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## RESEARCH

## View of students in higher education institution on homosexuality

A visão dos graduandos de uma instituição de ensino superior sobre a homossexualidade

Una visión de los estudiantes en una institución de educación superior sobre la homosexualidad

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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To describe and analyze the views of graduates from an institution of higher education on homosexuality. **Method:** A qualitative, descriptive study, carried out with 11 undergraduate students of courses in nursing and medicine, University Center of Health - UNINOVAFAPI, Teresina-PI. The interview was semi-structured, with a thematic content analysis. **Results:** Three categories emerged: homosexuality as sexual choice and question of gender; the bias imposed by society and holistic care without discrimination. The study shows that some undergraduates feel they are prepared to care for the homosexual clientele, using as a parameter, the lack of prejudice and the respect for others, points considered important in conducting a consultation. **Conclusion:** There is a need to invest in the training of teachers in the pursuit of articulated knowledge, capable of reducing the prejudices and prepare future health professionals to lead with this reality. **Descriptors:** Human Sexuality, homosexuality, nursing.

## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** Descrever e analisar a visão dos graduandos de uma instituição de ensino superior sobre a homossexualidade. **Método:** Pesquisa de natureza qualitativa, descritiva, realizada com 11 graduandos dos cursos de enfermagem e de medicina do Centro Universitário de Saúde - UNINOVAFAPI, Teresina-PI. A entrevista foi semiestruturada, com análise de conteúdo do tipo temática. **Resultados:** Emergiram três categorias: a homossexualidade como opção sexual e questão de gênero; o preconceito imposto pela sociedade e o cuidado holístico sem discriminação. A pesquisa mostra que alguns graduandos sentem-se preparados para atender a clientela homossexual, usando como parâmetro, a falta de preconceito e o respeito ao próximo, pontos considerados importantes na realização de uma consulta. **Conclusão:** Há necessidade de investir na formação dos professores na busca do conhecimento articulado, capaz de reduzir os preconceitos e preparar os futuros profissionais de saúde para lidar com essa realidade. **Descritores:** Sexualidade humana, homossexualidade, enfermagem.

## RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** Describir y analizar la visión de los estudiantes de una institución de educación superior sobre la homosexualidad. **Método:** Estudio cualitativo, descriptivo, realizado con 11 pregraduados de los cursos de enfermería y medicina del Centro Universitario de Salud - UNINOVAFAPI, Teresina-PI/Brasil. La entrevista fue semiestructurada, con el análisis de contenido temático. **Resultados:** surgieron tres categorías: la homosexualidad como una orientación sexual y cuestiones de género; el prejuicio impuesto por la sociedad y el cuidado holístico sin discriminación. La investigación muestra que algunos graduados se sienten preparados para atender a la clientela homosexual, utilizando como parámetro, la falta de prejuicios y respeto por los demás, los puntos importantes considerados en la realización de una consulta. **Conclusión:** Hay una necesidad para invertir en la formación de los docentes en la búsqueda del conocimiento articulado, capaz de reducir los prejuicios y preparar futuros profesionales de salud para lidiar con esta realidad. **Descritores:** sexualidad humana, la homosexualidad, la enfermería.

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## INTRODUCTION

Homosexuality is a topic that is often controversial as it is cross-referenced by some questions that permeate it such as: Is homosexuality a disease? Is it an individual behavioral deviation or is it a biogenetic issue? The amount of male hormone (testosterone) received by the fetus can determine if the individual into a more mature phase of their life will have an inclination towards the opposite or same sex. The homosexuality can be treated as a choice, i.e. an issue of sexual orientation, in which the individual has attraction for someone of the same sex or not, or even have relations with both.<sup>1</sup>

In this work, there is the commitment to respond to these questions, but recognizing that homosexuality has been widely publicized as a sexual orientation and not as an option; i.e., the individual does not choose to be homosexual, but has an orientation that leads them to relate with someone of the same sex. However, there are other aspects that pervade the topic, such as the affective issues, the roles expected and performed in a society and the behaviors that involve gender, sexual orientation, role and identity.

