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HOMOSEXUAL TEACHERS AND THE CHALLENGES OF HOMOPHOBIA IN THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

By addressing homophobia in the academic environment, we seek not only to highlight the obstacles faced by homosexual teachers, but also to propose reflections on the urgency of inclusive policies and practices that can transform the educational environment into a truly welcoming and egalitarian space for all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation. Thus, the general objective of this work is to raise the representations of teachers of Professional Education about prejudice and discrimination against homosexual teachers in the school environment. Methodologically, this is a qualitative and descriptive research. Two instruments were used in data collection, the questionnaire applied to 80 teachers and the management team of 15 ETECs, and a semi-structured interview applied with 02 supervisors of the Paula Souza Center, totaling 82 participants. The results indicate that 45 (56%) of the participants had never found any situation of prejudice or discrimination against homosexual teachers at school. On the other hand, 30 (38%) claim to have witnessed such a situation in the school environment. While 5 (6%) cannot distinguish whether or not the situation falls under homophobia. In addition, 66 (83%) of the participants said they had never witnessed any case of violence, while 14 (17%) revealed that they had. We detected that verbal and symbolic violence are the two main types of violence against homosexual teachers in the ETECs, witnessed by 14 participants. We can affirm, through the representations of professional education teachers, that there are still veiled prejudices about homosexuality in the general context, and we recognize the lack and need to expand research on teacher homosexuality in the school environment, and especially the multiple possibilities of investigation in this field of knowledge.

Keywords: Academic Environment. Homophobia. Prejudice. Discrimination. Homosexual Teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the recognition of sexual rights and diversity in contemporary society has grown significantly. However, despite legislative advances and social achievements, homophobia continues to be a worrying reality, especially in the educational environment. Gay teachers face unique and often painful challenges in their pedagogical practices, due to the persistence of ingrained prejudices and the lack of full inclusion in educational institutions. Therefore, studies are needed that explore the complexities and challenges of homosexual teachers in the face of homophobia in the educational environment.

In view of the above, this article presents as a general objective to raise the representations of teachers of Professional Education on prejudice and discrimination against homosexual teachers in the school environment. Therefore, the specific objectives are: 1) to obtain the perceptions of the participants whether or not they have witnessed any situation characterized as prejudice and/or discrimination, and what are the sensations caused by such situations; 2) question whether or not the participants have ever witnessed any case of violence against homosexual teachers in the academic environment, as well as their representations of such situations; And, 3) to present the participants' representations about the fact that the teacher self-declares homosexual in the school environment, whether or not this can bring some discomfort among the subjects who are part of the school living space.

By addressing this theme, we seek not only to highlight the obstacles faced by homosexual teachers, but also to propose reflections on the urgency of inclusive policies and practices that can transform the educational environment into a truly welcoming and egalitarian space for all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation.

Through this investigation, we hope to contribute to an informed and substantive debate on how to address homophobia in schools and academic settings, thereby promoting a fairer and more respectful education for all involved.

The present work was composed as follows: first the introduction of the work was presented, then the theoretical framework based on the literature on the subject, homophobia in the academic environment, then the methodology used by the article was contextualized. The results and discussions were presented below, and finally the final considerations.

HOMOPHOBIA IN THE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

The notion of homophobia to be addressed in this article is based on the reflections and studies of Daniel Ángel Borrillo, an Argentine intellectual, born in Bueno Aires in 1961,

specialized in Law, especially in the rights of homosexuals. Borrillo is currently a professor of law at the University of Paris X.-Nanterre and is also an internationally renowned expert on legal issues associated with discrimination, minority rights and gender studies, working specifically on the homophobia phenomenon, author of the book "HOMOPHOBIA: history and critique of a prejudice". For Borrillo (2016), the concept of homophobia has been used to refer to a set of negative emotions, such as: aversion, contempt and/or hatred of homosexuals. In addition to being used in allusion to situations of prejudice, discrimination and violence against LGBTQIA+ people (Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transvestites/Transsexuals, Queers, Intersex and Asexual +).

In the Brazilian context, the existence of homophobia is clear, but little is known about how it works and what its dynamics are when articulated with other forms of inferiority (racism, sexism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia). In this sense, Borrillo (2016) understands that the ideology that sustains the superiority of the white race in relation to others is called "racism". The one that promotes the superiority of one gender over the other is known as "sexism". On the other hand, "anti-Semitism" refers to the opinion that justifies the inferiority of Jews, and "xenophobia" refers to hostility towards foreigners. Therefore, corroborating this way of thinking, Toledo (2018) states that the establishment of the process of production and reproduction of discrimination is traditionally consolidated as a function of race and skin color, gender and sexual orientation, religious option, and ethnic origin of individuals.

To this end, here we intend to better understand the functioning of the homophobia phenomenon, not only in the individual sphere, but also in the cultural and institutional sphere, in order to improve the ways of confronting and deconstructing its violent and silent practices. Etymologically, the term homophobia refers to the fear of one's fellow man, as the prefix 'homo' means equal and 'phobia' represents fear. However, according to Borrillo (2016) in common sense, homophobia is usually used to identify hatred, aversion and/or discrimination of a person against homosexuals. The author also criticizes this concept, as he considers the term too generalized, emphasizing that the irrational fear of the different is apparently not the only cause for opposition to homosexuality, since such an attitude can come from other contexts and aspects, such as religiosity, ideologies and political and cultural thoughts.

Thus, Borrillo (2016) contextualizes that the concept of homophobia cannot be restricted to a single meaning or interpretation and presents homophobia in a multifaceted way through various types of homophobia: 'irrational', 'cognitive', 'general' and 'specific'. 'Irrational homophobia', also called psychological (individual) homophobia, consists of the

manifestation of violence, fear, aversion and repulsion against *gays* and lesbians. Such a definition, according to the author, limits the development and understanding of this phenomenon. On the other hand, 'cognitive homophobia', of a social nature, is rooted in the attitude of categorizing others, that is, it emphasizes the difference between heterosexuals and homosexuals, advocating tolerance. Such tolerance is restricted only to the non-rejection of homosexual people, however, no one recognizes the equality and equality of rights between heterosexuals and homosexuals, for example, homosexual marriage and adoption by homosexual people. In this sense, Borrillo (2016, p. 24) explains:

> In the social world, everyone likes homosexuals in general – in fact, many people have homosexual friends in particular. However, no one would go so far as to defend the equality of sexualities, a radical proposition that runs up against common sense: even if there is nothing abnormal about homosexuality, each of us knows that marriage or filiation recognized for same-sex couples would not be considered a normal situation.

