

DIVERSITY WITHOUT BORDERS: SOCIAL INCLUSION, SEXUALITY, GENDER EQUALITY ON A GLOBAL SCALE



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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The LGBTQIA+ movement has its roots firmly planted in centuries of history of marginalization.

Objective: This study aims to describe the current dynamics of social inclusion, LGBTQIA+ rights, and gender equality on a global scale.

Method: This is a reflective review substantiated by national and international books and journals relevant to the theme, in which it brings two points of discussion: Legislative advances related to LGBTQIA+ rights and Fight against discrimination and for the promotion of acceptance of sexual and gender diversity.

Results: The results presented here are divided into Legislative advances related to LGBTQIA+ rights in the world and gender equality, Fight against discrimination and promotion of acceptance of sexual and gender diversity where we list the findings of the literature and policies regarding the challenges of the LGBTQIA+ population.

Conclusion: The last decade has brought significant advances and setbacks, especially in Brazil, the previous federal administration promoted a rhetoric contrary to the so-called "gender ideology", seen as a threat to the "Brazilian family". This context highlights the urgent need to expand the debate and strengthen actions that guarantee social inclusion, LGBTQIA+ rights, and gender equality in a broad and effective way.

Keywords: Sexual and Gender Minorities, Public Policies, Legislation, Inclusive Gender Policies, Gender Equity, Gender Transversality.

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INTRODUCTION

The LGBT movement has its roots firmly planted in centuries of history of marginalization, resistance and affirmation of identity. Peripheral sexualities and gender identities, often excluded from dominant narratives, played a vital role in the formation and evolution of this global movement (Nagamine, 2019). In this sense, Quinalha (2022, p. 14) points out that "this same identity has been resignified and disputed, also becoming support for political action and the achievement of equality rights".

Since antiquity, diverse cultures have had a more fluid understanding of sexuality and gender than modern Western societies. In Ancient Greece, for example, homosexual relationships were common, and in some Native American cultures, individuals who possessed characteristics of both genders were revered as "two-spirit." These societies did not see sexuality and gender as rigid binaries, but rather as spectrums of possibilities. However, the rise of Abrahamic religions and the dissemination of European colonial values imposed a heteronormative and binary vision, marginalizing these peripheral identities (Melo, 2016).

The dawn of the modern LGBT movement can be traced back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when early activists begin to challenge norms. In Germany, Magnus Hirschfeld, a homosexual Jewish physician, founded the Scientific-Humanitarian Committee in 1897, one of the first organizations to advocate for LGBT rights. His pioneering work in sexology and his fervent advocacy for gay rights planted the seeds for future struggles for equality, since: "Rejecting the binary, fixed-gender configuration defined from the artificially constructed norms of masculine and feminine, Hirschfeld anticipated the notion of "gender fluidity" (Belmonte, 2024, p. 25).

As the movement grew, it expanded to include a wider range of identities and orientations. The 1980s and 1990s saw the worsening of the HIV/AIDS crisis, especially in the LGBT community, but it also fostered a new wave of activism and solidarity, including with organizations for this public. The visibility and acceptance of trans people also began to increase, although they still faced significant challenges (Prazeres, 2023).

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the world experienced an economic crisis with collateral effects comparable to those of the crash of the New York Stock Exchange at the end of the 1920s. Among these effects, there was the worsening of social inequalities: the elites, who prospered anyway, increasingly distanced themselves from the rest (called "the 99%") of the population. In search of a solution to the crisis, several social movements

"for the 99%" propose new analytical categories, such as the intersection that would be, in the feminist movement, a lens that encompasses and relates to each other all the axes of domination, especially the markers of gender, race, sexuality and nationality, in the struggle for social justice (Arruzza; Bhattacharya; Fraser, 2019).

It is noteworthy that, in this context, the search for social inclusion, LGBT rights and gender equality has become a pressing and universal issue, which implies the need to expand the discussion on the subject. Thus, this study aims to describe the current dynamics of social inclusion, LGBT rights, and gender equality on a global scale, identifying the advances, challenges, and opportunities to promote a more just and egalitarian society.

METHOD

It is a reflective review substantiated by national and international books and periodicals relevant to the theme, in which it brings two points of discussion: Legislative advances related to LGBT rights in the world and gender equality, and the fight against discrimination and the promotion of acceptance of sexual and gender diversity. Both points have a significant relationship with each other, especially in the light of global social movements and their borderless action in today's world.

