

Attitudes of Religious People on Marriage and Adoption by LGBs

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ABSTRACT – The goal of the present work was to analyze the attitudes of people from different religious affiliations in regard to marriage and adoption of children by LGBs. A questionnaire was answered by 202 people with a mean age of 34.2 ($SD = 11.61$), affiliated with the religions of Catholic, Protestant, Inclusive Protestant, Spiritist and religions of African origin. The questionnaire contained measurements of religiosity and prejudice, as well as open questions regarding the theme. The results indicated that the majority of participants displayed favorable attitudes towards these rights. However, a part of the sample presented unfavorable attitudes, mainly the Catholics and the Protestants who were politically aligned to the extreme right. These findings suggest obstacles towards the maintenance of LGB's rights.

KEYWORDS: Religiosity, homosexuality, civil marriage, adoption, prejudice

Atitudes de Religiosos Acerca do Casamento e da Adoção por LGBs

RESUMO – O presente trabalho objetivou analisar as atitudes de pessoas de diferentes afiliações religiosas acerca do casamento civil e da adoção de crianças por lésbicas, gays e bissexuais (LGBs). Aplicou-se um questionário com 202 pessoas com idade média de 34,2 anos ($DP = 11,61$), afiliadas às religiões católica, protestante, protestante inclusiva, espírita e de matriz africana. O questionário continha medidas de religiosidade e preconceito, além de perguntas abertas relacionadas ao tema. Os resultados indicaram que a maioria dos participantes apresentou atitudes favoráveis a esses direitos, porém uma parcela da amostra apresentou atitudes contrárias, sobretudo católicos ou protestantes fundamentalistas, com posição política de extrema direita. Esses achados apontam empecilhos para a manutenção dos direitos LGBs.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Religiosidade, homossexualidade, casamento civil, adoção, preconceito

In recent decades, the population of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transexuals and transvestites (LGBT), through political and collective articulation, has conquered several rights and spaces in society (Pereira, 2016). Considering the specifics of the members of this population, this research is limited to the study of lesbians, gays and bisexuals (LGBs), as there is an understanding that this group has different experiences, and in order to more precisely address issues related to sexual orientation. It is noteworthy that throughout the text, the terms LGBs and homosexuals will be used as synonyms. Regarding these progresses, a historic achievement occurred on May 5, 2011, when the Brazilian Supreme Court (STF) unanimously recognized the same-sex union as a legal

regime of the civil partnership. From then on, homosexual couples started to be recognized as family entities and gained inheritance and adoption rights, although no law has been approved by the Brazilian National Congress regulating this type of union (Pereira, 2016).

Regarding the right to adoption of children by homosexual couples, the Child and Adolescent Statute (Law No. 8069, 2014) determines that, for joint adoption, adopters must be married and prove family stability, offering benefits to the adoptee. The Statute does not mention, however, homoparental adoption, while it does not explicitly prohibit it either (Santos et al., 2018). In this sense, according to Santos et al. (2018), the rights to civil marriage and adoption by

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LGBs are the legal basis for the formation of a family by same-sex couples, one of the new family configurations that has grown significantly in Brazil. However, such advances are not socially accepted in a homogeneous way.

Prejudice against LGBs

The process of LGBs rights recognition is strongly influenced by the prejudice to which this group is subjected (Pereira, 2016). In relation to prejudice, the classic concept proposed by Gordon Allport in “The Nature of Prejudice” (1954), one of the most important books in Social Psychology, is closely related to the concept of attitude. According to Allport (1954), this construct refers to an organization of beliefs, ideas and cognitions with positive or negative affective valence (favorable or contrary) about a social object, predisposing to certain behaviors. Based on this definition, it is possible to decompose attitude into three components that are usually aligned with each other: the cognitive, affective and behavioral (Lima, 2020).

