


MASCULINITIES AND HEALTH: NARRATIVES (CO)CONSTRUCTED BY YOUNG PEOPLE FROM A PUBLIC SCHOOL IN THE AGRESTE REGION OF PERNAMBUCO

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Jullyane Chagas Barboza Brasilino¹ and Jorge Edielson Costa Gueiros²

ABSTRACT

The present study analyzes the meanings of masculinities and their implications on health practices among adolescents from a state public school in the agreste region of Pernambuco, which had as a research question: How do the (co)produced meanings about masculinities interact with adolescent health care practices? Thus, the general objective was to analyze the meanings of masculinities that circulate among adolescent male students of a state public school in the agreste region of Pernambuco. The methodology used was qualitative, based on social constructionism, it included as methodological steps an initial bibliographic review, followed by observations in the school daily life and conversation circle with the students. All these steps were recorded in the research diaries. The results indicated that adolescents produced and (re)produced, but also questioned, norms of hegemonic masculinity that influence their care practices. The conversation circle evidenced internal conflicts and social pressures related to gender expectations, a fact that impacts behaviors such as the search for health services and practices said to be masculine. It is concluded that the school environment is a strategic space to foster criticism about gender and health, in the search to (co)construct meanings about masculinities, in order to think about the deconstruction of stereotypes and the promotion of inclusive practices that provide health promotion.

Keywords: Masculinities, Health, Social Psychology.

¹ Dr. in Social Psychology - PUC/SP
Adjunct Professor - UPE/Garanhuns

² Graduated in Psychology - UPE/Garanhuns
University of Pernambuco - UPE

INTRODUCTION³

In the last thirty years, gender issues have gained spaces for discussion in interpersonal and/or institutional relationships. Since feminist studies in the second half of the last century, as well as studies on masculinities, the focus of this research, which had their first research carried out at the end of the 1980s (Lyra; Medrado, 2008). From this moment on, in the last two decades, it has become relevant that these themes be incorporated into discussions in the most diverse spaces of socialization, such as schools, so that they act in their primary function, which is "the full development of the student, his preparation for the exercise of citizenship and his qualification for work" (Brasil, 1996, p. 1). That said, gender relations have a direct impact on social relations, as they organize and systematize society based on power relations, which demarcate the places that people occupy, considering that the ways of being and their knowledge and daily practices are implied by these relations (Lyra; Medrado, 2008).

It was in the mid-1990s, with the aim of developing a specific field of studies on masculinities within gender debates, that the author Robert - now Rayween - Connell, discussed this idea. But it was only in 2004, along with a few other authors, that Connell published the "Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities" in an attempt to organize knowledge about masculinities. This study highlighted four aspects that encompass masculinities: 1) the reproductions of masculinities in social organization; 2) How men understand "gender identities"; 3) Masculinities as a product of social interactions, and finally, 4) Constructions of masculinities and their relations with institutions (Lyra; Medrado, 2008).

In this way, the works on the theme, more specifically "hegemonic masculinity", provoke "a link between the growing field of men's studies, popular anxieties about men and boys, feminist position on patriarchy and social models of gender" (Connell; Messerschmidt, 2013, p.2), which seek to think about social interactions from a relational gender perspective, stressing the disparities that these relations have engendered.

Thus, gender relations play an important role in thinking about life practices in general, and here we highlight health care, various types of access, and even the way people understand their well-being. In the context of masculinities, particularly among young people, the social norms that dictate what it means to be "masculine" can lead to

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the denial of vulnerabilities and the adoption of risky behaviors, often to the detriment of health care. Analyzing the linguistic repertoires on masculinities in health practices allows us to identify how these social constructions impact the way of experiencing or refusing care, reflecting the need to approach health in a way that is sensitive to gender relations.

Thus, the school, *the locus* of the present study, becomes a fertile soil to enhance the reflections on a possible overcoming of gender inequalities, since it is in this space that the first social relations begin to be constituted. Corroborating this idea, the Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education in its first article states: "Education encompasses the formative processes that take place in family life, in human coexistence, at work, in teaching and research institutions, in social movements and civil society organizations and in cultural manifestations" (Brasil, 1996, p.1). Thus, the present research focused on male adolescents who are in schools of the state education network in the southern agreste of Pernambuco.