The genus corresponds with the person's sex, i.e., male and female; the sexual orientation with respect to the attraction that can be felt by people of the same sex; the role of sexual behavior is related to gender that the individual plays in society and identity would be how the individual is perceived in relation to gender.<sup>2</sup>

The construction of gender is something that begins before a person's birth, when, for example, they are given a name and expectations are created regarding their behavior. Thus, the creation of gender enables the differentiation  
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*View of students in higher education institution... between male and female and can be an important element in the differentiation of treatment between the sexes.*<sup>3</sup>

It is worth mentioning that, in the second half of the 19th century, was developed one of the first scientific theories about homosexuality, which is the idea of "third sex", in which the homosexual was seen as possessor of a female soul in a male body. This theory maintains the non-criminalization of homosexuality, whereas they would not be something monstrous or reprehensible, but yes, a kind of "hermaphroditism of the mind", whose biological origin and innate making a "cure" or change impossible for the object of passion of the homosexual.<sup>4</sup>

Since the 1970s, most psychiatrists were convinced that homosexuality was a mental illness. Some believed that it could have physical causes, as is the case of many mental illnesses. Moreover, others, that its origin was linked to a deviation from orientation caused by a psychosexual development disturbance. However only in 1973, after long pressure from of homosexuals, the American Psychiatric Association (APA), so that they suppressed homosexuality of the list of mental illnesses, that approved the removal of homosexuality from the list of mental disorders.<sup>5</sup>

However, it is still common in current days, homosexuals suffer prejudice and exclusion, evidences these placed by the media daily, to the point of being subjected to constraints at the time that expose your identity in certain places, or in the presence of certain groups, reaching some who suffer even from physical aggression. Therefore, this form of identity interferes with an individual's life, often preventing them from exercising their real identity.

With the growth of this segment of the population, there is a need to establish policies to defend their interests, in order to reduce discrimination and repression. In addition, act on

Rocha FCV, Medeiros LV, Fonseca NSB *et al.* issues related to health, seen that homosexuals must also receive guidance regarding the exhibitions of risks which could endanger their health.

It is important to emphasize that in 2004, was instituted, the Program to Combat Violence and Discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) and Promotion of Homosexual Citizenship - National Council for Combating Discrimination, this program of the federal government for the fight against prejudice and intolerance as the lack of guarantee of fundamental rights to these people. In that year was instituted the Technical Committee for the GLBT population's health by the Ministry of Health (MS), with a view to ensuring equity in health care for this segment of the population.<sup>6</sup>

Still everything happens in an incipient manner and it is seen that there is invisibility of these by healthcare professionals. The study it becomes relevant, because it will enable unveil the subjectivity of the participants about the theme, for which it can plan and discuss the topic in teaching institutions as a way of entering this group in activities for prevention and health promotion. This study aims to describe and analyze the vision of undergraduates from an institution of higher education on homosexuality.

## METHODOLOGY

It is a descriptive study with a qualitative approach, carried out at a private higher education institution in Teresina-Pi. The choice of location was due to the same having a considerable number of graduates who fit the desired profile for the study, and being easily accessible to the researchers. Included in the study were male students, enrolled in the first period of the nursing

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Participants were 11 undergraduate students, being 6 in the nursing course and 5 in medicine course, aged between 20 and 35 years, being all of the male sex and single, with native to the capital of Teresina and some from other municipalities in the state of Piauí.

The data were collected through individual interviews with the undergraduates, using a semi-structured interview with open and closed questions, in April 2013. As for the interview, the students were invited to answer questions emphasizing the vision of undergraduates on homosexuality.

The recorded information is done by using a recording device, which were later transcribed, constituting the material for data analysis. The subjects were named as respondents and numbered in Arabic numerals.

The data were faithfully transcribed by the researcher and to handle them we used the thematic analysis, performing the dismemberment of text units and later regrouping them into categories. After the elaboration thematic categories was made the inference, interpretation and discussion of data.

For conducting this study were respected for ethical aspects research involving humans, established by Resolution 196/96 National Health Council The study was initiated after the approval of the Research Ethics Committee of the University Center for Health, Human Sciences and Technology of Piauí - UNINOVAFAP, filed under the number 198,802. The participants signed an informed Free and Informed Consent Form.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing the data, three categories emerged, homosexuality as sexual choice and question of gender; the bias imposed by society and holistic care without discrimination.