In this sense, still according to Allport (1954), prejudice is a hostile or negative attitude, an antipathy, based on stereotypes, that is, generalized, flawed and inflexible beliefs in relation to a group or an individual for belonging to a socially devalued group. Prejudice, however, manifests itself in different ways, depending on which socially marginalized group is being analyzed (Lima, 2020). In relation to prejudice against homosexuals, Herek (2004) proposes three levels of analysis that are closely related. The broadest would be heteronormativity, which corresponds to the norms and knowledge shared by society regarding non-heterosexual identities and behaviors, classifying them as inferior or deviant. On the second level there would be heterosexism, which refers to social structures and institutions, such as schools and justice, which concretely implement inequality between heterosexuals and LGBs. Finally, at a more individual level, there would be prejudice against sexual diversity, which corresponds to social attitudes (beliefs, affections and predisposition to behavior) internalized by each individual in society (Herek, 2004; Costa & Nardi, 2015). This last level will be the focus of this work. With regard specifically to this type of prejudice, literature shows that an important factor to be considered and analyzed is the influence of religion (Droogenbroeck et al., 2016; Pereira et al., 2011).

Prejudice against LGBs and religion

Although there is no unanimous definition among scholars about what religion is, the present work adopts the definition of Pinto (2009), who understands it as the organized, institutionalized and shared set of beliefs, practices, doctrines

and specific values, which give meaning to existence and manifest through a dependence of man on a superior being.

Often used as a synonym for religion, there is the term religiosity. Remaining on the perspective of Pinto (2009), religiosity is the degree of commitment of each person to their beliefs and religious practices, which can occur individually and independently of an institutional affiliation. In this sense, there is a multiplicity of possibilities for experiences between and within each religion, from various dimensions of religiosity. It is important to distinguish that what is called religiosity here is different from the concept of spirituality, since spirituality does not imply any connection with a higher reality, but is associated with a deep reflection on one's existence and the search for a meaning in life, which can be sought, but not necessarily, in a supreme being (Pinto, 2009). Thus, the construct religiosity is adopted as the foundation for this study, from a multidimensional perspective.

Based on this and understanding religious affiliation as one of the dimensions of religiosity, it is known that each religion has specific beliefs and dogmas, according to the values of its tradition, which influences the conceptions and behavior of its adherents. One of these factors concerns sexual diversity. Many of these conceptions are negative and excluding, which reflects a strong association found in literature between prejudice against LGBs and certain religions (Anderson & Koct, 2015; Doebler, 2015; Droogenbroeck et al., 2016), especially in people with greater religious fundamentalism (Anderson & Koct, 2015; Cunningham & Melton, 2013; Doebler, 2015).

In this context, traditional Christian religions, such as Catholicism and Protestantism, have a more negative perspective on LGBs. This leads to a frequent association between these religions and greater prejudice against LGBs, which is evidenced in several national and international studies (Moretti-Pires, Tesser Júnior, Vieira, & Moscheta, 2016; Quintão, 2017). Although there is a distinction between the conception of homosexuality in relation to Catholicism, seeing it as an innate tendency, and the Protestant conception, attributing it as an acquired behavior and, therefore, it can be “reversed” (Natividade, 2006), both conceptions are negative and associated with the belief that sexual acts that do not aim at procreation, as in the case of LGBs, are considered sinful, unnatural and morally inferior (Duarte, 2017; Mesquita & Perucchi, 2016).

In addition to scientific evidence, this panorama can be verified in the national political context. According to Quintão (2017), there is strong resistance to the acceptance of the newly acquired rights by the LGB population coming from Christians, especially Protestants, who occupy leadership positions in the political arena. It is an opposing and conservative force, which, characterized by the use of religious discourses and the claim of the right to free expression, articulated itself politically to interfere in public

decisions concerning the rights of sexual minorities, such as the Draft Legislative Decree (PDC 234/11), known as the “Gay Cure”, aimed to prevent parts of Resolution nº1/1999 of the Federal Council of Psychology, which prohibits discriminatory practices in relation to sexual orientation.

