violence, often implicit, and emotional insecurity, despite a false sense of security in the academic environment.

This false sense of security can be explained by the trivialization of certain types of violence, such as psychological and moral violence. This happens due to the fact that these are more subtle and silent forms of violence that leave no physical marks on the body and are diluted in the social context, manifesting themselves in the form of a “bad word, ,humiliation, or judgment, and these types of violence ultimately convey a false sense of security to the victims. This fact, combined with the recurrence of these situations in daily academic life, causes victims to “get used” to living with them.¹⁷

These types of violence are described in the literature as symbolic violence, a practice based on mechanisms that naturalize dominant representations or ideas in social spaces, imposing their “acceptance” . In this case, the dominant idea is based on the belief that heterosexuality is the normal parameter, the only adequate and legitimate form of expression of sexual identity and behavior, which means that anything that deviates from it is considered abnormal, deviant, immoral, and perverse.¹⁸

However, although they do not result in a “black eye” to confirm the social legitimacy of violence, the consequences caused by these symbolic forms are perverse and, in general, can cause more damage than physical violence, as they culminate in the development of various psychiatric disorders, such as depression, anxiety disorders, phobias, among others.¹⁷

In addition, the possibility of physical and/or sexual assault is always present in these women's daily lives, wherever they may be. This context, although followed by the feeling of safety reported by the participants, triggers a permanent state of alertness, which helps explain the fear of being assaulted reported by the interviewees.¹⁷

Regarding the location where the violence occurs, the gateway to violence against women in general at universities is the freshman orientation, where the highest number of humiliations, disrespect, discrimination, and intimidation occur.¹⁹ However, in this study, the classroom was considered the most violent location, with freshman orientation celebrations being the second most violent location.

Regarding the perpetrators of the violent acts, classmates and teachers were mainly mentioned. These data corroborate the study “abuse on campuses”, an unprecedented survey conducted by Intercept Brasil, released in 2019, which analyzed cases of violence from 122 educational institutions, 32 of which were private and 88

were public. Upon analysis of the reports, most victims pointed to students and teachers, in that order, as the main perpetrators.²⁰

When correlating data on the location with the highest prevalence of violence and the perpetrators of violence, it is understood that teachers are responsible for a substantial part of it, especially in terms of symbolic violence. Many of these professionals bring the influence of social morality into the classroom and express their prejudices explicitly or implicitly. Others arrive unprepared, lacking the necessary knowledge on gender and sexual diversity. In addition, the curricula of undergraduate courses, which are considered “formal”, contribute to the perpetuation of this situation, since these curricula are traditionally guided by the assumption of heterosexual normality and are therefore exclusionary.¹⁸

Regarding the participants’ perception that there is a relationship between suffering violence and being LGBTQIAPN+, it was possible to show that this conclusion is in line with the study on violence against LGBTQIAPN+ people, conducted in 2023, which showed that LGBTQIAPN+ people are more than twice as likely to suffer any type of violence. They also identified that LGBTQIAPN+ women experienced the highest prevalence of all subtypes of violence.⁶

With regard to the low rate of formal complaints, fear of retaliation as a result of filing complaints and disbelief in the effectiveness of institutional processes, it is clear that the situation is similar to the data obtained in a study conducted in 2019, in which 92.5% of the sample composed of victims of discriminatory acts did not file any type of complaint at the university, while the other 7.5%, who took the case to the institution’s authorities, reported that no action was taken. In other words, 100% was the percentage of failure to investigate and apply sanctions and/or penalties to the aggressors in this study.²⁰

Also in the aforementioned study, fear of suffering some form of reprisal/retaliation emerged as a justification for the victim's silence. Given this, when the perpetrator of the violence is a teacher, this fear of retaliation is mainly related to the loss of credit or even a diploma. Thus, despite the protection guaranteed by Article 216-A of the Penal Code, which defines the crime of harassment and its punishment, victims ultimately choose not to report it due to the fear described above.²⁰

Another factor raised that influences the failure to file formal complaints is related to the lack of credibility in resolving the demands of LGBTQIAPN+ women. A tendency in cases of violence against women in general is to blame the victim themselves for the violence suffered, a tendency in cases of violence against women in general.^{1,12}

The gap in institutional support reported by the participants in this study reflects the general situation in Brazilian universities, with the aim of identifying whether Brazilian educational institutions have policies in place to deal with cases of violence against women — receiving complaints, providing victims with psychological and/or legal assistance, and initiatives to prevent new cases.²⁰ Based on this search, it was found that most of these institutions did not have structured internal policies for this purpose, but rather a few abstract guidelines without specific protocols. Some even assign responsibility for assisting and sheltering victims to women's police stations and/or health units.

