

RESEARCH ARTICLE

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PROFILE OF GENDER VIOLENCE AGAINST THE LGBT POPULATION AND ASSOCIATED FACTORS

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to identify the predictive potential of sociodemographic variables and characteristics of the main complaints of crimes reported against the LGBT population. **Methods:** quantitative, descriptive research conducted at the Police Office for Prosecution of Homophobic Crimes, through consultation of occurrences registered from January 2017 to 2018. The data collection instrument was built based on the data available in the Detailed Terms of Occurrence. The analysis was carried out using descriptive and inferential statistics. **Results:** of the sample, 64.2% (n = 34) were male, with mean age of 32.5 years (± 10.5 years), 83.3% (n = 30) had eight or more years of study, 79.2% (n = 42) had suffered insult, 71.7% suffered threats (n = 38), 41.5% (n = 22) suffered verbal aggression, and 1.9% (n = 1) physical aggression. **Conclusion:** the variables perpetrator of the crime, schooling and victim's age were considered strong predictors for the crime of insult, and sex and gender were predictors of medium strength.

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INTRODUCTION

In Brazil, a total of 277 deaths of LGBT people were registered in the year 2017 until September 20, representing 1.05 deaths/day. Such data represent an increase of 30% in relation to 2016, when 343 cases were registered (Agência Brasil, 2018).

The state with the highest record of hate crimes against the LGBT population was São Paulo (59), followed by Minas Gerais (43), Bahia (35), Ceará (30), Rio de Janeiro (29), Pernambuco (27), Paraná (23), and Alagoas (23). Among the regions, the highest average of hate crime records was found in the North (3.23 per million inhabitants), followed by the Midwest (2.71) and the Northeast (2.58) (Agência Brasil, 2017). In the city of João Pessoa/PB, 38 police inquiries, 56

detailed terms of occurrence (DTO), and 96 police reports (PR) were recorded in 2016. The age range of the victims varied between 18 and 60 years (Secretaria da Segurança e Defesa Social, 2018). Detailed terms of occurrence differ from the others in that they present a greater amount of details in the information provided by police authorities. The Brazilian population faces a process of recognition of the rights of the LGBT population. This population still suffers discrimination in the public and private spheres (Checa, 2018). Throughout history, sexual and gender diversity has been criticized and divided opinions among social subjects. There is a pattern based on heterosexuality, which is the involvement of subjects of opposite sex and gender; people who differ from this pattern end up seen as inferior (Souza, 2018). This prejudice becomes evident through the rejection of individuals or social groups, as well as the subtle prejudice present in discourses that disguise the real feelings and perceptions towards a given social group. These demonstrations of prejudice can also be exquisitely cruel, even leading to murders (Souza, 2017). In the health sphere, professionals face difficulties with regard to serving this public and do not have sufficient preparation to deal with the conflicting situations faced by these individuals.⁵ Thus, it is essential that health professionals provide respectful assistance, free from prejudice and or discrimination, valuing the role of the individuals assisted regardless of their sexual orientation (Popadiuk, 2017). In this context, nurses play an important role as educators to the LGBT group, carrying out health education actions on topics such as Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), guaranteeing full reproductive rights, and reducing suicidal ideation rates related to depression, in addition to guaranteeing dignified and humanized care (Silva, 2017). The development of this work is justified by the need to disseminate recent data on violence against the LGBT population and encourage this group of people to report violent situations. In this context, this research aimed to identify the predictive potential of sociodemographic variables and describe the characteristics of the main reports of crimes against the LGBT population.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a quantitative research with secondary data, part of the project entitled: Sexualities and Gender: dynamics, dimensions and intersubjectivities, approved by the Ethics Committee of Research with human beings of the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB) under the opinion number 1,783,228. Data collection was carried out at the Police Office for Prosecution of Homophobic Crimes in the city of João Pessoa-PB, which works in conjunction with the Commission on Sexual Diversity and Homoffective Law of the Order of Attorneys of Brazil (OAB), Coordination of Specialized Attendance in Combating Homophobia and Racism, Secretary of Women and Sexual Diversity of the State and the LGBT Space. The population in this research is the LGBT public who sought the services of the Police Office for the Prosecution of Homophobic Crimes from January 2017 to January 2018. More specifically, those who denounced any type of violence they suffered, that is, victims of homophobic crimes. The population corresponded to a total of 53 people. Data were collected from the information available in the DTO: qualification of the victim, of the aggressor, description of the place and conditions in which the criminal offense occurred, and mention of the existing evidence (photos, videos, recordings, etc.) and of the indicated witnesses. The collected data were analyzed with the aid of the R software version