Valle (2006) points out that this prejudiced rigor of Christianity, in general, has been softened in recent years, especially by Catholic discourse. In order to exemplify this greater flexibility, the author cites the greater acceptance of LGBs by the Catholic Church, evidenced in unofficial documents and declarations of religious leaders. However, Ribeiro and Scorsolini-Comin (2017) argue that some Christian communities, despite permeating a discourse of acceptance, still maintain restrictions and discrimination against LGBs. According to the authors, although the participants declared they had ties of friendship within the religious community, their participation in the institution was limited, especially from the moment they assumed their homosexuality. The restrictions mainly involved changes in their roles in the church.

Furthermore, new strands of Christianity have been growing in Brazil and in the world, from the 1990s onwards and from movements of the LGB Christian community itself, culminating in the emergence and rise of self-styled inclusive Christian churches. These aim at reconciling Christian dogmas with the acceptance of deviant standards of heterosexuality, by questioning the marginal place assigned to this public and questioning passages from the Bible that were previously used to exclude and condemn them. These churches have been associated with less prejudice against LGBs (Jesus, 2010; Natividade, 2010).

Following this line of greater tolerance towards homosexuality, other religious groups have also been associated with a more favorable and less prejudiced perspective towards LGBs, such as Spiritists (Britto, 2017; Cravo & Trindade, 2016) and religions of African origin (Silva, Paiva, & Parker, 2013; Silva, Santos, Licciardi, & Paiva, 2008). Regarding Spiritism, although homosexuality has not been addressed in Kardec’s works, books that are basic to this doctrine, recent discussions about the rights of the LGB population and the malleability of Spiritist teachings contributed to a greater openness and acceptance of homosexuality by adherents of this religion (Britto, 2017), which, in fact, has been evidenced in literature, and shows in Spiritists an inclusive discourse and a greater attribution of positive characteristics to homosexuals, compared to other religious denominations (Cravo & Trindade, 2016; Duarte, 2017). Despite reports of inclusion, some studies indicate experiences of prejudice and discrimination in certain Spiritist Centers, even if subtle, such as rejections of lectures on the topic (Britto, 2017; Pereira, 2016; Costa et al., 2017).

With regard to African-based religions, such as Candomblé and Umbanda, Santos (2008) states that they

are open to difference and sexual diversity, which can be explained, in part, by the historical persecution that these groups suffered by dominant religious institutions. Silva et al. (2008), found in young people and leaders of these religions a greater openness to listen to moral postulates different from their own, compared to young people of Christian religions. However, despite the more inclusive perspective, some studies emphasize the presence of discriminatory attitudes in the *terreiros* (traditional sacred Candomblé sites) (Santos, 2008; Silva et al., 2013), so that, although there were homosexuals occupying higher hierarchical positions, those who had behaviors considered feminine were less valued and received guidance on how to behave in the *terreiro* (Rios, 2013).

Given all of this, it was necessary to comparatively investigate all the religious groups mentioned above, as they represent the religions with the largest number of adherents in Brazil (IBGE, 2011) and have different perspectives in relation to LGBs. It is also noteworthy that comparative studies covering all these religious affiliations are scarce in national literature. The study by Gomes and Souza (in press) is emphasized. They aimed to analyze the influence of religiosity on prejudice against homosexuals in people of different Brazilian religious affiliations. The authors found a more explicit prejudice among Catholics and traditional Protestants, a subtle prejudice among Spiritists, and prejudiced attitudes were not identified among inclusive Protestants and among those who followed religions of African origin. From this perspective, the relevance of evaluating the attitudes of religious people from these different affiliations about certain LGB rights was perceived.

Attitudes about rights to civil marriage and adoption by LGBs

Colwell’s (2017) literature review study, which aimed to understand how parental sexual orientation affects the emotional well-being of adopted children, found that this variable does not affect them positively or negatively. In the national context, Lira and Morais (2016) carried out a literature review with national and international articles, finding that the performance of parenting is independent of the couple’s sexual orientation. Thus, these results demonstrate that there is no scientific evidence that shows that homosexual couples are not able to be parents.