Thus, from Borrillo's (2016) perspective, this difference between 'irrational homophobia' and 'cognitive homophobia' alone is not enough to understand the breadth of the homophobia phenomenon, especially in identifying the causes of the accentuated discrimination against homosexual people. To this end, considering the complexity of this phenomenon, the author suggests other classifications to more adequately circumscribe the forms of antipathy against *gays* and lesbians, called 'general homophobia' and 'specific homophobia'. The first is related to sexism, that is, the discrimination of people based on their sex (male/female), specifically, the segregation of genders (male/female). In this sense, Borrillo (2016) highlights that society is historically marked by male domination, through patriarchy and machismo, advocating superiority in relation to the feminine, as well as the denial and rejection of homosexuality. Thus, the author argues that 'general homophobia' consists of all behavior that establishes heterosexuality as the standard norm, excluding any other form of sexuality, including homosexuality.

On the other hand, 'specific homophobia' is a form of intolerance, especially against *gays* and lesbians. In view of this, Borrillo (2016) points out that some authors propose the use of two terms: 'gayphobia' and 'lesbophobia', as they justify that the representations of each of the sexes deserve specific terminologies. According to the author, 'gayphobia' consists of discrimination, specifically, against homosexual men and 'lesbophobia' refers to lesbian women who are victims of particular violence, first because they are women and second because they are homosexual, accumulating discrimination against gender and sexuality, unlike male homosexuals. And she adds that the main characteristic of lesbians

in gender-based social relations is the fact that they are invisible and silent, due to their femininity.

Therefore, according to Borrillo (2016) it is inconceivable that homophobia does not permeate the sexual aspect and order. In this sense, Felicíssimo (2014), inspired by Daniel Borrillo, argues that sexism and heterosexism are fundamental control mechanisms to understand the ways in which relations between the sexes and sexualities are organized. Sexism is based on the natural difference between the sexes, that is, through the roles assigned to men and women. From this fact, male domination over female domination occurs, and women are seen as inferior, complementary and subordinate to men. Such domination is verified through various forms, such as symbolic violence that acts in an invisible and subtle way. This hierarchy of genders strengthens homophobia, because linked to sexism is heterosexuality. For Borrillo (2016, p. 31):

> Heterosexuality thus appears as the standard for evaluating all other sexualities. This normative quality – and the ideal I it embodies – is constitutive of a specific form of domination, called heterosexism, which is defined as the belief in the existence of a hierarchy of sexualities, in which heterosexuality occupies the superior position. All other forms of sexualities are considered at best to be incomplete, accidental, and perverse; and, at worst, pathological, criminal, immoral and destructive of civilization.

Thus, Felicíssimo (2014) and Borrillo (2016) observe that sexism and heterosexism are two pillars of homophobia, as they differentiate people according to sexes, forcing discourses and practices of domination of some over others. This results in the visible manifestation of fear, repulsion and hatred against homosexual people, in various spheres: social, political, legal, religious and moral, as these people are seen as out of normality. Therefore, for Borrillo (2016, p. 34):

> Homophobia can be defined as general, psychological and social hostility towards those who supposedly feel desire or have sexual practices with individuals of their own sex. A specific form of sexism, homophobia equally rejects all those who do not conform to the role predetermined for their biological sex. An ideological construction that consists of the constant promotion of one form of sexuality (hetero) to the detriment of another (homo), homophobia organizes a hierarchy of sexualities and, from this posture, extracts political consequences.

As mentioned earlier, hostility against homosexuals has its origin in the Judeo-Christian tradition and permeates the influence of Christianity on the Roman Empire and goes to the current Catholic and Evangelical churches. Based on this, Natividade and Oliveira (2009) point out that the fact that religion is still considered one of the main promoters of homophobia, especially in Brazil, means that this religious discourse is strongly echoed in scientific and legal discourses. In this sense, Borrillo (2016) points out

that the medical discourse through clinical homophobia, based on the evolution of the species proposed by Darwin to the pathologization of homosexuality. For the author, such discourse is considered homophobic, because the justifications are supported by the thesis of the natural order, reinforcing discrimination against homosexuals. Still, in this sense, the study by Prado and Junqueira (2011) criticizes the understanding that the sexual practices of the LGBTQIA+ population are subject to medical treatment, considering that homosexuals are sick and should undergo treatment.

Another form of expression of homophobia can be perceived through insults, everyday insults, vulgar jokes and jokes, mockery that exposes and ridicules a certain person, simply for being homosexual, in addition to the fact that homophobia can also manifest itself silently and even by the use of pejorative terms to refer to LGBTQIA+ people, in order to disqualify, inferiorize and demean these people. From this perspective, the research by Souza, Silva and Santos (2017) sought to understand the main pejorative ways in which LGBTQIA+ people are treated and recognized, especially in the school environment. This study identified the following words to refer to male homosexuals: effeminate, baitola, barbie, faggot, faggot, faggot, faggot, faggot, faggot, faggot, faggot, among others. To refer to female homosexuality, the following terms were verified: bolacha, caminhoneira, sapatão and sapa. For bisexual people, the designations such as bi, understood, razor and undecided were mentioned. Thus, it is perceived that homophobic attitudes are so naturalized that they become invisible and, with that, behaviors that end up spreading homophobia are reproduced. Such naturalization is part of the constructions and understandings of common sense, however, it is present in the discourses of teachers and other professionals, in addition to openly permeating public debates.