In the meantime, the study is linked to the umbrella project entitled: Gender, Sexual Diversity and Health in schools: possible dialogues. And having as a triggering question: What is the interaction between the (co)produced meanings about masculinities among adolescents from a state school in the agreste region of Pernambuco and the practices of health care? Thus, the general objective was to analyze the meanings of masculinities that circulate among adolescent male students of a state public school in the agreste region of Pernambuco. Its specific objective is to analyze the different linguistic repertoires on masculinities about students' integral health practices.

METHODOLOGY

It is a qualitative research, focusing on a set of social practices, in this way, it was a study focused on singularities and non-quantification, because there is a view that, "works with meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes [...]" (Minayo, p. 21 and 22, 2001). In addition, the research is based on the view of social constructionism, which focuses on the investigation of the ways in which people explain, describe and see the world in which they live (Spink, 2010). According to the author, constructionist-based research results in "a socialization of knowledge that becomes something that we build together through our social practices and not something that learns from the world" (Spink, 2010, p. 9).

Furthermore, this text is an excerpt from a larger research entitled "Gender, Sexual

Diversity and Health in Schools: possible dialogues", which was submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pernambuco - UPE and approved with CAAE: 73164323.0.0000.0128, opinion: 6.454.374.

A methodological step was the bibliographic survey. In it, we use the Virtual Health Library - VHL; *Scielo*; Electronic Journals in Psychology - PEPsic, and the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD). For the bibliographic search, we chose the descriptors "masculinities"; "adolescents"; "men", "health" and "school". From this research, a time frame was made from the years 2018 to 2023, in order to consider the last five years of publications to have more recent sources and 53 results were found, respectively, 4 from the VHL; 2 (repeated) from Scielo; In PEPsic, the only combination that generated 14 results were - masculinities and men; and finally, we identified 33 BDTD texts.

For the final selection of the texts, we used the following criteria: To read all the abstracts and identify points of intersection of these with the research that has masculinities and health as its central themes. In the next stage, we screened and selected 10 articles for full reading, which were directly linked to the study in question. In addition, some books that address the descriptors of the research and that are a reference in this area of study were read.

Another important stage of the study was the choice of a school to develop the research, we opted for a Reference School in High School with which we had had little contact previously. The referred EREM was founded in 1960 and the following year being recognized by ordinance of the state government. In 2023 (the year of the observation and conversation circles), it had the following structure: 12 classrooms operating only with the High School modality, the final stage of Basic Education, 4 for the first years, 4 for the second years, 3 for the third years and a library; a sports court; 2 laboratories, 1 of which is science and the other is informatics; 1 patio that also serves as a cafeteria, as the school does not have one; 1 kitchen; 1 room for coordination; 1 management room; 1 secretary; 1 teachers' room and 4 bathrooms, 2 male and 2 female (two of these are exclusive for teachers), and finally, the school has a green area.

Initially, a visit was carried out with the aim of observing the daily life of the school, the place where the adolescents live, class schedules, breaks and living spaces within this context. We present the research proposal and the letter of consent authorized by the Regional Management of Education of the Southern Agreste - GRE/AM. It was explained

how the conversation circles would work and the importance of students knowing a little about the theme of the circles and their objectives.

However, the complications that could happen for this execution were discussed, since by the end of the school year (2023) and that specific month (November) the application of the external tests SAEB (Brazilian Educational Evaluation System) and SAEPE (Pernambuco Educational Evaluation System) would take place. In addition, the school would experience a project called State in Focus, which takes place annually, in which it mobilizes the entire school community. When we talked and visited the school calendar, we agreed on days to talk to the students informally, talk a little about the research and the delivery of the authorization documents of the parents or guardians of the adolescents interested (ICF and Media Use) to participate voluntarily. Another pertinent factor was to make clear to the school our interest in giving feedback to all those involved in it and the Assistant was interested in thinking about a project based on the results of this study.

During the month of November, there were a total of eight visits to the school, getting to know the space, talking to people, talking about the research with the adolescents, delivering documentation and collecting it. The school management signaled the 1st year of High School C as the room that has the most male students. In this room, most did not want to participate at first, and resistance was identified on their part when talking about the theme and how it would happen collectively - in a conversation circle. When the first raised his hand, the vast majority also raised it and questions arose.