Despite this, scientific literature reveals the persistence of opposition to the rights of marriage and adoption by LGBs. In a study conducted in New Zealand, lawyers and social workers demonstrated that they prefer to see children adopted by heterosexual couples over same-sex couples, with religiosity and political conservatism associated with negative views regarding homoparental adoption (Scherman et al., 2020). Similarly, a study in Poland analyzed the attitudes of

Poles towards the legalization of civil unions between people of the same sex, finding that this right is not supported by the majority of the population (Tomczak & Zawadzka-Witt, 2021). In a survey conducted with Portuguese university students, parental competence and child development were evaluated more positively in heterosexual couples than in homosexual couples (Gato & Fontaine, 2016).

Several surveys also point to the relationship between religion and religiosity and attitudes towards the rights of LGBs. Gross et al. (2018), for example, found that in a sample of French heterosexual students, Catholic participants were less favorable to homoparenthood than those without religious affiliations, and the level of religiosity intensifies this rejection. In another French study, the results showed that religiosity plays a moderating role in the association between attitudes and political orientation and sexual prejudice (Vecho et al., 2016). Whitehead and Perry (2016), in turn, demonstrated that religious factors, such as attendance at religious services and reading of sacred texts, are among the strongest predictors of opposition to adoption by same-sex

couples. Lee and Mutz (2019) propose that the growing favorability of Americans towards same-sex marriage is due, among other factors, to the reduction in religiosity. In the national context, Pereira et al. (2013) analyzed the relationship between support for discriminatory policies against homosexuals and social representations regarding the nature of homosexuality in final-year psychology, social work and law students. The research revealed that religious beliefs predict opposition to marriage and the adoption of children by same-sex couples.

Given what has been exposed, from the context of prejudice against sexual diversity to the resistance of significant sectors of society to the realization of rights and citizenship of sexual minorities, it seems pertinent to analyze which arguments underpin attitudes towards the rights conquered by homosexual couples and how religiosity can be involved in this process. In this sense, the objective of this research was to analyze the attitudes of people of different religious affiliations in regard to civil marriage and the adoption of children by same-sex couples.

METHOD

Study Type and Participants

This is an exploratory and descriptive research, with an approach of mixed method quantitative-qualitative data collection. As inclusion criteria, participants should be over 18 years old and claim to belong to any of the religious affiliations investigated in the research. Those who did not indicate any religious affiliation or, when indicating two did not choose a predominant one, were excluded.

Thus, 202 people of different religious affiliations in the city of Fortaleza, Ceará, aged between 18 and 69 years old ($M = 34.24$; $SD = 11.61$) participated in this research, with the majority being female (56.4%), of mixed ethnicity (51%), married or in a stable relationship (39.3%), middle class (36.2%), with complete higher education (35.1%) and with political orientation considered centrist (29.1%). Regarding sexual orientation, the majority were heterosexuals (63%), followed by homosexuals (31%), bisexuals (5%) and two people marked the option “other”. With regard to religion, 44 were Catholics (21.8%), 44 Protestants (21.8%), 42 inclusive Protestants (20.8%), 43 Spiritists (21.3%) and 29 were from a religion of African origin, such as Umbanda and Candomblé (14.4%).

Instruments

Participants answered a pencil-and-paper questionnaire with sociodemographic questions, as well as other scales. In order to measure religiosity, the Religious Fundamentalism Scale was used – short version. (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2009) This measurement corresponds to the revision of the Religious Fundamentalism Scale that seeks to measure the level at which an individual believes that religious teachings and doctrines are immutable and central to the truths about man (for example, “Whenever there is a conflict between science and the sacred, science must be wrong”). It includes 12 items that are answered on a Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree) ($\alpha = .92$).

In order to measure prejudice against LGBs, two scales were used: the Intimacy Rejection Scale, developed and validated by Lacerda et al. (2002). This measurement is an adaptation of the rejection of intimacy scale proposed by Pettigrew and Meertens (1995) to measure one of the main dimensions of flagrant racism. The participants’ task consisted of indicating the extent to which they would feel embarrassed in 5 specific situations (e.g., “Having friends who are openly homosexual”), being answered on a scale

ranging from 1 (Not at all bothered) to 5 (Very bothered) ($\alpha = .86$). The second measurement is the Emotional Expression Scale, validated by Lacerda et al. (2002), which assesses the emotional dimensions involved in prejudice. It consists of a list of six emotions, three positive (admiration, respect and love) ($\alpha = .67$) and three negative (disgust, anger and contempt) ($\alpha = .79$), where the participants indicate, on a scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Often), how often they have felt these emotions with respect to homosexuals.