3.1.0, using descriptive statistics. The relation of the different crimes with the variables investigated was analyzed using the Weight of Evidence (WoE) test according to the information value (IV), which shows the potential of prediction of the independent variables in relation to the outcome (the types of crimes identified in the investigated cases: insult, threat, verbal aggression, and physical aggression). Values below 0.02 indicate that the variable is a very weak predictor of the investigated outcome; from 0.02 to 0.1, weak predictor; from 0.1 to 0.3, medium-strength predictor; and 0.3 or higher, strong predictor.

The crimes were classified according to the Brazilian penal code: (Brasil, 2008).

Threat: Art. 147. - To threaten someone through words, writing or gestures, or any other symbolic means to cause unjust and serious harm.

Defamation: Art. 139. - To defame someone, imputing an offensive attribute to his/her reputation.

Insult: Art. 140. - To insult someone, offend his/her dignity or decorum.

Bodily injury: 129. - To offend the bodily integrity or health of others.

RESULTS

Of the total cases investigated, 64.2% (n = 34) were male, 50.9% (n = 27) female, 64.2% (n = 34) were aged 20 to 39 years, with an average of 32.5 years (\pm 10.5 years), 83.3% (n = 30) had eight years or more of schooling, 79.2% (n = 42) of the victims suffered insult, 71.7% (n = 38) threats, 41.5% (n = 22) verbal aggression, and 1.9% (n = 1) physical aggression. Regarding the perpetrators of these crimes, 47.9% (n = 25) were inserted in the victim's social relations and 39.6% (n = 21) were partners or ex-partners.

Table 1. Distribution of investigated cases according to sociodemographic variables and characteristics of the crime, João Pessoa, PB, Brazil, 2018

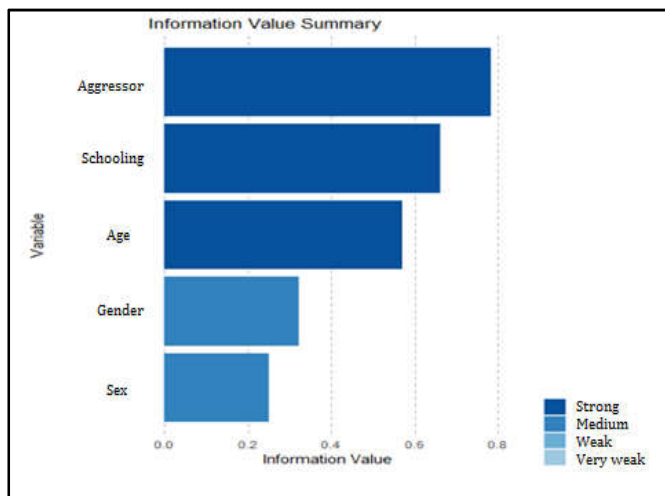
Variables	n	%	
Age	< 20 years	6	11.3
	20 to 39 years	34	64.2
	40 to 59 years	12	22.6
	\geq 60 years	1	1.9
Sex	Male	34	64.2
	Female	19	35.8
Gender	Male	26	49.1
	Female	27	50.9
Schooling*	Illiterate	1	2.8
	< 8 years	5	13.9
	8 years or more	30	83.3
Type of Crime**	Insult	42	79.2
	Threat	38	71.7
	Verbal aggression	22	41.5
	Physical aggression	1	1.9
	Others	3	5.7
	Offender	Someone from the victim's social relations	25
	Partner/ex-partner	21	39.6
	Family member	7	13.2

Note: *The total n of these variables does not correspond to the 53 cases investigated because the information regarding schooling was not available in the medical record; **The total number exceeds the 53 cases investigated because an individual could have suffered more than one type of crime.