In this sense, in order to understand the roots of this situation, initially, it is necessary to think of the university as a political and social space, considering its potential for the reproduction of oppression, violence, and privilege. Historically, this space has been dominated by white, heterosexual, and financially wealthy people. However, with the democratization of higher education at the national level, made possible by the implementation of policies that expanded access, a diversity of individuals started to occupy this space — black, brown, indigenous, gay, lesbian, transvestite, transgender, asexual, non-binary, and other students. Consequently, social inequalities and hierarchies of gender, race, and color prevailed in this scenario.²¹

In this interim, it is also true that enabling permanence has not progressed in tandem with expanding access, since institutional structures have shown little progress with regard to policies for protecting against and combating discrimination in universities.²² Another study showed that young, black, and non-heterosexual women are at greater risk of gender-based violence while attending university. This situation contextualizes the reality faced by LGBTQIAPN+ university women with regard to institutional support for cases of violence suffered in the academic context.¹¹

However, in contrast to the global reality on this issue, it has been noted that some Brazilian universities have taken the first step toward changing this reality. Two of the pioneers in this field, which will be used as examples in the present study, are the University of São Paulo (USP) and the University of Brasília (UnB).

Currently, USP has a Pro-Rector for Inclusion and Belonging (PRIB), created in 2022, whose function is to propose, coordinate, centralize, and support cross-cutting policies at the university based on equity and intersectionality. It is structured into five departments that work in coordination with each other: “Campus Life”, “Women, Ethnic and Racial Relations and Diversity”, “Mental Health and Social Well-being”, “Human Rights and Policies of Reparation, Memory, and Justice”, and “Education and Professional Life”.²³⁻²⁴

This Office of the Pro-Rector was created with the aim of addressing the situation described in this study regarding Brazilian universities, which, despite having adopted and promoted increased access through quota policies, have not provided the means to enable the new student profile to remain in higher education. In this context, one of the many questions that PRIB set out to answer with its creation was: “How can we ensure similar conditions for pursuing a teaching career, considering the multitude of differences that affect it, such as state and national legislation, gender, sexuality, and ethnic-racial conditions?” . To answer this question, the Board of Women, Ethnic-Racial Relations, and Diversity was created with the function of proposing agendas and policies aimed at ensuring plurality through the promotion of “respect and equality of existence and permanence for the entire USP community, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, color, ethnicity, nationality, or disabilities.”.²³⁻²⁴

However, interventions to ensure permanence at the university did not start only at the time PRIP was created. Several projects were already working in an exemplary manner in this sense. One of them is the USP Women’s Office, founded in 2016 with the aim of implementing initiatives and projects focused on gender equality. The Office has three main lines of action: one for programs, which promotes actions to combat gender violence and promote equality; research, which investigates the theoretical basis for decision-making regarding the work to be carried out and disseminates data related to the institution's internal and external

audiences; and communication, which focuses on the production of educational materials, dissemination on social networks, and promotion of events.²⁵

Thus, one of the projects carried out by the Office will be used as an example in this study, due to its excellent structure and the fact that it corroborated the demands raised by the women who participated in this study when asked what they expected from universities. The project in question entails the participation of various sectors within and outside the university and was described and disseminated through the “Protocol for Assistance by the Superintendence of Social Assistance of the University of São Paulo for cases of Gender Violence Against Women”. The protocol promotes the systematization of assistance to women in situations of violence and is structured in four stages, which will be briefly described below.

The first stage consists of initial contact with the woman to identify their needs and safety situation. The victim will be welcomed with discretion, respect, and protection of their integrity and dignity. If necessary, the University Security or Military Police may be called, and in cases of sexual violence, the victim will be immediately referred to healthcare services.

In the second stage, care will be provided by a team of social workers. The protocol highlights the ethical principles that must be respected, such as ensuring confidentiality and privacy, with zero tolerance for any type of discrimination. The protocol also emphasizes that assistance should be guided by empathy, active and respectful listening, valuing the feelings of people in vulnerable situations and the autonomy and dignity of victims.

In the third stage, guidance will be provided on possible referrals within and/or outside USP, on the formalization of complaints within and outside the institution, and on requests for necessary academic adjustments. Contact will also be mediated, when possible, with health, psychosocial, reparation, and restitution of rights services.