Finally, to learn about the attitudes of the participants, two questions were asked (“Do you agree that gay couples should have the right to civil marriage?” and “Do you agree that gay couples should have the right to adoption?”), and these were answered in a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). After each of these questions, participants were asked to write openly and in more detail their opinions about civil marriage and adoption by homosexual couples, indicating whether they were in favor or against these rights and if they were able to justify their positions.

Procedure

For data collection, the main religious centers of each of the religious affiliations were first researched. Then, the leader of each one was contacted by telephone, making an appointment to present the research and its objectives. Thus, the collection began in these religious centers, with the collective applications of the instruments carried out, as previously scheduled with the leaders. In order to increase the reach of participants, the “snowball” technique was also used, in which, from these first people, it was possible to find new contacts of people affiliated with the investigated religions. The application of the instrument to these people reached through the snowball technique occurred individually, based on previous appointments via telephone.

The study procedures were developed in order to protect the privacy, anonymity and autonomy of the subjects, and they also signed a Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF). This research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the

University of Fortaleza (CAE n° 84859318.4.0000.5052, ruling n° 2.606.383) and respected all ethical principles in research with human beings, as recommended by Council Resolutions 466/12 and 510/16 National Health.

Data analysis

Initially, using the SPSS software version 20, descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviations) were carried out to analyze the general position of the sample regarding attitudes towards marriage and adoption by LGBs, as well as measurements of religiosity, prejudice and political orientation of the participants. Subsequently, Pearson correlation analyzes were computed to analyze the relationship between these variables.

For the qualitative analysis of the data, that is, the analysis of the answers to the open questions about attitudes to civil marriage and adoption by homosexual couples, the IRAMUTEQ software (*Interface by R pour les Analyses Multidimensionnelles de Textes et de Questionnaires*) was used with the Descending Hierarchical Classification (DHC). For this, three stages were covered: the preparation and coding of the initial text; the descending hierarchical classification performed by data processing; and the interpretation of classes. Preparing the initial text in this research involved inserting the participants’ responses in a set of texts that constitute the corpus of analysis. Each answer was separated by a command line. This line consists of variables chosen from the most relevant data for the analysis of the participants’ responses, such as age, gender, political position, sexual orientation, in addition to the level of rejection of intimacy, positive emotions, negative emotions and religious fundamentalism, inferred from the scores obtained by the scales, and, finally, attitudes towards the issues of marriage and adoption by LGBs. It is noteworthy that the answers were lemmatized, which consists of corrections of typing and punctuation errors, in addition to the standardization of acronyms and the addition of compound terms.

RESULTS

Initially, descriptive statistics and correlation analyzes were computed using the study’s quantitative variables. These results are shown in Table 1. In general, it can be seen that the mean attitudes towards marriage and adoption by LGBs are above the midpoint of the scale, which indicates a greater agreement with these rights. In the opposite direction, bias measurements have low scores, which indicates a low level of bias for the majority of the sample. However, regarding the measure of religious fundamentalism, the sample also presents

a score above the midpoint of the scale, which indicates a sample with a high level of religiosity. Furthermore, correlation analyzes between the variables show that there is a negative relationship between attitudes favorable to LGBs’ rights and the variables of religious fundamentalism, prejudice (rejection of intimacy and negative emotions) and right-wing political positioning. The understanding of these relationships is deepened through the qualitative analysis of the data that is presented below.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics and coefficients of correlation between the analyzed variables

Variables	Range	M	SD	AA	FU	RI	NE	PE	PO
AM	1.00-7.00	5.57	2.27	.83**	-.37**	-.72**	-.27**	.43**	-.41**
AA	1.00-7.00	5.49	2.30		-.38**	-.66**	-.24**	.41**	-.40**
FU	1.33-9.00	5.32	1.83			.33**	.00	-.13*	.27**
RI	1.00-4.40	1.51	.72				.38**	-.47**	.39**
NE	1.00-5.00	1.37	.73					-.19**	.09
PE	1.00-5.00	3.99	.99						-.25**