Source: Research data, 2018

As for the predictive potential of the variables investigated with the types of crimes, considering the information value

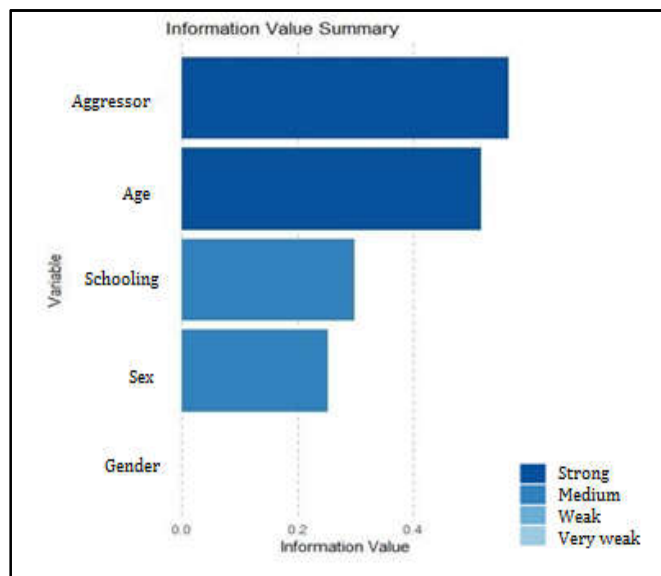
(IV), it was observed that the variables offender (IV = 0.78), schooling (IV = 0.66) and victim's age (IV = 0.57) were strong predictors for the crime of insult, while the variables gender (IV = 0.32) and sex (IV = 0.25) were predictors of medium strength (Figure 1).



Source: Research data, 2018

Figure 1. Relationship between the dependent variables and the crime of insult based on the Weight of Evidence model. João Pessoa, PB, Brazil, 2018

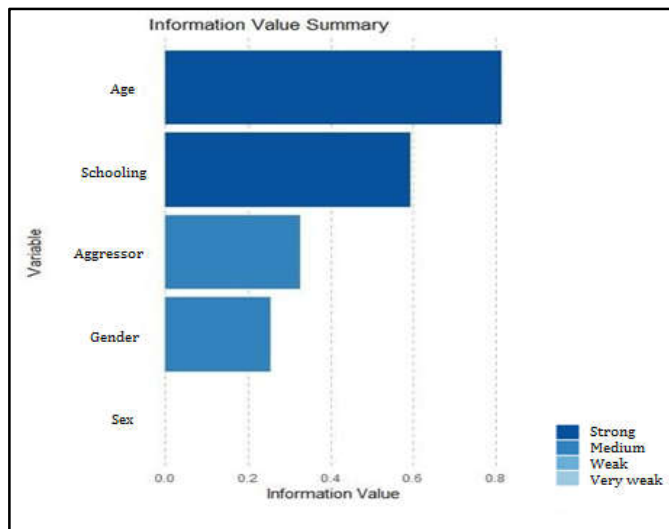
With regard to the crime of threat, there was a very strong relationship with the variables offender (IV = 0.57) and age (IV = 0.52); medium-strength relationship with schooling (IV = 0.30) and sex (IV = 0.25); and very weak relationship with gender (IV = 0.00) (Figure 2).