Another discussion necessary to understand the consequences of homophobia discussed in the work of Feitosa (2016) is the notion of 'internalized homophobia', also called by Borrillo (2016) 'internalized homophobia'. This concept consists of the way the LGBTQIA+ population assimilates homophobic culture and, above all, how these people construct their homophobic subjectivities, thoughts and postures. Borrillo (2016) clarifies that not even gays and lesbians are immune to such homophobic feelings, that is, "society's hatred against homosexuals can turn into self-hatred" (p. 100-101). In relation to this, Borrillo (2016, p. 101) comments:

> The internalization of this violence, in the form of insults, insults, contemptuous statements, moral condemnations or compassionate attitudes, impels a large number of homosexuals to fight against their desires, sometimes causing serious psychological disorders, such as feelings of guilt, anxiety, shame and depression. The still widespread stereotype about the homosexual incapable of having a fully developed affective life, without families or children, and being led to end his days in

> unbearable solitude – relieved, at times, by suicide – obsesses the minds of numerous gays who, in order to avoid this "tragic fate", engage in an attempt to reject their own sexuality.

In view of this, the author points out the difficulty of accepting one's own homosexuality and points out that a considerable number of LGBTQIA+ people are in a situation of isolation and unbearable anguish. In this sense, publicly manifesting their homosexuality is a liberating moment, but many choose to remain clandestine, not revealing the *coming out* of their sexuality.

It is important to emphasize that homophobia acquires institutional specifications. In this context, according to Borrillo (2016), 'institutional homophobia' refers to the way in which institutions reproduce, by action or omission, homophobic conduct. In the Brazilian scenario, Prado, Martins and Rocha (2009) demonstrate the dynamics of this type of violence, through a study in which they observed that the Rectory of the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) exempted itself from intervening in homophobic "hazing", naturalizing this type of violence in society. Dialoguing with this way of thinking, Feitosa (2016) reports that the institutional character of homophobia can also be seen in several studies that investigate the daily life and access of the LGBTQIA+ population to fundamental rights such as Education, Health, Safety, among others. In view of this, the author realizes how recurrent 'institutional homophobia' is in the fields researched.

Still with regard to 'institutional homophobia', considering the school/college/university as a social institution, Borrillo (2016) argues that these institutions should play a fundamental role in the fight against intolerance, promoting respect for diversity. The author also justifies that it is crucial that homosexuality should be presented in courses and textbooks as a legitimate manifestation of sexuality as much as heterosexuality. In this sense, Silva and Barreto (2012) consider that the school is a favorable and favorable environment for interactions as it constitutes a space rich in social relationships, in which the behaviors of students with each other, with teachers and the entire school community are loaded with values and beliefs. The authors also add that sexual orientation is neglected as a motivational factor for the occurrence of homophobic bullying1 in the school context. Hence the essential reflection on the function of the school, with regard to the control and surveillance of the sexuality of individuals.

It is notorious that the consequences of homophobia, in any instance and circumstance, constitute a factor of suffering and injustice, and in school this practice can result in the deprivation of young students from the exercise of their rights. In the perception of Junqueira (2009), homophobia exercised in the school context is a reality that causes intimidation, produces insecurity, stigmatization, isolation, factors that generate the

individual's disinterest in school activities, in addition to stimulating school dropout and dropout. As a result, it may directly influence the difficulty of inserting these young people in the competitive labor market, as it weakens and affects their self-esteem. Junqueira (2009) also points out that homosexual students, when experiencing this process of exclusion, oppression, humiliation, stigma and discrimination by classmates and teachers in the school environment, need to regularly seek strength to face such prejudices. Another important factor observed by Junqueira (2009) refers to LGBTQIA+ students, who end up introjecting that they need to present an above-average school performance, comparing themselves with heterosexual students, so that they are possibly treated as equals.

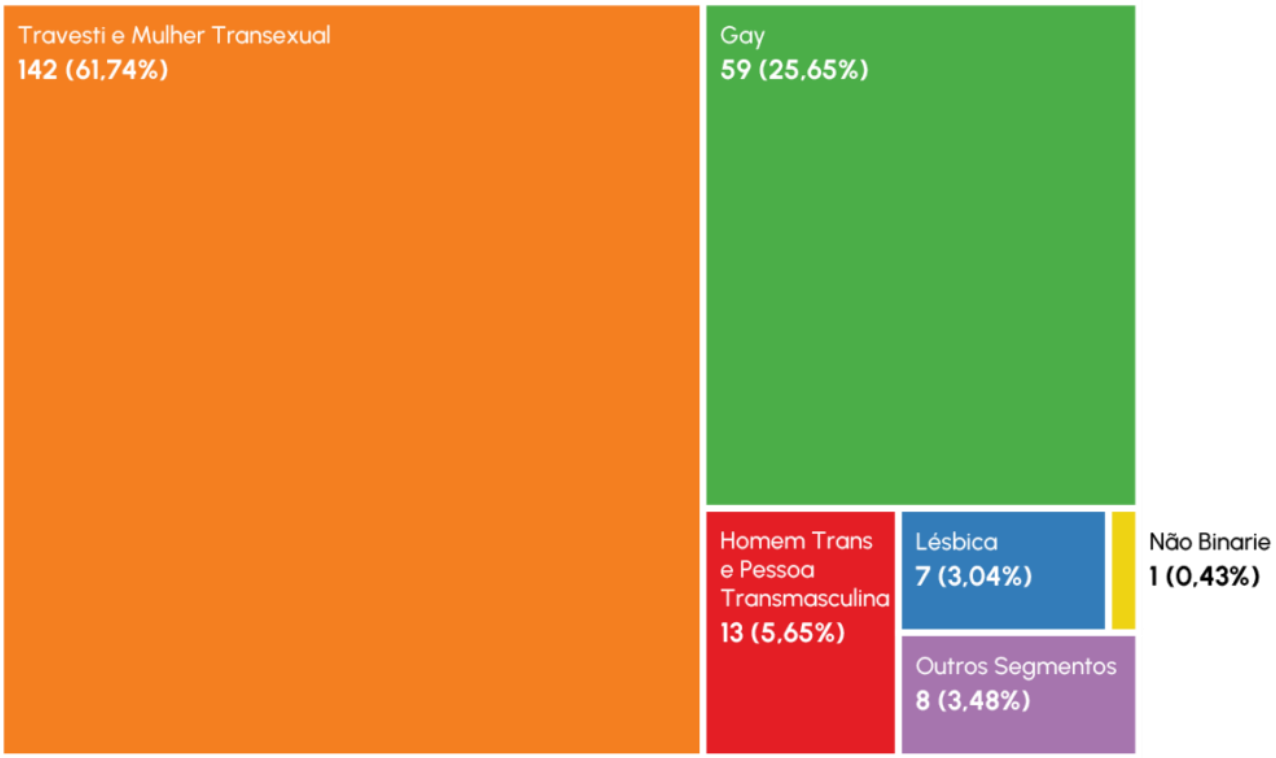
Still, in this context, Peres (2009) highlights the latent need for the school to promote reflections on themes related to respect for diversity, through lectures, conversation circles, academic events, aiming at the socialization of all, in addition to developing guidelines and Pedagogical Political Projects (PPP) that guarantee the effective confrontation of homophobia and its stigmatizing processes. In addition, Junqueira (2009) emphasizes that the school is responsible for the formation of future generations, and is also considered the basis of human formation. The author adds that the fragile initial and continuing training of teachers, the curriculum, the teaching materials, the functioning, the evaluation process, the hierarchies and even the architecture of school institutions collaborate with heteronormative guidelines, intending and excluding the LGBTQIA+ population from the basic right to education. Still in this interpretative bias, Feitosa (2016) points out that overcoming homophobia in schools is a challenging job, as teachers carry with them the hegemonic, moral, religious, and philosophical values that subordinate LGBTQIA+ people.