Note: AM (Attitudes towards marriage); AA (Attitudes towards adoption); FU (fundamentalism); RI (rejection of intimacy); NE (negative emotions); PE (positive emotions); PO (political orientation); M (mean); SD (standard deviation); ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

Attitudes about civil marriage between LGBs

Corpus 1, referring to people's attitudes about civil marriage, was made up of 197 texts, separated into 197 text segments (TS), with 153 TS (77.66%) being used. There were 2,719 occurrences emerging (words, forms or terms), with 627 distinct words and 366 with a single occurrence. The analyzed content was categorized into five classes: Class 1, with 30 TS (19.61%); Class 2, with 31 TS (20.26%); Class 3, 30 TS (19.61%); Class 4, 32 TS (20.92%); and Class 5, 30 TS (19.61%), which are discussed below. These classes are divided into branches, where class 5 corresponds to subcorpus A, classes 1 and 3 to subcorpus B and classes 2 and 4 to subcorpus C. These corpus can be seen in Figure 1a. It is noteworthy that throughout the description of the classes, the variables that, according to the Iramuteq, had the most representative responses of each formed class are emphasized.

Class 1 – Opposing homophobic society

This class comprises 19.61% (f = 30 TS) of the total analyzed corpus, and consisted of words and stems in the range between $\chi^2 = 29.12$ (Life) and $\chi^2 = 4.95$ (Family). As for the variables, it was noticed that this class was composed, above all, of people who declared themselves in favor of civil marriage and who presented low rejection of intimacy with homosexuals. Regarding the arguments used, in general, the answers indicated society as a means in which prejudice and discrimination against this minority are disseminated. These comments can be seen in the following example:

“I believe that there is no difference between a homosexual couple and a heterosexual couple, both are couples who deserve to pursue the same possibility of getting married. Unfortunately, the difference is the way society condemns homosexuals.” (Participant No. 216, bisexual woman, Spiritist religion, 19 years old).

Class 2 – Inclusive Protestants in favor of the law

This class comprises 20.26% (f = 31 TS) of the total analyzed corpus and consists of words and stems in the range between $\chi^2 = 58.76$ (Equal) and $\chi^2 = 4.08$ (Happiness). Regarding the descriptive variables, they consist mainly of homosexual participants, affiliated with the inclusive Protestant religion and who declared themselves in favor of civil marriage between homosexuals, with low rejection of intimacy and high expression of positive emotions towards this public. The favorable attitudes towards civil marriage of this class include the argument that this is a human right, conferred on everyone equally according to the laws and the Constitution. This can be seen in the following example:

“In the Brazilian Constitution it says that we are all equal, so, yes, all people should have equal freedom and rights for all.” (Participant No. 11, homosexual male, inclusive Protestant religion, 20 years old).

Class 3 – Every form of love is valid

This class comprises 19.61% (f = 30 TS) of the total analyzed corpus and consists of words and stems in the range between $\chi^2 = 43.87$ (Form) and $\chi^2 = 11.96$ (Relationship). It presented, in its majority, participants who declared themselves in favor of marriage and who argued that all forms of union and love are valid, as it can be seen in the following example:

“All forms of love are valid. So regardless of sexual orientation, if there is respect, complicity, why not marrying and living this love?” (Participant No. 179, heterosexual woman, Spiritist religion, 33 years old).