In this way, together with the school, we decided to spread the news of the rodas in the first four years of the school and we hope for the adhesion of the students. In all, more than 30 copies of the ICF and Media Use were delivered, however, with the experience of the project at school and its close culmination, the students always forgot the documents at home, hence the need to make many visits, as the school was focused on this activity and dispersed for other tasks, and research was one of them. For Spink (2008) the difficulties that may occur for insertion in the field-theme, among them, we have the disposition for dialogue and sharing of experiences. This factor becomes essential, as it was necessary to be open to dialogue and the exchange of ideas with members of the school community, in order to enrich the research and promote a collaborative approach of the participants in the light of social psychology.

Social psychology, as a field of study, faces the challenge of legitimizing everyday

observation as a scientific method. Persuading the scientific community and the general public of the validity of sitting in cafes, walking on the streets, and talking to people as legitimate research practices requires an ongoing debate about the relevance and rigor of these methods. This discussion is critical to ensuring the quality and credibility of social psychology research, especially when it comes to qualitative studies that rely on subjective experiences and interpretations (Spink, 2008). From a reflective and collaborative approach, we can strengthen social psychology as a rigorous and relevant field of knowledge for understanding human behavior in different social contexts. Such aspects legitimize the importance of the various observations made in that space.

These initial meetings were important to get to know the space, to talk to the school community, to learn about how the research participants live together, getting closer to the dynamics of the space and the relationship it provides. That said, an observation occurred *in the* daily life, with the aim of constituting a relationship between the researchers, the space and the participants. According to Batista, Bernardes and Menegon (2014), field studies require the researcher to reflect on everyday life and the configuration of the *microplace*. This interaction becomes essential for the quality of the research.

In addition to the rich observations in the daily life of the school, recorded in the research diary, another important methodological step helped us in the process of co-producing meanings about masculinities and health with adolescents, were the conversation circles. Thus, we think of conversation circles as this space for group interaction, in which the people who are participating come together in a circular way to share experiences on a certain theme, based on an exchange of ideas in a collaborative way. For Rasera (2020), this meeting format provides a comfortable environment for this sharing, the equality of those involved – due to the circular and horizontal position that everyone meets, mutual respect and active listening for a co-construction of narratives.

The choice of conversation circles as a research strategy was with the aim of promoting the expression of opinions of adolescents in a free and reflective way. Because there is no hierarchy in the questions and reflections, it is possible to promote multiple voices, to value the diversity of perspectives on the same theme, not to mention that participants have the opportunity to engage in collaborative processes of social transformation, strengthening social ties and the development of a cooperative and constructive debate (Rasera, 2020).

The conversation circle presented and analyzed here was carried out by one of the

authors and researcher Maria Isabel Cavalcante Almeida, both researchers of the umbrella research "Gender, Sexual Diversity and Health in Schools: possible dialogues", lasting one hour and fifty-seven minutes, which took place in the school library with 14 participants. The circle was recorded and transcribed on the researchers' smartphones, and complementary notes were made, with the participants' permission. This information was filed in the notebook of the main researcher and will be deleted after the proper treatment of the data.

Following the ethical rigor of the research, it is necessary to use some documents to carry out conversation circles with adolescents in a school. Thus, the Informed Consent Form (ICF) was used, containing all the procedures and objectives of the research for the signature of the parents or guardians of the adolescents, seeking to make clear their awareness and voluntary participation. Another document that is signed by those responsible is called Use of Media, because the conversation circles are recorded and transcribed, it is necessary to authorize the use of these speeches. These procedures are anchored by CNS Resolution No. 466/2012, which clarifies that all studies carried out with human beings must be approved by the Research Ethics Committee and their participants (in this case, parents or guardians) must sign the ICF, as well as it must be read by the researcher with those involved, making it relevant to have a copy available for each one (Brigagão *et al.*, 2014).

In addition, because the study participants were adolescents, the Informed Consent Form (TALE) was read and signed. This document was presented to the participants because they were minors, as a way of respecting the autonomy of these adolescents and ensuring that they understood the objectives and risks of the research in which they were volunteering to participate (Novoa, 2014). TALE aims to expose in a clear and accessible way to adolescents the procedures that involve their participation and inform the possibility of leaving the research at any time. In addition, the use of the ICF and TALE can contribute to the quality and reliability of the data produced, since adolescents will be more engaged and motivated to actively participate in the research. Finally, a term of Use of Media was signed by the adolescents also informing them that the voices would be recorded and transcribed.