Another cruel face of homophobia is the violence practiced against the LGBTQIA+ population, simply because the sexual orientation of these people is different from heteronormativity, such violence happens in different spaces, the school being one of them. In general, it is essential to mention that in the middle of 2024 it is not known how to officially define the size of the LGBTQIA+ population in Brazil, which makes any calculation of the relative prevalence of violence against this social group unfeasible. In addition to this problem, the records of the police report also do not make any classification of the victim according[3]to sexual orientation, as well as there is no such characteristic in the death certificates. Therefore, dimensioning and collecting diagnoses and data to support the elaboration of public policies that will mitigate violence against this minority is a difficult task.

[3] Azevedo (2009) understands that homophobia at school can be considered a form of bullying, since both concepts would have a cultural and social meaning (p. 5). In his study, he uses the expression homophobic bullying to refer to homophobic discrimination or also homophobia in an indistinct way.

Despite all this difficulty in obtaining statistical data, it is noteworthy that in Brazil, data on violence against LGBTQIA+ people are alarming compared to other countries. In this regard, according to the LGBTIphobia Dossier published in 2023, by the Observatory of Deaths and Violence against LGBTQIA+ in Brazil, there were 230 deaths of this population violently in the country. Of these deaths, 184 were murders, 18 suicides and 28 characterized by other causes.

Illustration 01: Number of LGBTQIA+ deaths in Brazil by segment in 2023



Source: Observatory of Deaths and Violence against LGBTQIA+ in Brazil, 2023

This document is produced by the Observatory of Deaths and Violence against LGBTI+, which since 2021, has been constituted by the cooperation between 3 civil society organizations: Acontece Arte e Política LGBTQIA+, the National Association of Transvestites and Transsexuals (ANTRA) and the Brazilian Association of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transvestites, Transsexuals and Intersexes (ABGLT).

Also, according to data from the report on LGBTphobic violence in Brazil (2023), it is verified that LGBTphobia in Brazil is structural, operating in a way that disqualifies expressions of sexuality that diverge from the heteronormative standard, affecting the LGBTQIA+ population in different age groups and in the most diverse places, from the street to the family level. The data also point out that Brazilian society is sexist, sexist and misogynistic, as most aggressors are male, which attests to how much socially constructed masculinity feels threatened by other experiences of sexuality, reaching the extreme limit of

physical violence. The data analyzed in this report were obtained through the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (Dial 100), the Gay Group of Bahia (GGB) and the Trans Brazil Network (RedeTrans).

According to the report on violent deaths of LGBTQIA+ in Brazil mapped by the Gay Group of Bahia (2023), Brazil continued to be the world champion of LGBTQIA+ homicides and suicides in 2023, with 257 documented violent deaths, one more case than that recorded in 2022. Thus, it can be said that a death occurs every 34 hours, of a person, simply because of their sexual orientation. These conclusions are based on information gathered from the media, Internet research sites, and correspondence sent to the GGB, as there are no government statistics on these hate crimes against this specific population. It should be noted that this research, conducted without government resources, was carried out by volunteers, with data collected from websites, blogs, social networks and journalistic notes. It is imperative to recognize that such statistics are underreported, as sexual orientation or identity is often omitted in such funeral publications.

Also according to the report of the Gay Group of Bahia (2023), the violent death of 127 transvestites and transgenders, 118 *gays*, 9 lesbians and three bisexuals was documented, totaling 257 victims of hate crimes. These alarming numbers, even if underreported, reinforce the urgency of effective actions and policies to combat violence directed at the LGBTQIA+ community. In the same direction, according to one of those responsible for the report on violent deaths of LGBTQIA+ in Brazil mapped by the Gay Group of Bahia (2023, p. 3), Eduardo Michels, is categorical in arguing:

> 99% of these 'homicides' against LGBT are aggravated by individual homophobia, when the killer has poorly resolved his own sexuality and wants to wash his repressed desire with blood (motivated by internalized individual homophobia); or cultural homophobia, which practices *bullying* against lesbians and gays, expelling transvestites to the margins of society where violence is endemic; or institutional homophobia, when governments do not guarantee the safety of spaces frequented by the LGBT community or veto projects aimed at criminalizing homolesbotransphobia. Even when a transvestite is involved in illicit activities such as drug consumption, petty theft, her condition as a "" (transphobic culture) increases hatred and violence in the execution of the crime. From North to South of Brazil one hears it said: "" has more to die than

Although the data released by the two Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are different, but the numbers are very close, it is worth considering that not accepting the difference between sexualities implies perpetuating violence in the name of prejudice. In this sense, the State and society play a fundamental role in promoting the fight against homophobia in an expanded way and giving visibility to this sexual minority, historically marked by social evils, violence that has been demonstrated in multifaceted ways.