Source: Research data, 2018

Figure 2. Relationship between the dependent variables and the crime of threat based on the Weight of Evidence model. João Pessoa, PB, Brazil, 2018

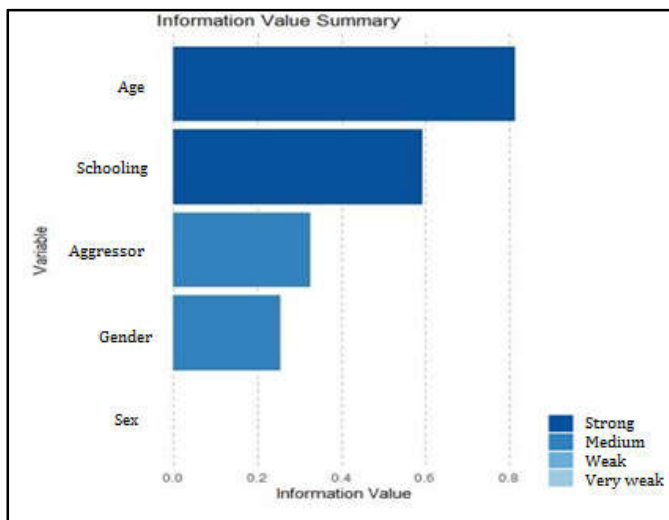
As for the crime of verbal aggression, the variables that showed a strong predictive potential were: victim's age (IV = 0.82) and schooling (IV = 0.60). The variable offender (IV = 0.33) and gender (IV = 0.25) had a medium-strength potential of prediction, and the variable sex (IV = 0.00), a very weak potential of prediction (Figure 3).



Source: Research data, 2018

Figure 3. Relationship between the dependent variables and the crime of verbal aggression based on the Weight of Evidence model. João Pessoa, PB, Brazil, 2018

Considering the last and the least prevalent type of crime, it was observed that the variables victim's age (IV = 0.82) and schooling (IV = 0.60) had a strong predictive potential for the mentioned outcome; and the variables offender (IV = 0.33) and gender (IV = 0.25), a medium-strength potential. Gender (IV = 0.00) had a very weak predictive power over this type of crime.



Source: Research data, 2018

Figure 4. Relationship between the dependent variables and the crime of physical aggression based on the Weight of Evidence model. João Pessoa, PB, Brazil, 2017-2018

DISCUSSION

The results of this study showed that in the 53 DTO analyzed, the age group of 17 to 24 years was the one that most sought the services of the Police Office for Prosecution of Homophobic Crimes. In the case of adolescents, young gays or lesbians who publicly expose their sexual desires and identifications face discrimination and prejudice and this enhances the vulnerability to which they are usually already exposed.⁹ Not being able to count on other people's social support is also an aspect of vulnerability faced by homosexuals when they reveal their sexual orientation, because the reactions

of the network can also involve lack of understanding and/or violence (Souza, 2018). As to the complaints analyzed in the present research, it was observed that males were the majority of people who made reports. In contrast, females were more expressive in the complaints. The literature points out that lesbians are more likely to suffer violence than gays, but the fragility of social and instructional response networks can be considered one of the reasons that inhibit the reporting of violence (Magruder, 2016). As for the main types of violence in this study, there was a predominance of insult, threat and verbal aggression. Depending on the location where the data were collected, there is a divergence regarding the predominance of physical or psychological violence, however, the international and national literature converges with regard to high prevalence of violence. A systematic review conducted from January 2000 to April 2016 analyzed 76 articles from 50 countries and identified a high prevalence of physical and sexual violence caused by the perception of sexual orientation and gender identity, particularly among transsexual people (Prunas, 2018; Parente, 2018; Albuquerque, 2016 and Blondeel, 2018). Regarding aggressors, they were within the victim's social environment. This corroborates with a study carried out in Ceará which showed that this fact can be aggravated by the lack of a support network, because people from the victim's environment do not accept their sexual desires and identifications (Albuquerque, 2016). The association with the variables aggressor, schooling, and age of the attacked person, strong predictors of the crime of insult, may indicate that the fact of having a higher level of education does not mean that individuals are more attacked, but rather that the level of education can influence empowerment to seek help and/or report the aggression (Parente, 2018).