### Homosexuality as sexual “option” and gender issue

This category are presented the testimonies that refer to homosexuality as an option and not as guidance, as it is revealed in the following statements:

*Homosexuality is still seen by many as a prejudiced... each person has the right to choose their sexual option. (DEPONENT No. 4).*

*[...] each person has the right to choose their sexual choice and if they choose to be homosexual society has to accept.” (DEPONENT No. 8).*

Sexual orientation is opposed to a particular notion of “sexual orientation”, that society has and this is understood as a deliberate choice and supposedly performed autonomously by the individual, regardless of the social context in which they have. Our ways of being, acting, thinking and feeling reflect so subtle, complex and profound the contexts of our social experience.<sup>7</sup>

Therefore, there is a need for greater preparation to cope with this concept, because we were born to not choose what we want to be, is only defined when we were born the sex, whether man or woman, but sexual orientation is presented

*View of students in higher education institution... in the form of desire by people of the same sex or different sex.*

It is observed in part of the analyzed speeches the acceptance of homosexuality as a form of existence, including with the expression of the need to respect the sexual option of people, however, this thought still represents a minority. It is possible to check that the experience of homosexuality is still very informative, as is revealed in the statement below:

*A right of each person choose their sexual option... Now the society is still very judgmental. (DEPONENT No. 11).*

It is worth pointing out that homosexuality is not a matter of choice, but rather that the individual already born tilted, preordained that/this sexual option, and that any attempt to change this sexual orientation, is totally ineffective, because the desire for another person of the same sex, does not depend on the genre to which you are as it is described in this testimony.

*[...] the homosexual is of the male gender, regardless of their wishes. What changes is only their sexual preference. (DEPONENT No. 10).*

In The same way, that there are differences with respect to the church, beliefs, ideas, the “sexual option”, or better, the sexual difference is high point of discussion today. This leads us to realize that the difference between gender and sexual orientation, goes beyond the issues related to sex and that still need be discussed in teaching

Rocha FCV, Medeiros LV, Fonseca NSB *et al.* institutions, especially for those students who will meet and take care of this clientele.

Gender is a social category imposed over a sexed body, became a word particularly useful because it provides a means of distinguishing the sexual roles assigned to women and men. The use of “gender” puts the emphasis on a whole system of relations that may include sex, but that is not directly determined by sex or directly determines sexuality.<sup>8</sup>

*They have a life together with people of the same sex, relate to them and are happy the way he wants and each one has the ability to choose his gender.* (DEPONENT No. 5)

According to the discourse of the deponent may be noted that homosexuality or a view by genre or by sexual orientation, “sexual option”, is defended by them as something contrary, opposite or even that gender is not “alias” of sexuality, but that the constructions related to sexuality are entered into sexual practices relating to the gender issue.

It is interesting to note how the gender differences are also present in etiologic theories about homosexuality, a time that, the forms and the biological processes that lead a man to be homosexual are essentially different from forms and processes that cause the female homosexuality. This vision differentiated from male homosexual and homosexual females is, with certainty, related the vision of male and female bodies as two radically distinct bodies and immeasurable.<sup>9</sup>

It is worth noting that gender relations are established within a hierarchical system, which give way power relations in which the male is not

*View of students in higher education institution... only different from women, and this gender construction occurs through the dynamics of social relations. What we are will be built through relationships with others, a personal identity and life history.*

### The bias imposed by society

On gender in the past, the heterosexuality was perceived as something essential, determined biologically. The conception that some behaviors are typically female or male is supported in the possibility of procreation.<sup>8</sup>

We judge others by ourselves; we put ourselves as a standard to evaluate the behavior and attitudes of other human beings. The ‘good’ or ‘bad’, the ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, they are part of our life, and we use values that we learned how to correct to analyze ourselves and the other. Those who differ from what we consider ‘correct’, are seen as bad.<sup>10</sup>

The hetero-affection puts us in touch with a reality that brings social concepts and values are learned and trained, and it is from these that we are guaranteed to evaluate and judge, and extend such appreciation to others. When we come into contact with other human beings, who are part of our social group, we have learned how to identify signs, attitudes and recognized codes such as inside or outside of the norm, of the accepted.

*[...] I must say that I have not yet formed an opinion with respect to this group, but respect them... I think that it is not by the fact of not agreeing or take the same attitudes of the homosexuals, which I must discriminate against them by their choice, their sexual option... each one does what he wants with his life.* (DEPOENT No. 2)



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Our judgments are made based on a standard type, in which people can only relate to the opposite sex of theirs. To deviate this model is to be subject to criticism. The individual is disapproved who is overweight, which is thin, tall, short, or presents one of the most condemned characteristics -to be recognized as a homosexual.