LEGISLATIVE ADVANCES RELATED TO LGBT RIGHTS IN THE WORLD AND GENDER EQUALITY

In recent decades, the world has witnessed significant progress in the promotion of LGBT rights and in the search for gender equality, the result of much struggle and demand to recognize fundamental rights for this population. This advance is manifested in the progressive legislation of several countries, which have worked to ensure that all people, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, enjoy equal rights and protection from discrimination (Magalhães *et al.*, 2023).

In Europe, many countries have led progressive legislation on LGBT rights, abandoning the conservative concept of obsolete policies of the previous century. Several countries recognize same-sex unions: some allow marriage, while others offer "registered partnerships" that grant rights similar to those of marriage, with some exceptions, such as restrictions on adoption or minimum age requirements. The Netherlands is considered the first country to legalize same-sex marriage, in April 2001. France also approved same-sex

marriage and adoption in 2013, despite intense protests and heated debates in parliament, as well as disapproval from the Catholic Church (Onias, 2019).

Sweden, in addition to legalizing marriage equality in 2009, has also implemented robust anti-discrimination laws and allowed transgender people to legally change their documents, without the need for sex reassignment surgery. These measures reflect a commitment to the protection and inclusion of LGBT people in all aspects of social and legal life (Ramos Júnior; Benigno, 2013).

In the Americas, Canada, which legalized marriage equality in 2005, is often cited as a progressive model for LGBT rights, as it has adopted a number of inclusive policies, such as explicit protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in its Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In the United States, the Supreme Court's 2015 decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which upheld the right to same-sex marriage nationwide, was a historic milestone. In addition, several states and municipalities have implemented anti-discrimination laws and policies to support transgender people (Magalhães *et al.*, 2023).

Asia has also seen significant progress, albeit in a more gradual and heterogeneous way. Taiwan stood out as a pioneer in the region by legalizing same-sex marriage in 2019, following a landmark ruling by its Constitutional Court. This decision not only ensured equal rights for same-sex couples, but also inspired activists and lawmakers in other Asian countries to consider similar reforms. Despite the advances in relation to the Asian continent, there are many criticisms, given its authoritarian form of government in several countries. In this sense, "throughout these turbulent periods, members of the LGBT+ community have found creative and courageous ways to resist, often building underground support networks to preserve their identity and dignity" (Oliveira, 2024, p. 08)

In India, the repeal of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code in 2018, which criminalized homosexuality, was a significant victory for LGBT rights, paving the way for greater acceptance and inclusion. In Africa, the situation is more complex, with some countries making strides in terms of LGBT rights while others remain staunchly conservative. South Africa is a remarkable example of progress. Since 2006, the country has allowed same-sex marriage and has one of the most advanced constitutions in the world in terms of protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. However, many other African countries still criminalize same-sex relations and lack legal protection for LGBT people (Braga, 2020)

Legislative advances related to LGBT rights and gender equality represent important steps towards fairer and more equitable societies. These developments are not only reflections of legal changes, but also of a broader cultural transformation, where acceptance and respect for diversity are gaining ground. However, it is adamant to recognize that there is still much to be done. In many parts of the world, LGBT people continue to face discrimination, violence, and marginalization. The struggle for gender equality also faces resistance, especially in contexts where patriarchal and conservative norms are prevalent (Melo, 2016; Torres, 2018).

Governments in several countries have adopted a variety of policies to promote equality and diversity. In the sphere of gender equality, the implementation of quotas for women in political and business positions is a common practice. Norway, for example, was a pioneer in establishing a 40% quota for women on the boards of directors of public and private companies. This measure, adopted in 2003, resulted in a significant increase in female representation and served as a model for other European countries (Machado, 2016).

Based on the UN General Assembly's 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Gender Equality Act was enacted in Norway in 1979, requiring public authorities to ensure the application of gender equality in all areas of life. In 2002, this law was expanded to include the private sector. This ensures equal pay for equal work, additional protection during pregnancy and maternity leave, and measures against sexual violence (Machado, 2016; Louçã, 2024).