As for aggressors, it was seen that despite the protection laws, people from the LGBT people' social relations are still the ones that most attack them. In this sense, homophobia can be present in the social relations established between students, professionals and other subjects in the school community (...) affecting the students' perspectives of school success (Cunha, 2018). The effects of these situations have exponential effects, causing great damage, constant discomfort and increased risk of violence. Greater attention is necessary to this logic of homophobic socialization specifically in some places, including the school environment (Cunha, 2017). Regarding schooling data, most of the people who were assaulted had completed high school, and were majority in the DTO. Regarding the relation with age, it was identified that the victims would be in the period of end of high school and possibly entering or finishing college. Based on this problem, it became evident that most people had already suffered some form of aggression (physical, moral or both) in the school, and such individuals were still attending school despite suffering some form of prejudice due to their sexual orientation, making them more susceptible to depression and suicide (Shearer, 2016). There are gaps and concerns about the real reason that leads these people evade the school environment and about what they do after this evasion. It is observed that the school adopts culturally produced standards and stereotypes, making identities invisible and adopting exclusionary practices for all those that do not fit the profile used as adequate and accepted, and such practice of silencing culminates in evasion (Cunha, 2018). This is also a reality found in Nigeria and South Africa (Okanlawon, 2017 and Daniels, 2019). The effects of these situations have exponential effects, causing great damage, constant discomfort and increased risk of violence. In the

meantime, it is essential to make a thorough analysis of this logic of homophobic socialization, specifically in some places, including the school environment (Cunha, 2017). A context responsible for the emission of aggressive responses becomes evident when evaluating episodes of violence against homosexuals. The so-called homophobia may not occur in all places or with all people identified with the LGBT universe, but even so, its occurrence or relevance must not remain hidden from the eyes of science or public policy making. Homophobia occurs, and this is a fact (Silva, 2016). Regarding the perpetrators of the crimes, the majority were members of the victims' social relations. However, it is always noteworthy that these data are under-reported, and thus the reports here represent just a small portion of the cases that are reported and notified. The real challenge that this report has to face is to emphasize the importance of the denunciations for a better understanding of the reality of the Brazilian LGBT population and for the construction of measures that are able to increasingly meet the needs of this population (Brasil, 2013). It is worth noting that nurses work in the construction and implementation of public health policies (Silva, 2017). They play a comprehensive role in strengthening these policies by assisting individuals who are part of the LGBT group and who in many cases seek health care in the search for support and humanized care in the midst of the so many negative situations faced (Querino, 2016). This study showed a lack of information about reports and discussions of the data, in particular, discussions about the age group and schooling of the attacked people. As data were collected in only one capital of the Northeast, the data cannot be generalized to the profile in Brazil, however, the study strengthens the literature.

Conclusion

Most of the complaints were from men, with an average age of 32.5 years, who had good levels of education, were victims of the crime of insult, and the aggressors were people from the victim's social environment and, more specifically, partners or ex-partners. The aggressor, schooling, and victim's age were strong predictors of insult, while the variables of gender and sex were predictors of medium strength. It was expected to find a higher percentage of complaints, since the crime rate against the LGBT population has increased. However, it was not possible to point out that this amount demonstrates the reality because not all crimes are reported. An aspect that could discourage the making of complaints is that, in all the DTO analyzed, none was completed either due to the change of address of the victims and/or the accused aggressor, or to the withdrawal of the complaint by the victims. It is important to emphasize that in order to prevent impunity, complaints need to be made, and victims need to know they have support. Finally, the intention of the research is to encourage victims of homophobic crimes to denounce the aggressors, to show that the relevance of these complaints goes beyond the personal benefit but can reach the whole society because one complaint can lead to several others. A number of complaints compatible with the reality can make the competent authorities turn to seek policies to bring security and dignity to this population that is so vulnerable.

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