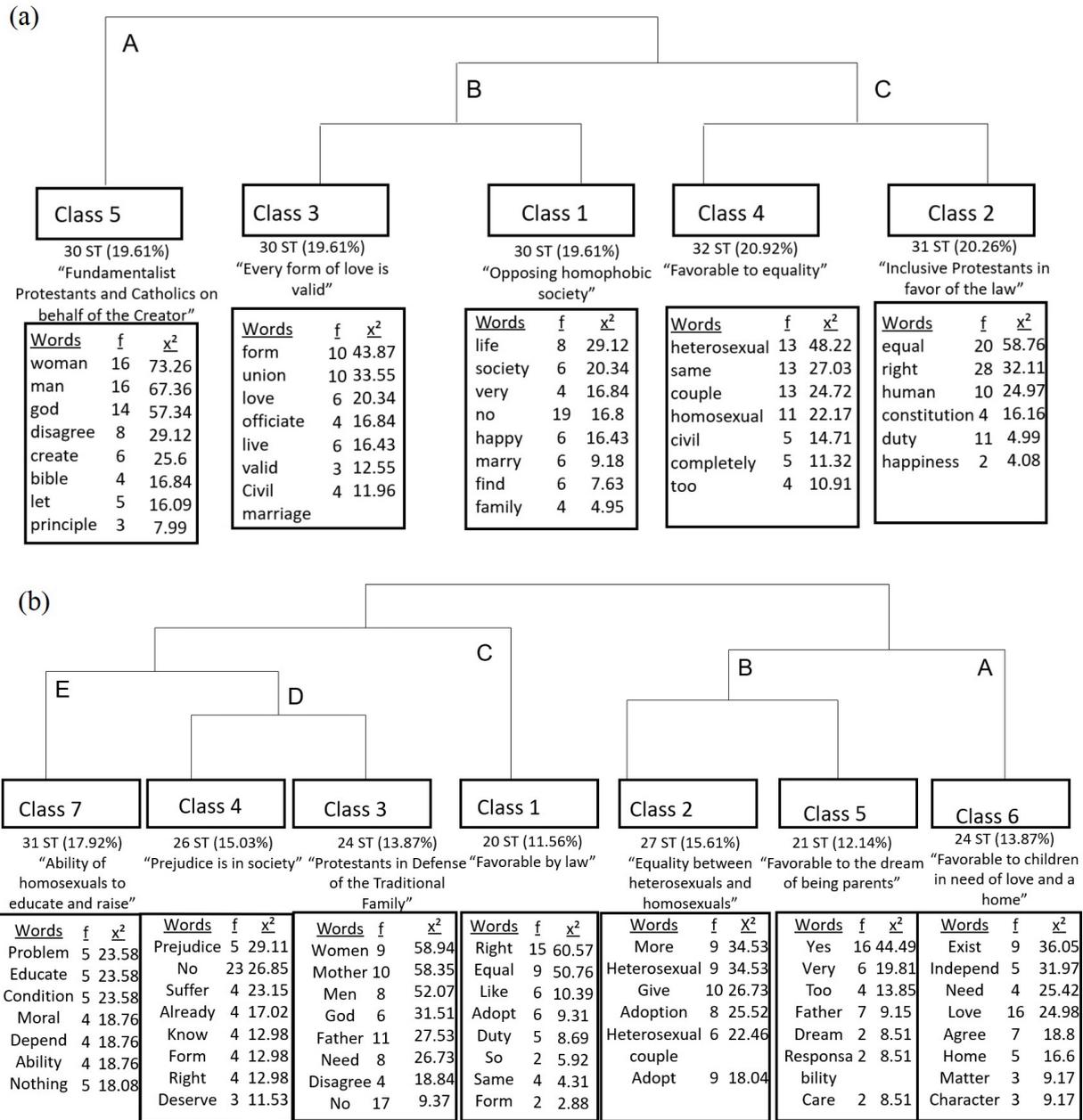


Figure 1. Dendrogram of the Descending Hierarchical Classification of the attitudes towards marriage between homosexuals (a) and towards adoption by homosexuals (b).

Class 4 – Favorable to equality

This class comprises 20.92% (f = 32 TS) of the total analyzed corpus and consists of words and stems in the range between $\chi^2 = 48.22$ (Heterosexual) and $\chi^2 = 9.14$ (Right). It is formed, above all, by participants in favor of civil marriage, who compare these relationships with heterosexual relationships, equating and validating them

based on the equality or similarity between the two types of relationship. This can be seen in the example:

“Yes, the same right that a heterosexual couple has, a homosexual one must also have. What each person does with their life only concerns him; no one can boss others around.” (Participant No. 45, homosexual male, religion of African origin, 25 years old).