Finally, in the fourth stage, records of the service will be compiled for the notification of cases, for statistical purposes. The protocol requires reinforcing to the women that they are not alone, that they are not responsible for the violence they have suffered, leaving open the possibility of seeking new shelter to reassess referrals and

other reasons necessary for the restoration of health, rights, university activities, and emotional and social relationships.

At the end of the service, contact with the victim of violence is maintained and follow-up is carried out at a frequency determined according to the women's situation and the progress of the case, to ensure that they receive adequate support.

In addition to USP, UnB is also one of the pioneers in Brazil in combating violence in the university environment. In 2013, this university created the Diversity Board, responsible for serving, promoting, and guaranteeing the rights of minority groups in higher education, with an emphasis on women, Black people, Indigenous people, and the LGBTQIAPN+ community.²⁶

Regarding the work of this Board, the pedagogical and preventive focus is noteworthy. For this purpose, they promote roundtable discussions, debates, partnerships with social collectives, and training activities for teachers and other employees of the institution in relation to LGBTQIA+phobia, racism, and gender violence. Sectoral policies aimed at inclusion and guaranteeing rights are also being considered. With regard to violence, UnB, through this Board, provides victims with psychological, social, and educational support, ensuring that they are welcomed, listened to, and referred for the formalization of complaints within the university and to the appropriate external bodies designated for this purpose.²⁶

Another measure implemented by UnB is the inclusion of the aforementioned Board within the Federal District's women's protection network, which allows for joint work between the university and other governmental and non-governmental institutions that can assist in supporting and addressing this reality.²⁶ Regarding punishment for the aggressor, also mentioned by some of the interviewees, the protocol highlights the importance of clarifying to the victim the differences between filing a formal complaint within and outside the university and the powers and possible measures that may be adopted by each instance.

In the case of universities, victims need to know that these institutions are not part of the judicial system and therefore cannot arrest, punish, or prosecute abusers and aggressors. However, each university has the autonomy and duty to open an investigation that may lead to internal disciplinary or educational measures.

Given this, when considering the implementation of changes in Brazilian universities, and considering that the protocol meets all the demands raised by the women interviewed in this study, it is believed that it could be used as a reference for other institutions to also promote their own adjustments.

It is recognized that the number of participating universities is a limitation of this study, which hindered the construction of a general overview covering all regions of the country, in addition to precluding a comparison between the situation in public and private institutions. In light of this, it is hoped that other more comprehensive studies on the theme will be conducted, so that this reality can be revealed with increasingly reliable data.

It is believed that the results of this study can contribute to changing the reality described by raising awareness of the problem and encouraging representatives of Brazilian universities to take a stand against misinformation, prejudice, and, above all, violence. It is hoped that this will provide guidance to universities, which, by understanding the aspirations of their audience, can adapt to better accommodate them. In addition, it is hoped that institutions that are still in the early stages of addressing prejudice and violence can use the policies and actions adopted by institutions that have already made progress in this field, such as the University of São Paulo and the University of Brasília, as examples.

Conclusion

Understanding the reality faced by LGBTQIAPN+ women in higher education institutions is essential for debates to be held and changes to be implemented. The study confirmed that these women are physically, morally, and psychologically abused during their academic lives in places that, in theory, should provide them with a welcoming environment, inclusion, and knowledge. In addition, it was also found that many of these aggressions come from people who, instead of contributing to the construction of a respectful environment, reinforce exclusion and prejudice.

It was also possible to confirm that the precariousness of policies and actions to intervene in this reality is still a reality in most Brazilian educational institutions. Due to this, these women feel helpless in the academic space they inhabit, as they have to deal

with the fear of imminent violence, do not feel welcome, and still live with the anguish generated by the impunity of their aggressors.

Despite this, these women remain hopeful that this reality can be transformed and that universities can still assume their role as agents of social change. To this end, they hope that institutions will adapt to accommodate the diversity stemming from the new student profile and the resulting challenges, and that they will create ways to promote safety and assistance for their student body, with special awareness towards historically marginalized groups, such as LGBTQIAPN+ women.

Therefore, the aim is for dignified student retention to cease to be merely an ideal and become an essential part of the right to education, which is being achieved by populations that have historically been/are invisible in our country. For this purpose, it is essential that universities not only recognize diversity, but also commit to effective actions that guarantee a truly safe, inclusive, and equitable academic environment for all.

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