Therefore, to conduct the conversation circle we use several resources and group techniques such as: Contract; Presentation technique (icebreaker); Use of audiovisual material as a trigger for the theme (video: My life of João - Instituto Papai), and Use of

collages on the theme. For the planning of group meetings, we took as a basis the studies of Emerson Rasera (2020) on the contributions of social constructionism to group meetings and their effects.

Groups provide a space for dialogue, collaboration, and the construction of shared meanings, in the formation of identities, in the transmission of values, in the promotion of social change, contributing to the strengthening of social relations and the development of more cohesive and inclusive communities (Rasera, 2020). Thus, when we think that conversation circles would be a way to give adolescents the opportunity to share different perspectives, experiences and knowledge, which contributes to the creation of new ways of understanding the world and acting in a collaborative and co-constructed way.

According to Rasera (2020), in social constructionism, group work plays a fundamental role in the construction of reality. From the interaction and shared discourse, the group becomes a space for the co-construction of narratives, negotiation of meanings and formation of identities. Group work values the diversity of voices and co-responsibility in the search for solutions to the challenges of the community. In this way, the group becomes an environment conducive to critical reflection, social transformation, and the promotion of a participatory and inclusive democracy. In short, group work in social constructionism enhances the capacity for collaboration and collective action for the positive transformation of society.

For the systematization of the transcriptions, a framework was constructed, as a map of association of ideas, based on the study of Mary Jane Spink (2013), the maps organize and systematize the different elements of the research. Linguistic construction, repertoires and implicit dialogues come together in a composition of interpretation and production of meanings, through the analysis of discursive practices. According to the author, these instruments have a double objective, which are: "to provide subsidies to the interpretation process and to facilitate the communication of the steps underlying the interpretative process" (Spink, 2013, p. 107).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

From the conversation circle, it was intended to analyze the meanings about masculinities and health that circulate among adolescent students of a state public school in the agreste region of Pernambuco. Likewise, identifying in their discourses the

implications of hegemonic masculinity in the school context, and mapping the production of these meanings in the daily lives of the participants.

The space reserved for the conversation circle to take place was the library, having to relocate the servers from the environment to the teachers' room, a fact that generated a certain discomfort on the part of the school, since all the activities that take place in the library end up being experienced by the library servers as well, as it is their work environment and the school does not have other spaces for the culmination of these activities.

We organized the chairs in a circular way aiming at horizontality, in which all adolescents could hear and be heard, with social constructionism as a theoretical contribution for the development of the conversation circle. This disposition, from the perspective of constructionism, is understood as a co-construction – a collective construction based on the exchanges of experiences of all those who are part of the meeting (Rasera, 2020). Based on this assumption, the library was organized as follows

Given this, the following reports were organized into a category, based on interpretative repertoires - discursive practices that are composed of terms, descriptions and figures of speech, delimiting the options for discursive construction based on the context and specific grammatical styles (Spink; Medrado, 2013), produced from the conversation circles. In order to contemplate the objective of the study, we organized it as follows: **3.1 Health and masculinities** and for this category subcategories were associated, with fragments of the conversation circles, which are: **3.1.1 Do men cry? barriers to emotional expression, and 3.1.2 Consequences of machismo**. In order to ensure the confidentiality of the participants, it was asked what would be the name that each young person would like to be called in the writing of this study, so all names are fictitious.

HEALTH AND MASCULINITIES

Taking this category as a reference, men's health care is a recent topic in the literature. Thus, most men neglect self-care to reaffirm their "place" of virility and masculine strength, an important marker against what is considered feminine. Some men deny that they are in suffering and/or have some kind of pain, they "swallow their tears" so as not to show themselves vulnerable (Cardoso, 2023).

In view of this, with the purpose of meeting the specific objective of analyzing the different linguistic repertoires on masculinities about students' comprehensive health practices; We built the subcategories: 3.3.1 Do you cry? Barriers to Emotional Expression, and 3.3.2 Consequences of Machismo.