In this sense, it is important to emphasize that the State has failed to adopt effective measures to investigate and punish crimes of this nature. This is due to the lack and/or fragility of public policies that seek to prevent, investigate, judge, punish and repair crimes committed against LGBTQIA+ people, such factors allow and tolerate this violence, resulting in impunity and repetition.

In relation to this, it is necessary to clarify that according to the Federal Constitution of 1988, in its article 3, item XLI it is stated that "the fundamental objectives of the Federative Republic of Brazil are: to promote the good of all without prejudice of origin, race, sex, color, age and any other forms of discrimination"; and in article 5, item XLI, that "the law shall punish any discrimination that undermines fundamental rights and freedoms". It should also be noted that on June 13, 2019, the Federal Supreme Court (STF) equated and framed the crime of homophobia in the crime of racism, until the National Congress approves a specific law, in view of this, homophobic and transphobic conduct can be equated to crimes of racism. In addition, the collegiate also established the thesis in the sense that the criminal repression of the practice of homophobia does not reach or restrict the exercise of religious freedom, as long as the manifestations do not constitute hate speech. However, the class entities argue that the LGBTQIA+ minority should be understood as a group analogous to the "social race", and the aggressors, punished in the form of the crime of racism, whose conduct is non-bailable and imprescriptible, whose penalty varies between one and five years of imprisonment, according to the conduct.

It is also noteworthy that the scientific discourse and that of common sense, although they are contradictory, in their totality they are not, because the discourse of the collective imagination reflects in the scientific discourse and vice versa, with this reductionism and stereotypy are part of these discourses practiced in the daily life of society, since it is still very natural for people to link homosexuality to disease and perversion, despite the undeniable advances of this phenomenon. Finally, another important reflection is the low availability of public statistical data, both nationally and among Brazilian states, about homophobic violence. Thus, it is understood that giving notoriety to these numbers will possibly favor advances in public policies, in order to encourage and mobilize society to respect diversity, curbing prejudice and discrimination.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

82 professionals working in professional education participated in this research, as follows: 80 teachers in different hierarchical positions from 15 State Technical Schools contemplating two Regional Centers of the State of São Paulo, a Regional Supervisor and

a Supervisor Responsible for the area of Legislation and Information of the High School and Technical Education Unit (CETEC) of the Paula Souza Center. It should be noted that in this Institution, the positions of Direction, Pedagogical Coordination, Educational Guidance, Course Coordination and Decentralized Class Coordination require them to be teachers. It is also clarified that there is a possibility that these positions accumulate the function of teachers and school management team. Therefore, it is stated that the 82 participants are teachers, but many, at the current moment, are exercising school and institutional management positions/functions.

Two instruments were used for data collection. The first was a questionnaire applied to the 80 teachers and management team (direction, pedagogical coordination and educational guidance), called P01 to P80, structured in line with the theoretical framework and the objectives set for this investigation. For Gil (2008), the questionnaire is an investigation technique composed of a set of questions that are submitted to people with the purpose of obtaining information about knowledge, beliefs, feelings, values, interests, expectations, aspirations, fears, present or past behavior. The application of this instrument was done via the internet through the *Microsoft Forms form*. It is noteworthy that the questionnaire was composed of 03 open questions.

The second instrument was a semi-structured interview, composed of a guiding question, technically guided by Zago (2003), and which was applied to two professionals who hold the position of senior management in the Educational Institution: a regional supervisor from the two administrative regions, the locus of this research, and a supervisor responsible for the area of legislation and information at CETEC, called G1 and G2, in order to know their representations regarding the homosexuality of teachers in the Institution. The two participants allowed the audio recording of the interview. The audio recording of the interviews is of fundamental importance, because, according to Zago (2003), the researcher is freer to conduct the questions, advance in the problematization, in addition to favoring the relationship of interlocution. This practice requires negotiation with the respondent to obtain their approval.

With regard to ethical issues, the work was submitted to Plataforma Brasil, in accordance with Resolution 510/16, directed to the Ethics Committee for Research on Human Beings (CEP) of the Institute of Biosciences - Unesp/Rio Claro Campus. It is noteworthy that the participants who expressed spontaneous agreement to participate in the research signed the Informed Consent Form (ICF). For the treatment and analysis of the data collected through the questionnaire and interviews, the Content Analysis technique proposed by Bardin (2016) was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST HOMOSEXUAL TEACHERS IN THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Prejudice and discrimination are socially and historically produced, and permeate the different spheres of collective life, being present in academic life, and are even widely disseminated within the school community, which instead of discussing diversity opts for segregation and exclusion. Thus, in this category of analysis, the representations of the participants regarding prejudice and discrimination against homosexual teachers in the environment of the 15 ETECs are presented.

We sought to rescue from the participants whether or not they witnessed any situation at school, in which the homosexual teacher was a source of ridicule, mockery or discrimination by fellow teachers, the management team, and/or even parents and students. In this sense, 45 (56%) of the participants had never found any situation of prejudice or discrimination against homosexual teachers at school. On the other hand, 30 (38%) claim to have witnessed such a situation in the school environment. While 5 (6%) cannot distinguish whether or not the situation falls under homophobia. The 30 (38%) of the participants who witnessed a discriminatory situation were observed to have the sensation caused, according to Chart 01.