In the area of LGBT rights, several countries have legalized same-sex marriage and adopted anti-discrimination laws, as already highlighted. Canada, in 2005, was one of the first countries to legalize marriage equality, followed by many others, including Germany and Australia. In addition, many countries have implemented legislation that protects against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. These laws have been essential in ensuring that LGBT people can live freely and with dignity (Torres, 2018).

In the case of the United Kingdom, the British Government's Equality Office aims to promote diversity and equity throughout society. Created with the aim of addressing systemic inequalities and ensuring that all citizens have equal opportunities, this governing body formulates and implements public policies aimed at equality. According to Eslabão (2023, p. 184) "focused in particular on issues related to the condition of women in the labor market, their social integration and reduction of wage asymmetries". Through public

awareness campaigns and educational programs, the British government works to combat prejudice and discrimination, promoting a culture of respect and acceptance of diversity. These initiatives not only promote social inclusion, but also contribute to building a more cohesive and harmonious society.

International organizations also play a critical role in promoting equality and diversity. The United Nations (UN), for example, has several initiatives in this field. UN Women, established in 2010, works to eliminate discrimination against women and girls, empower women, and achieve gender equality. Its campaigns and programs have addressed issues such as gender-based violence, women's political participation, and equal pay (Nagamine, 2019; Rodrigues; Hernandez, 2020).

Another prominent international organization is the European Union (EU), which has implemented comprehensive policies to promote equality and combat discrimination. The Equal Treatment in Employment Directive, passed in 2000, prohibits discrimination in the workplace on the basis of religion, belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. This directive has been instrumental in protecting workers' rights and promoting inclusion in the workplace (Magalhães *et al.*, 2023).

In addition to government policies and initiatives by international organizations, companies also have a significant role in promoting equality and diversity. Many global corporations have adopted diversity and inclusion policies, creating more welcoming and representative work environments. Diversity training programs, inclusive recruitment initiatives, and the formation of diversity committees are some of the common practices. Companies such as *Google* and *Microsoft* have been leaders in this area, implementing robust policies to ensure that all employees, regardless of their background, gender, or sexual orientation, feel valued and respected (Nhamuche; Baptista; Carneiro, 2023).

However, despite the advances, there are still significant challenges to be faced. Effective implementation of these policies often meets with cultural and institutional resistance. In many parts of the world, conservative attitudes and deep-rooted prejudices continue to impede the full realization of equality and diversity. Therefore, it is crucial that the promotion of these values is accompanied by education and awareness campaigns that help transform attitudes and behaviors (Rodrigues, 2019).

In Brazil, the "recognition of the personality rights of homosexual couples" came through a joint judgment of ADPF 132-RJ and ADI 4277-DF before the Federal Supreme Court (STF), in 2011. In this regard, Prazeres (2023, p. 40) notes that: "Although it was not

a specific decision on marriage, as it addressed stable union, the fact is that from its publication it made official the court's view on the nature of the family entity." Two years later, during the 169th Ordinary Session of the National Council of Justice, Resolution No. 17532, of May 14, 2013, was approved, determining "... to notary offices throughout Brazil the recognition of stable unions and same-sex marriages" (PRAZERES, 2023, p. 41).

FIGHT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION AND FOR THE PROMOTION OF ACCEPTANCE OF SEXUAL AND GENDER DIVERSITY

The fight against discrimination and for the promotion of acceptance of sexual and gender diversity is an ongoing battle that requires not only legal changes, but also cultural and social transformation. Laws alone will not be able to bring about such changes, given that: "(...) the historical and cultural context is central to the emergence of our embodied perceptions" (Jarrín, 2023, p. 35).

In this context, awareness campaigns play a crucial role in educating the public, challenging stereotypes, and promoting a culture of inclusion and respect. In this text, we will explore some successful campaigns that have contributed significantly to combating discrimination and promoting acceptance of sexual and gender diversity (Rodrigues, 2019).

One of the most recognized and impactful campaigns is "*It Gets Better*," launched in 2010 in the United States in response to the alarming increase in suicides among LGBT youth. This campaign, started by journalist Dan Savage and his partner Terry Miller, consisted of online videos where LGBT people shared their stories of overcoming and encouraged young people to believe that their lives would improve. The message of hope and support resonated globally, generating thousands of videos in different languages and inspiring similar movements around the world. "*It Gets Better*" not only offered emotional support to LGBT youth in times of vulnerability, but also raised awareness of the difficulties they face and highlighted the importance of community support (Grzanka; Mann, 2014).