Do men cry? Barriers to emotional expression

When we construct this subcategory, we think of emotional expression as any and all forms of demonstration of affection in the broad sense. In line with normative gender standards, men need to be strong, virile, not elucidate feelings, be manly, and being part of a family they need to be the provider (Cardoso, 2023). This subcategory was intertwined during all the discourses of the circle, every now and then, it emerged, here are some of the sequences of excerpts from speeches that illustrate such reflection:

Belzinhã: So, what did you think?

Jorge: Beyond naps? lol

Amón: So, the film, not the film, the video brings several criticisms. There's one that is, like that, there are several, there's one that I wanted to remember specifically but I forgot. But then, for example, there is that part of what he is crying that then the rubber goes there and just turns it off and puts it on, and since he can't control his crying, then he puts it to rain, because then it would be an excuse: **He's not crying, it's just raining.**

These lines came soon after the video: My Life of John was reproduced during the conversation circle. Amón makes it clear that the pencil - represented in the video as a marker of hegemonic social norms, draws the rain so that the character does not show vulnerability by crying - **"He's not crying, it's just raining"**, and followed by that, others came:

Jorge: Does anyone have a suggestion of what the pen would be?

Henrique: Society! Every time there is a limit there. That he can't cry, that he can't do that, that he has to fight, that he can't run, he can't **show feelings for anything.**

Henrique was categorical when talking about the function of the pencil in the video and presenting how society assumes that every man needs to behave in front of it. Cardoso (2023), when talking about his implication with health and masculinities, the theme of his dissertation, ratifies the above discourses:

I had been noticing these demands for masculinities throughout my life, both in the personal sphere and at work. I noticed several times the effort that the men around me made to remain firm in the face of life's situations, not to show suffering in the

face of the difficulties that plagued them and never to lower their heads to the demands of life (p.16).

The difficulty in expressing feelings and/or emotions are characteristics that frequently appear in the literature on the manifestations of traditional masculinities. These produced and reproduced meanings exert the force of truths and gain other proportions, as is the case of love life:

*Amón: Yes, it's going back to the second part, there's the scene where he's there, I imagine, like, I don't know a party, a game, I don't know, and then he starts talking about the girl he likes, and then like this, a painted heart appears, in this case, then I imagine he was talking like, how much he liked her and stuff. Meanwhile, his friends laughed. So, like, **he can't even show feelings towards the girl he likes**, and then they arranged for him to stay or rather encouraged him to stay with another girl who had nothing to do with it, then he stayed and got something there, a sexually transmitted disease.*

Another factor added to this is the importance of the approval of the man's masculinity by other men, with virility as an indicator of this evaluation. This point, which Zanello (2018) invites us to think about, "virility, which confirms masculinity, must therefore be proven, constructed, [manufactured]". (p. 222). An example of this is the dialogue between Paul and Henry:

Paulo.: In the video, one thing I saw twice, I didn't pay attention if there was more, was him going on his friend's wave, as you said, which was in the cat business, that he then threw the stone, which basically, he could not have played, which was what appeared on his face. But he did it because his friends were doing it...
*Henrique: Yes, but he regretted it later, like, he did it because everyone was thrown at the time, of him not being taken out, I don't know, different,, from this business. Then he came in right away, but then when everyone left he regretted it and went there to help the cat. **But not in front of his friends, out of shame, because he was afraid of being judged by them.***

The author asks: "When does this end?" and uses Kimmel's studies (2016) to answer, stating that this process never ends, because to admit weakness to a man is to be a coward, and as a consequence, it is not to be a real man. And, finally, she asks the last question: "but by whom?" asking who makes this value judgment, the answer is: Men who evaluate and legitimize each other, therefore, masculinities are built together with power relations (Zanello, 2018). Thus, the following statements reaffirm the importance of public opinion about what is expected of a man in the face of an adverse and/or difficult situation:

*Jorge: **We commit more suicides, we get hurt more, because we put ourselves in the place of a very strong person, a very virile man, very strong, the strength and this makes us get hurt more, die more, precisely because of the***

construction of an expectation and a reality that often does not match. We are what we are!

Eric: You have to show that you're not afraid, that you're brave, to do everything like this

Jorge: But is it possible?

Augusto: No, not really

Eric: But in expectation, you have to be afraid of nothing. You have to put your face in. but not really.

Jorge: In this way, can men cry?

Eric: Can

Belzinhão: Yes, but should he?