Chart 01: Feeling of witnessing a situation of discrimination against homosexual teachers in the school environment

Times of Sensations mentioned:	Testimonials from participants
07 Lack of respect:	"A tremendous lack of respect. There is always someone in the teachers' room calling homosexuals 'bambi' and ". (P06) "The only feeling is the lack of respect, because ignorance is present in all media, including in the teachers' room" (P09)
06 Discomfort / Discomfort:	"The feeling I had was one of discomfort, it shocked me deeply, because I do not accept prejudiced people in any aspect" (P13) "I felt uncomfortable, because prejudice does not make us better or superior than others" (P21) "It bothers me and makes me uncomfortable" (P37)
05 Embarrassment:	"Total embarrassment. The jokes are very clueless and offend people" (P04) "The jokes, jokes and jokes in bad taste against homosexuals embarrass people" (P35)

03 Disgust / Repudium:	"Disgust. People feel immune, as if homosexuality were a disease or shamelessness" (P03) "The impact caused was one of repudiation, I wanted to preserve the homosexual teacher of this ridiculous situation" (P27)
03 Inferiorization:	"I feel inferior. Weekly I hear gay jokes in the teachers' room, people even forget that I am also gay. I'm embarrassed" (P26) "The feeling is one of inferiority. Several times, I have witnessed in the teachers' room, in pedagogical and course meetings, teachers uttering homophobic terms and offenses, this became even more latent in the period after Bolsonaro's election, and this is crystallizing, unfortunately" (P33)
02 Sadness:	"I think it's immensely sad. It is necessary to respect all people" (P01) "Very sad to see how people are prejudiced and how much they make others suffer" (P14)
02 Indignation:	"Outraged. I have witnessed these situations of discrimination both on the part of some teachers and managers, but I withdrew from the teachers' room and started to assign my classes to the Decentralized Classes, where there is an environment of respect" (P36)
02 Joke:	"I took it as a joke. I witnessed a situation in which the homosexual teacher himself made jokes with homosexuals, provoking laughter from everyone teachers present" (P29)
8 different sensations	30 (participants)

Source: Research Data – Prepared by the authors.

Chart 01 shows that seven participants found a lack of respect, six people had the feeling of discomfort and discomfort. The embarrassment was the feeling of five people. Three had the feeling of disgust, repudiation and inferiority. And, finally, the following sensations: sadness, indignation and being the target of a joke were expressed by two participants (each).

Prejudice and discrimination can be perceived through situations of different natures, such as ethnic-racial, physical, linguistic, religious, political, socioeconomic, generational, gender, sexual orientation, among others. We agree with Borrillo (2016) that in the school context, such situations are constituted by humiliation that permeate relationships, even if they are not always perceived and identified as such, and are not limited to *bullying* among school subjects. They also occur in pedagogical decisions, in the rules of coexistence, in

the organization of routine and environment, in disciplinary referrals, including between coexistence and student-student, teacher-student and teacher-teacher relationship.

Another form of expression of homophobia, according to Borrillo (2016), can be perceived through insults, everyday insults, vulgar jokes and jokes, mockery that exposes and ridicules a certain person, simply for being homosexual, in addition to homophobia can also manifest itself silently and even through the use of pejorative terms to refer to LGBTQIA+ people, in order to disqualify, inferiorize and demean these people. Such pejorative terms against homosexual people, in the school environment, was the motto of study by Souza, Silva and Santos (2017). Thus, it is perceived that homophobic attitudes are so naturalized that they become invisible and, with that, behaviors that end up spreading homophobia are reproduced. Such naturalization makes up the constructions and understandings of common sense, that is, of the concensual universe.

Here it is worth mentioning that two participants had the feeling of being the target of a 'joke'. In view of this, we believe that heterosexuals' mockery of homosexuals is explicit, apparently socially legitimized. In addition, homosexuals make jokes about themselves, assuming that the jokes are 'funny', ratifying through jokes and laughter the social stigma called by Borrillo (2016) 'internalized homophobia', which consists of the way the LGBTQIA+ public assimilates homophobic culture and, above all, how these people construct their homophobic subjectivities, thoughts and postures, because not even gays and lesbians are immune to such feelings.

This interpretation is close to the study by Pompeu and Souza (2019) who notes the presence of homophobic humor naturalized in the professional environment, through jokes and mockery, establishing a relationship between the oppressed (the homosexual individual) and the oppressor (the one who makes the joke). In Brazilian culture, the use of jokes is something present in everyday life, which makes it difficult for people to consider them as *bullying* directed at homosexuals (Reis; Carvalho, 2014). After all, many people are unaware of the association of such jokes with discrimination or reduce their offensive character, naturalizing them.

In view of this, it is clear that prejudice is inside and outside the school walls. Specifically, in relation to sexual orientation, we found that such discrimination is not only present in the homosexuality of the student, but also of the homosexual teacher, according to situations witnessed by 30 (38%) participants.

Another question asked the participants was whether they had ever witnessed any case of violence against homosexual teachers in the school environment. We have 66 (83%) of the participants who have never witnessed a case of violence, while 14 (17%)

reveal that they have. We detected that verbal and symbolic violence are the two main types of violence against homosexual teachers in the ETECs, witnessed by 14 participants.

Violence at school is not a current phenomenon, it is a reality that has transcended for decades. Such violence, in the school environment, manifests itself in different ways, through verbal, physical, psychological, symbolic aggression, practices of prejudice, discrimination, *bullying, cyberbullying*, among others. In this sense, for Borrillo (2016), homophobia is the repulsion or prejudice against homosexuals, and is one of the causes of violence in the school context, both among students and teachers.

It is symptomatic that the violence and tensions involving homosexuality are naturalized in school. We agree with Prado and Junqueira (2011) that prejudice is one of the marks of the society of distinction, contributing to the maintenance of hierarchy among social groups by legitimizing the valorization of the attributes of the dominant class and, consequently, the inferiority of the marginalized minority, for example, homosexuals. It is noteworthy that hatred and violence arising from prejudice are established, consolidated and reproduced in the school environment as a result of the inequalities instituted between individuals, whether by sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion or social class. We saw that in the TSECs studied, such violence manifests itself mainly verbally1 and symbolically2.

In practice, this last type of aggression arises when an individual escapes the standard of normality and the interests of the hegemonic classes are reproduced and institutionalized, excluding and devaluing the dominated. We corroborate the way of thinking of Prado and Machado (2009) when they emphasize that symbolic violence is as dangerous as the other types, because it acts silently, preventing individuals from identifying the limits of their own perception of reality, that is, they hide the real reasons for inferiority of the other, naturalizing such behavior.

Common sense, which permeates our entire society, prevents us from evolving in conceptual terms, especially on a topic that is inherent to all of us, human sexuality. In this way, prejudiced representations are perpetuated, rooted in the consensual universe. As a consequence, these anchored heterosexist thoughts and beliefs also influence school actions in relation to homosexual teachers and/or students. And such beliefs are subtly manifested in different environments, including at school, through games and jokes, according to P29's report. And these silent forms of prejudice reverberate in the school environment, according to Junqueira (2009) such homophobia causes intimidation, produces insecurity, stigmatization, isolation, factors that stimulate and can cause school dropout and dropout.