In addition to global campaigns, many countries have developed national initiatives to promote acceptance of sexual and gender diversity at the local level. An example is the "Feel the Pride" campaign launched in the United Kingdom in 2019 by the Scottish government. This multimedia campaign, which included TV ads, billboards, and community events, aimed to challenge homophobia and transphobia and celebrate the diversity of the LGBT community. Through personal stories and positive messages, the campaign highlighted the importance of pride and self-acceptance, while encouraging allies to show

their support. "Feel the Pride" has been widely praised for its inclusive approach and its ability to unite communities around values of equality and respect (Silva, 2018; Eslabão *et al.*, 2023).

One of the most important lessons is the need for a holistic and intersectional approach in promoting gender equality and sexual diversity. This means recognizing that people have multiple identities and face interconnected forms of discrimination and oppression based on gender, race, sexual orientation, social class, among others. Successful experiences have shown that policies and programs that address these intersectionalities are most effective in promoting true equality and inclusion (Martinez, 2016; Melo, 2016).

Another important lesson is the need for involvement and leadership of affected communities. Successful experiences in promoting gender equality and sexual diversity are often those that are led by activists, civil society organizations, and members of the LGBTQIA+ and women's communities themselves. These initiatives are more sensitive to local needs and realities, and have greater legitimacy and support from those directly affected. "During the last two decades, the international movement for LGBT+ rights has broadened its geographical scope, won decisive legal victories, and obtained support from important supranational institutions" (Belmonte, 2024, p. 86).

In addition, education and awareness are key in promoting gender equality and sexual diversity. Successful experiences have shown that educational programs that address gender and sexuality issues from an early age are essential to deconstruct gender stereotypes, prevent discrimination, and promote a culture of respect and acceptance of diversity. This includes inclusive sex education in schools, training for health professionals, and the promotion of positive and representative media and entertainment (Rodrigues; Hernandez, 2020).

Furthermore, the importance of legislation and public policies in promoting gender equality and sexual diversity is essential. Successful experiences have shown that laws that protect against discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation, as well as policies that promote equal opportunities in employment and education, are key to creating an environment where everyone can thrive. This includes the legalization of same-sex marriage, the criminalization of gender-based violence, and the adoption of gender quotas in political and business positions (Louçã, 2024; Onias, 2019).

As Pereira et al. (2024) conclude in their study, through their findings, they demonstrate that we are still in a conservative and prejudiced Brazilian social structure, the social gaze reproduces inadmissible behaviors in higher education institutions and reveals gaps in the reception of the transgender population and that there are no effective public policies that guarantee the stay of trans people in the academic environment, leaving them vulnerable to the conditions of the environment (Pereira, Bruno Gomes; Sartori, Thiago Luiz, 2024).

Finally, a decisive lesson is the importance of solidarity and mutual support in promoting gender equality and sexual diversity. Successful experiences have shown that the creation of support networks, alliances and grassroots movements is essential to building a cohesive and powerful human rights movement. This includes collaboration between different groups and movements, amplifying marginalized voices, and celebrating collective achievements (Louçã, 2024; Prazeres, 2023).

In Brazil, unfortunately, the last decade has been marked by setbacks in the issues of gender and diversity. It is not yet possible to measure the effects of the "true crusade" promoted by the last administration of the Federal Executive against a supposed "gender ideology" that would threaten the "Brazilian family", largely due to the "blackout of official data" that should inform public opinion on these issues (Magalhães et al, 2023, p. 54-55). We hope, however, that a course correction will occur within the next few years, in order to resume the protection of people who most need reparation and promotion of their fundamental rights in our country.

CONCLUSION

In recent years, several countries have implemented policies aimed at promoting equality and diversity, with emphasis on the importance of an intersectional approach that considers the multiple identities and forms of discrimination faced by people. The last decade has brought significant advances and setbacks, especially in Brazil, the previous federal administration promoted a rhetoric contrary to the so-called "gender ideology", seen as a threat to the "Brazilian family". This context highlights the urgent need to expand the debate and strengthen actions that guarantee social inclusion, LGBTQIA+ rights, and gender equality in a broad and effective way.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors contributed to the preparation of the final manuscript and agree with the submitted version.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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