Augusto: Must

Spleen: No

Crazy-Roblox: No

Henrique: If he has to cry, cry.

Philip: So...

Eric: Man doesn't cry?! It does cry.

Augusto: And it's made of stone, right?

Zanella (2018), in order to explain these power relations between men, uses the concept of hegemonic masculinity: "For it to be hegemonic, it is necessary to disqualify other virilities, from other men. Therefore, the prestige of one is based on the devaluation of the others" (p.224). Therefore, masculinities will always be a field of confrontation with each other. This subcategory makes us reflect that the idea that "men don't cry" is a deeply rooted stereotype in our society, built over centuries and transmitted from generation to generation, and the young people we talked to also affirm this. This belief limits the emotional expression of masculinities, imposing a model of "hegemonic" masculinity that associates the display of feelings with weakness.

Consequences of machismo

Here, machismo is thought of as a set of beliefs and behaviors that place men in a position of superiority over women. Much of what was discussed in the conversation circles went through this sieve. As it is a structural phenomenon in society, it is sometimes naturalized and incorporated as part of male subjectivities, this discussion can be seen in the conversation in the following excerpts:

João: I wanted to understand this one about the revolver.

Arnaldo: because the reality is that the man only wants to carry a gun

Everyone laughs

Jorge: We keep thinking about this thing, for example, violence, right? Why do we, for example, use more violence than women?

Spleen: because it's instinctive!

Jorge: Is it instinctive?!

Augusto: It's from nature, right?

Henrique: It's the nature of man, right? Being more aggressive than women. There are some who are a bit of a tiôgo (referring to men who do not act violently).

Another factor intrinsically linked to machismo is patriarchy. Some authors, such as Zanello (2018) conceptualize it as a system that is based on the false idea of male superiority and on a mandatory performance that is structured in a power game of male domination. Given this, such domination can build several oppressions about behaviors and deviations from this norm:

Jorge: Did you notice this moment? He is like the emotional one of the ride, right? He told his friends about the feeling he had for the girl and his friends started to make fun of his show of affection, right?

Henrique: To this day it's like this, if you have a circle of friends - my circle of friends at school is like this: if you talk I don't know what, - I'm getting to know this person, they already say: - Oxe, my brother is and fresh is? What is this business of falling in love! You fall in love after you're old! Now you have to squeegee everyone, go to parties, marijuana and everything.

Machismo and patriarchy feed each other, because the patriarchal structure, which places men in positions of power and control, creates an environment conducive to the development of sexist beliefs and behaviors. Let's see more excerpts from speeches that confirm this movement:

Jorge: Do you think that painting a nail says about who you want? Who are you attracted to? Do you think this has any connection? You think that, for example, the issue of hair removal, right? Today it's more, today I see the issue of hair removal more common in men. Do you think this has any association with who you desire? Who do you kiss?

Henrique: This is more for hygiene, because it's disgusting.

Eric: My Grandma herself has already said: "You're shaving your legs! Is it becoming fresh?! Oxe boy, shaving your legs loses strength, see?

Jorge: And who says that?

Eric: My Grandma

Henrique: It's more the grandparents.

Jorge: And do you know where they learned that from?

Henry: it's usually the woman who shaves

Amón: But even that was forbidden some time ago.

Consequently, sexuality is one of the most explored fields to maintain this expression of domination and virility. In this way, men demarcate their territory based on their image of virile, sexually active identity and their erect penis as an object of confirmation of strength (Zanello, 2018). Which corroborates the statements of Eric's grandmother and Henrique's friends, everything that deviates from the norm is associated with the feminine in a pejorative way. Let's look at Paul's speech:

Jorge: How do you see in the video when this issue of sexuality arises? Can you make an association with your life? What does that little pencil require or not? Or does it not make sense to you?

Paulo: For me it does a lot, that basically this business of society and everything else, I ended up suffering. In the case, when before I came out as gay, it basically got to a point where I saw the people around me and everything, and I didn't know why I was different and everything, and basically I cry and ask God to take that away from me. I see that unfortunately, I didn't feel the same thing, it's not the same as others and society I wanted to follow her, what she said, but I wasn't part of her, not the way she wanted.