The perceptions of the participants who witnessed such violence (verbal or symbolic) are shown in Chart 02. In view of this, we realize that everyone disapproves and repudiates the practice of prejudice and discrimination against homosexual teachers in the 15 ETECs.

Chart 02: Perceptions of participants who witnessed some type of violence against homosexual teachers at school

Times of Perceptions mentioned	Testimonials from participants
04 Nuisance	"I felt quite uncomfortable" (p. 02) "Very bothered and angry by the homophobic comments" (P48)
04 Upset and Disrespect	"Upset, because I didn't expect to be disrespected in the middle of the teachers' room" (P16)
	"I felt disrespected, and later I was upset with the situation", because it is through jokes that homophobes manifest themselves covertly" (P33)
01 Uncomfortable	"Extremely uncomfortable" (P06)
01 Indignation	"Total indignation" (P44)
01 Frustration	"Frustrating, disappointed. Even some teachers, especially older women, were outraged by the teachers' jokes about these sexuality issues, gay among others" (P11)
01 Offense	"Offended, because they don't respect people" (P17)
01 Sadness	"Very sad about the situation, because the subject made pre-judgments that did not match reality and the character of the homosexual teacher (P58)
01 Contempt	"I feel contempt for those who do this" (P13)
8 different perceptions	14 (participants)

Source: Research Data – Prepared by the authors.

It is evident that the practice of homophobia, outside or inside the school, brings negative consequences of different natures, especially for the victims, because if for the participants who witnessed[4]such situations of discrimination against homosexual teachers, perceptions of discomfort, discomfort, indignation, frustration, offense, sadness and contempt were generated. We infer that for these homosexual teachers who have suffered such violence, the psychological damage is certainly greater. As expected, the results of the

[4] According to Salles et al. (2010), verbal violence combines offensive words, embedded in prejudice and non-humanistic discourse.

violence practiced can unfold in suffering, trauma, depression, inferiority, humiliation, social isolation, and even suicide.

Associated with this, we have the experience of ambiguities, which can lead to identity crises and the development of a feeling of exclusion or non-belonging, added to demonstrations of revolt with the *status quo*, a feeling of continuous losses and disbelief in the possibility of changing reality (Prado; Machado, 2009). Thus, these subjugated individuals, through prejudice, blame themselves for the situation, judging themselves as inferior. And, in the face of this inferiority, self-confidence is unfeasible, implying disbelief in one's own personal and professional potentialities.

Still with regard to prejudice and discrimination, we tried to find out from the two supervising managers (G1 and G2) if the fact that a homosexual teacher is self-declared can lead the person to suffer some type of discomfort at school, and if they are treated by the school community in the same way as heterosexual teachers.

Regarding discomfort, G2 believes that being homosexual is not a preponderant reason to cause discomfort, but emphasizes the need for people to have emotional intelligence3 and empathy, that is, to know, understand and put themselves in the place of the other, to inhibit such negative feeling.

This ability allows the recognition of some elementary signs of the human being, for example, tone of voice, acceptance of differences, paying attention and respecting the opinion of the other, signs capable of favoring empathy in relationships. To this end, according to Moscovici (2010), social representations as almost tangible entities circulate, intersect and crystallize continuously, through a word, gesture, meeting, in our daily lives. Thus, they are present in most of the relationships and communications we establish with people or groups of people, as well as in the objects we produce and/or consume in our daily lives.

G1, on the other hand, points out that we are in a veiled prejudiced society. Thus, the teacher's attitude in assuming his/her homosexuality at school greatly influences the acceptance or rejection of this person in the school environment. In this sense, Borrillo (2016) highlights that society is historically marked[5]by male domination, through patriarchy and machismo, advocating superiority in relation to the feminine, as well as the denial and rejection of homosexuality. Thus, we agree with Borrillo's (2016) argument that 'general homophobia' consists of all behavior that establishes heterosexuality as a standard norm, excluding any other form of sexuality, including homosexuality.

[5] Symbolic violence is defined by Bourdieu (1999) as a subtle mechanism of domination and social exclusion that is used by individuals, groups or institutions.

According to G1, in a certain way, a person can be openly homosexual, but not necessarily raise flags. Because according to him, it is necessary to understand that the school is an authoritarian and conservative institution, even more than the Church. Thus, some precepts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are cared for in the school environment, and, therefore, certain things are not allowed and admitted.

We perceive here an implicit form of prejudice, as such representation of negative content remains with intensity in the social imaginary. The acceptance or rejection of a homosexual individual in contemporary society, as we have already mentioned, depends solely on his or her behavior and attitude, ratifying the guilt of that person in having the homosexual orientation. We believe that raising a "flag" means knowing oneself, valuing oneself and becoming visible in different environments, we are even experiencing a culture of "political correctness", especially with regard to the acceptance of the other, based on equality among all, in addition common sense imposes that being prejudiced nowadays is unethical or, at least, denotes lack of information.

G1 also makes a caveat that there is an erroneous understanding that the homosexual teacher seeks the school precisely for intentional proximity to the students, with ulterior motives, of enticement, and not for vocation and professionalism. Therefore, in G1's perception, rejection is the result of a secular, sexist culture, which determines what each one can and should be. In this way, the homosexual teacher is required to have a reserved posture. We emphasize that the representation that the homosexual individual is a sexual pervert is still produced and reproduced in society. Therefore, we believe that this distorted representation, associating homosexuality with pedophilia, needs to be fought.

According to the experience and experience of G1, during his 35-year trajectory at the Paula Souza Center, he is unaware of situations in which any teacher has been harmed, persecuted or had his or her actions limited due to his or her homosexuality, but he says that literature has shown us, in terms of the country, that reality is not always this. Also in this direction, G2 clarifies that she is not aware of unequal and disrespectful treatment among teachers, especially due to sexual diversity in ETECs.

