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## Gender and Sexual Orientation among adolescents in Brazil: An analysis of the prejudice and bullying in the educational context

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### Abstract

Brazil has and adolescent population of over 34 million and face numerous challenges to their health, including their sexual and reproductive health. Considering the LGBT population the difficulties are even bigger. Recent data shows that 28% of all deaths of LGBT population were of people aged under 18 years. The objective of the present investigation is to analyze recent studies conducted about LGBT prejudice in the educational context in Brazil. For this purpose a literature review was performed in electronic databases to gather investigation. Articles were included if they fulfilled the inclusion criteria. Seven studies met the inclusion criteria and were included in the review. Five studies focused on adolescents scholars perspectives on homophobia and other LGBT prejudice, one study investigated teachers perspectives over LGBT prejudice in the educational scenario and one study investigated the prevalence of suicidal intention and attempts by sexual orientation. As conclusions, LGBT prejudices are imbricated in the Brazilian educational context. Such reality has a huge impact on adolescent health. Comprehensive Sexuality Education programs, including and gender and sexual orientation components should be implemented in schools to preserve LGBT basic rights.

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## 1. Introduction

Brazil is one of the five biggest countries in the world with a population of over 205 million people, of them around 17% are adolescents (IBGE, 2016). These over 34 million adolescents face numerous challenges to their health, including their sexual and reproductive health (UNICEF, 2014). For example, between 2006-2011 HIV prevalence increased among young people aged between 17 and 20 years (Brazil, 2012). Around of 30% of boys and 9% of girls have their first sexual intercourse before the age of 15 (Wellings, Collumbien, Slaymaker et al; 2006).

Besides reproductive aspects, other facets of sexual health among adolescents are of concern, like gender and sexual orientation. For instance, 23% of girls aged 15-24 who have had relationships, have experienced physical and/or sexual violence (Stöckl, March, Pallitto et al; 2014).

When taking into consideration LGBT prejudices the numbers are even more alarming. According to the 2014 annual report of the Bahia's Gay Group, 326 LGBT people were murdered in Brazil. This indicates one murder every 27 hours and shows a 4.1% increase when compared to 2013 data. Out of these 326 deaths, 50% were gay, 41% transvestites, 4% lesbians, 2% transvestites lovers (T-Lovers) and 0.9% bisexuals. Regarding to age, 28% of were under 18 when were killed and 68% of victims were between 20 and 60 years (Bahía, 2014).

Different investigations addressing health disparities associated with sexual identity have found the role of victimization and negative peer relationships during adolescence as a important factor, associated with health risks in adolescence and young adulthood, such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem (Diamond & Lucas, 2004; Ryan, Russell, Huebner et al, 2010; Russell, Kosciw, Horn et al; 2010). Also, the perceived rejection from a range of people (family members, coaches, teachers, therapists, neighbors, and friends) was predictive for substance abuse unprotected sex, HIV infection, self-harm and suicide (Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2009; Lancet 2011).

Taking into consideration to the importance of adolescence as a period self-identity determination, the incorporation of LGBT and sexual diversity in the curriculum is needed (McGarry, 2013). Effective Sexuality Education Programs must be adequate to age and culture, providing scientifically accurate, realistic, information about sex and relationships. By doing so, it enables young people to explore values and attitudes, to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights and to make decisions about their health and sexuality.

Using the educational environment to inform adolescents about sexuality also helps to address a growing problem, the Homophobic/Transphobic Bullying. In other words, Bullying (exposition over time to aggressive behaviour that intentionally inflicts injury or discomfort through physical contact, verbal attacks, fighting or psychological manipulation) on the basis of perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

Such form of gender-based violence, based on stigmatizing attitudes and/or discriminatory behaviors affects not only lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth who experience homophobic and transphobic bullying, but also learners who are perceived as not conforming to existing gender norms and stereotypes even if they do not identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (UNESCO, 2012). As a result, homophobic and transphobic bullying also results in students drop out of school (Dinis, 2011).) There are ten actions to stop sexual and gender-based violence in schools and online resources (UNESCO, 2012, p.15):

- Advocate a holistic approach involving students, school staff, parents and the community.
- Make your students your partners in preventing violence
- Use constructive discipline techniques and methods
- Be an active and effective force to stop bullying
- Build students' resilience and help them to respond to life's challenges constructively
- Be a positive role model by speaking out against sexual and gender-based violence
- Be an advocate for school safety mechanisms
- Provide safe and welcoming spaces for students
- Learn violence prevention and conflict resolution skills and teach them to students
- Recognize violence and discrimination against students with disabilities, and those from indigenous, minority and other marginalized communities

The teachers can use some resources and links to online information on stopping violence in schools (UNESCO, 2012, p. 27), for example:

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