Here, we can observe that patriarchy and its forms of oppression made Paul feel guilty for not corresponding to the system itself. Zanello (2018) emphasizes "one of the marks of the virile ideal of contemporary masculinity (hegemonic, heterosexual) is to have a closed asshole". The injunction to always be the "penetrator" and never, in any way, to be/have been penetrated" (p.179) stands out. The association with homosexuality is common in the statements of the participants:

Henrique: He wanted to speak here.

Prado: That's how disappointed my family was because my cousin came out as gay, that they expected him to date a person, to be straight, in this case. Once, for example, here (school) he (Felipe) painted my nail with marker pencil, then when I got home my mother complained...

Jorge: How did you feel?

Henrique: She said he was looking like his cousin!

Everyone laughs.

Jorge: How did you feel about that?

Prado: I felt bad

The effects of sexist practices are numerous, both for those who receive them and for those who exercise them. According to Cardoso (2023), "Thus, machismo can become, for a part of men, a cause of suffering and mental illness, and also become an obstacle to the process of coping with them by not allowing mediations or reflexivity" (p.48). For this reason, illness on the part of men tends to increase, due to silences to the detriment of a norm to be followed.

With this in mind, in the following statements it is possible to observe the effects of these silencing on men's health:

Jorge: Can you visualize the construction of what is masculine in our society? Does this impact our health, people?

All: Yes

João: Mental Health

Jorge: Only mental? Because if we are more violent, it is because a society imposes that we always be violent. We die more.

Eric: We're going to get arrested.

Jorge: I don't know if it's a piece of data that you have access to: But we men die much more than women and precisely because we put ourselves more at risk.

Eric: Commits suicide

Jorge: We commit more suicides, we get hurt more, because we put ourselves in the place of a very strong person, a very virile man, very strong, the strength and this makes us get hurt more, die more, precisely because of the construction of an expectation and a reality that often does not match. We are what we are!

Lima *et.al* (2020) emphasize that the diversity of barriers that hegemonic masculinities and their perpetuation can cause in health practices, especially for men themselves, including: Not accessing health devices - can result in delays in the diagnosis and treatment of diseases; Risky behaviors - the idea of masculinity associated with courage and invulnerability can lead men to adopt risky behaviors, such as excessive alcohol consumption, smoking, and lack of preventive care, which increases the likelihood of health problems; Stigma regarding mental health issues - sexism can contribute to the stigma around male mental health, causing men to avoid seeking help for emotional and psychological issues, which can result in underdiagnosis and undertreatment of mental disorders; and finally, Impact on quality of life – the pressure to adhere to strict norms of masculinity can negatively affect men's mental and emotional health, contributing to high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression.

Hegemonic masculinities, socially and historically constructed, impose a set of norms and expectations about what it means to be a man and masculinities. These norms, often rigid and limiting, play a crucial role in building barriers that prevent men from seeking and accessing adequate health care. In this sense, hegemonic masculinity associates the search for help and the expression of feelings with weakness, discouraging men from recognizing their own needs and seeking help when they are sick or suffering emotionally. Thus, we emphasize that it is essential to deconstruct the idea that men need to be strong all the time and that seeking help is a sign of weakness.

CONCLUSION

Thus, this investigation aimed to contribute to the promotion of criticality to understand the changes in contemporary society and question the forms already crystallized in it. Considering the results of this research, it is possible to highlight important reflections. Initially, the analysis of the specific literature on masculinities and health pointed to significant gaps in this area of study, especially when directed to

adolescents and their school experiences. The investigation also highlighted the (im)possibilities of addressing the theme of masculinities within the school environment, emphasizing the need for entry strategies that consider the sensitivity and receptivity of adolescents. By mapping the meanings produced about masculinities by the students, the marked presence of hegemonic masculinity was identified, with its implications in the school routine, which reinforces the importance of promoting discussions that defamiliarize these patterns and promote the diversity of gender expressions. In addition, the analysis of the different linguistic repertoires related to students' comprehensive health practices evidenced the need for a sensitive and inclusive approach that considers the multiple dimensions of masculinity in promoting adolescent well-being. In view of these findings, the relevance of this research for Social Psychology is reiterated, not only because it fills gaps in the literature on masculinities and adolescence, but also because it points to the urgency of more studies that directly and specifically address this theme, aiming to contribute to a broader and more contextualized understanding of the experiences of adolescents and to the promotion of more inclusive school environments. healthy and egalitarian.

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