Correspondingly to the form of treatment is seen similarly between the two managers, that is, they believe that homosexual and heterosexual teachers need to be treated equally. In this sense, G1 highlights that the few problems of sexual harassment that exist in the Institution are strictly related to heterosexual teachers, therefore, it does not know situations of rejection of students because a teacher is homosexual. She even adds

that in ETECs there is a good affective relationship, in the sense of empathy, respect and friendship between teachers, regardless of sexual orientation.[6]

In view of the above, we emphasize that society is marked and characterized by diversity and we fully agree with Feitosa (2016), Borrillo (2016) and Toledo (2018) when they emphasize that the school must play a fundamental role in the fight against intolerance, promoting respect [7]for diversity. It is noteworthy that although people have points of similarity, they all have unique characteristics that differentiate them from each other. Thus, cultural, social, economic, physical, intellectual, gender differences, among many others, are present in all forms of social grouping: the school is just one example of an environment of social coexistence. Therefore, in all environments, we need to establish and enable inclusion, respect, and equality among all people.

As a way of confronting homophobia in the school environment, we believe it is necessary for the school to promote articulated and non-hierarchical studies and debates between education professionals and students, in order to question the prejudices and norms historically constituted from the perspective that heterosexuality is the only legitimate expression of sexuality. For these changes to be effective, we must strive to sensitize the school community to the forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation, which have led students to drop out of school because they cannot stand the suffering caused by jokes, threats and daily aggression inside and outside the school walls.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This investigation began through a personal and professional concern that aimed to know what are the representations of teachers, management team and supervision, about teacher homosexuality in the school environment of State Technical Schools. We consider that the objective was achieved and, above all, that the guiding questions were answered in the light of the theoretical references adopted about homosexuality and homophobia.

Regarding one of the specific objectives, to identify in the perception of the participants whether or not there are occurrences of prejudice in relation to homosexual teachers in the school environment of the ETECs, we found that 56% did not find situations of prejudice or discrimination against homosexual teachers, but 38% vehemently affirm the existence of prejudiced occurrences in relation to homosexual teachers, which means the existence of homophobia within the State Technical Schools. We believe that the school, theoretically, is the best social environment to promote diversity; However, in this

[6] Goleman (1995) understands that emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize one's own emotions and, through this self-knowledge, understand the other's emotion.

environment it is not easy to be different, in the sense of not following heteronormative standards. We noticed that issues related to sexuality, especially homosexuality, are treated superficially in the school environment, and when it comes to the teacher, it is even more veiled. Thus, we recognize the difficulty of some participants not being able to identify whether or not such a situation was a prejudiced attitude.

A clear unfolding of this prejudice against the sexual orientation of homosexual teachers was confirmed through representations of 17% of the participants, who claimed to have witnessed or witnessed some episode of violence, verbal and/or symbolic. Nevertheless, we realize that everyone disapproves and repudiates the practice of prejudice and discrimination against homosexual teachers in the 15 ETECs. We emphasize that tension and violence generate a symptomatic effect that is disguised as a supposed normality, given the naturalization that the mentality and violent behavior go through. Thus, we show that the practice of homophobia, outside or inside the school, brings negative consequences of different natures, especially for the victims.

We verified different sensations of the participants who witnessed such situations of discrimination against homosexual teachers at school, among them: discomfort, discomfort, lack of respect on the part of the aggressor, embarrassment, disgust, repudiation, inferiority, sadness, indignation and play. In relation to this last sensation, it was found that the "aggressors" interpret the act of "mocking" homosexual people as something natural, as such an attitude is recognized by the school as harmless. In addition, it is practiced and reproduced, on a daily basis, in an innocuous way. Therefore, such insults, offenses and mockery are crystallized in/by society.

We can affirm, through the representations of professional education teachers, that there are still veiled prejudices about homosexuality in the general context. In this sense, due to the complexity of the homosexuality phenomenon, we highlight the need for it to be widely researched and studied, in order to be better understood and understood. Such complexity implies that homosexuality is present in the biological, psychological, religious, social, cultural and environmental dimensions. Therefore, all this frantic search and discussion about the reasons and causality of homosexuality makes us reflect on "why heterosexuality does not need to be explained", but we consider valid and pertinent the development of research with the purpose of deconstructing false beliefs, rooted especially from the religious perspective, that homosexuality is "the devil's thing" and pathological. We reinforce that religious institutions – especially those of the Judeo-Christian tradition – are the ones that most distill prejudices against homosexuality, because in the name of Christian belief and values, they annihilate, exclude, offend and belittle homosexual people,

even if such behaviors completely escape religious teachings, such as one of the biblical precepts "Love one another, as I have loved you. Only in this way will you be recognized as my disciples" (John 13:34-35).

Through this panorama of complexity about homosexuality, we have seen that addressing this or similar themes in the school environment can generate controversies and conflicts with different school actors. Therefore, we believe it is essential to stimulate the discussion about gender and sexuality in schools, because such discussion will possibly contribute to the integral formation of students, expand the understanding of the homosexual universe, and above all we understand that the school is the best social and political environment to discuss sexual diversity, as it enables greater awareness of children, young people and adolescents about the importance of mutual respect to live in society, minimizing the cruel consequences of discrimination and prejudice. In addition, we think that the school, by providing opportunities for debates with adequate and up-to-date information from a scientific point of view associated with the various values related to sexuality existing in society, enables students to fill this gap on this important topic, which is part of their intimacy and privacy. Therefore, reflecting on these issues in the school environment will certainly help adolescents to move through this phase of life, minimizing doubts, anguish and rebellion about sexuality.

We recognize the need and the need to expand research on teacher homosexuality in the school environment, and especially the multiple possibilities of investigation in this field of knowledge. However, we hope that the results of this study have contributed to motivate possible discussions about the importance of the school in stimulating and implementing actions to prevent and confront prejudice and discrimination, in all senses, especially homophobia. To this end, it is necessary to provide the school community with information and knowledge about the theme of gender and sexuality, in order to subsidize school agents in the promotion of pedagogical strategies that combat the different nuances of homophobia. Because, as long as this form of prejudice exists, even if subtly, trivializations will continue to be manifested in the daily life of the school through jokes, mockery and malicious jokes.

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