It was believed that the best way to combat prejudice would be the knowledge of oneself and the other, and knowledge should occur through education. Getting to know the other, recognizing what he thinks of himself, is not inferior, that he has a different value, not unequal, it is important to reduce prejudice and discrimination.<sup>11</sup>

*[...] I think that we should respect the choice of each person, but we live in a country where the prejudice is very great, with time this may come to change... but while this does not change, I believe that all people have the right to choose what they believe to be the best for them. (DEPOENT No. 6).*

*[...] There is still much prejudice... it is a personal decision, it will not minimize or characterize the concept of person... it is his choice. (DEPOENT No. 3).*

In the analyses of the speeches, it is clear that in many reports that these do not have formed opinion on homosexuality. Because many still appear to be frightened into, accepting homosexuality; but it is clear that the majority seek to cultivate respect for the human being, regardless of their orientations, and that society does not have the right to judge or discriminate.

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However, prejudice has been studied as a psychological characteristic of the individual: a repressed frustration and moved to weakest groups, the development of a kind of authoritarian personality; low willingness to open mindedness, the lack of contacts with members of minority groups.<sup>12</sup>

*Sexuality today in Brazil and in the world is very much open... every person has the right to choose what they want to do, have the right to their choices. (DEPOENT No. 7)*

This deponent says that the world is changing, and consequently the prejudice. We believe that education is one of the most powerful tools to combat this prejudice. Therefore, it is necessary that there be inclusion of this topic in undergraduate courses for which the discussion is expanded and disseminated.

On this basis, sexuality is expressed and lived in thoughts, relationships, attitudes, beliefs, but is influenced by the interaction of biological factors, psychological, social, economic, cultural, religious, historical and other. Although there is this conceptual, difference is observed that talking about sexuality can lead to an understanding of the relations between the sexes, or simply emphasize the biological components of sexuality.<sup>13</sup>

### **Holistic care without discrimination**

One of the confrontations is on the questions involving homosexuality, specifically in the field of healthcare. The discrimination with respect to care for these individuals is something routine in health services. Many discriminate by not knowing how to deal with the situation and other by prejudice.

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Homosexuals, as well as any other person have the right to health, but in view of what is the Brazilian reality this right is crossed by inequities that must be addressed with actions that propose reverting exclusion and violation of fundamental human rights, in view of promoting fairness for different social groups.

*[...] all have the right to be treated equally. Unfortunately we live in a society where being different in any way is reason for discrimination. (DEPONENT No. 1)*

*[...] I will care for the patient as a normal person; he will be cared for in an equal manner. There is no reason to treat the patient otherwise discriminating against them because of his sexual orientation. (DEPOENT No. 9).*

The quality of healthcare is directly related to the training received by professionals who make up the health team. This should be prepared to provide assistance to consider ethics as a fundamental principle of human society, especially in the workplace.<sup>13,5</sup>

According to the report of the deponents, although unaware and even do not know the right approach to this group of people, they claim that healthcare is a universal right and they deserve holistic care just as any other individual. In the context of health services, it was noted that the reality is quite different, happens in a fragmented way, i.e. the professionals are incapacitated in their entirety in this service. Usually the health professional relationship with the patient is distant and often discriminatory.

It is believed that the nurse can help to demystify the myths and prejudices directed to sexuality and to the optimization of knowledge of the population on the topic "human sexuality" in

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*View of students in higher education institution...* all its bio-psycho-sociological nuances. This practice requires the intercourse of training institutions in order to enable the facilitator of the educational process, in the second instance, to enable the learners.

## CONCLUSION

The study shows that some undergraduates feel they are prepared to care for the homosexual clientele, using as a parameter, the lack of prejudice and the respect for others, points considered important in conducting a consultation. However the customer service requires not only respect the individual and their individuality, as also, have theoretical foundation, practices, studies and readings, tools in which still are not seen in the training of these health professionals.

However it is perceived that the study participants have some representation in society, because all showed to have an open mind for the changes, which brings a great benefit to this clientele, that is the answer to any citizen regardless of their sexual orientation.

It is worth pointing out that there are many gaps in relation to sex education in the formation of health professionals, as well as research related to this topic. Therefore, we see the need to broaden the discussion with faculty and students, in both the initial training as well as in continuing. It is also necessary that the undergraduate disciplines are Cross sectional for this issue, only then will they encourage the development of critical awareness and reduce prejudice.



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