Class 5 – Fundamentalist Protestants and Catholics on behalf of the Creator

This class comprises 19.61% (f = 30 TS) of the total analyzed corpus and consists of words and stems in the range between $\chi^2 = 73.26$ (Women) and $\chi^2 = 7.99$ (Principle). As for the descriptive variables, these consist mainly of heterosexuals, affiliated with Protestantism or Catholicism, opposed to civil marriage between homosexuals, with a medium level of rejection of intimacy with homosexuals, extreme right-wing political positioning and a high level of religious fundamentalism. In this class, their attitudes are strongly opposed to marriage between homosexuals, based on religious, fundamentalist and creationist arguments, which explain the idea that man and woman were created for each other and that any kind of alternative relationship to this constitutes disrespect to divine rules. This can be seen in the example:

“No, God created man and woman and placed them here on earth to generate a family. I defend what I believe and the Bible is my rule of faith and it is an abomination in God’s eyes. God loves the sinner, but he abhors sin.” (Participant No. 196, heterosexual woman, Protestant religion, 35 years old).

Attitudes about adoption by homosexuals

In relation to corpus 2, referring to people’s attitudes towards adoption by homosexuals, this consisted of 197 texts, separated into 197 text segments (TS), with 173 TS (87.82%). There was the emergence of 2,892 occurrences (words, forms or terms), with 677 distinct words and 370 with only one occurrence. The analyzed content was categorized into 7 classes: Class 1, with 20 TS (11.56%); Class 2, with 27 TS (15.61%); Class 3, 24 TS (13.87%); Class 4, 26 TS (15.03%); Class 5, 21 TS (12.14%); Class 6, 24 TS (13.87%); and Class 7, 31 TS (17.92%). Classes are divided into branches, with Class 6 corresponding to subcorpus A; Classes 2 and 5 to subcorpus B; Class 1 to subcorpus C; Classes 3 and 4 to subcorpus D; and Class 7 to subcorpus E. These corpus can be seen in Figure 1b.

Class 1 – Favorable by law

This class comprises 11.56% (f = 20 TS) of the total analyzed corpus and consists of words and stems in the range between $\chi^2 = 60.57$ (Right) and $\chi^2 = 4.31$ (Same). In general, it is mainly composed of participants in favor of adoption by homosexual couples and base their arguments on the laws, rights and duties attributed to all citizens, including homosexuals.

“All people are equal, so they should have the right to adopt and express their love for a child.” (Participant No. 172, homosexual woman, 35 years old, religion of African origin).

Class 2 – Equality between heterosexuals and homosexuals

This class comprises 15.61% (f = 27 TS) of the total analyzed corpus and consists of words and stems in the range between $\chi^2 = 34.53$ (More) and $\chi^2 = 14.00$ (Abandoned). In general, it is composed of participants in favor of adoption, who justify their attitudes based on comparisons between homosexuals and heterosexuals, claiming that they are equal and, therefore, have the same rights. In the speech of some, there is also the observation that the children to be adopted by homosexual couples were previously “abandoned” by the heterosexual couples who generated them.

“It is fair that both heterosexual and homosexual couples can have the same possibility of a life together, a marriage, a child, respect in public. It is only fair to be adopted by a responsible couple, whether heterosexual or homosexual” (Participant no. 216, bisexual woman, 19 years old, Spiritist religion).

Class 3 – Protestants in Defense of the Traditional Family

This class comprises 13.87% (f = 24 TS) of the total analyzed corpus and consists of words and stems in the range between $\chi^2 = 58.94$ (Women) and $\chi^2 = 9.37$ (No). As for the descriptive variables, these are mostly composed of people against the adoption of children by homosexual couples, people belonging to Protestant religion, with high or medium levels of rejection of intimacy with homosexuals, average level of expression of positive emotions in relation to this group, and high level of religious fundamentalism. People belonging to this class are also largely heterosexual with political positions linked to the far right.

“I disagree. A child needs foundation and the first foundation of his life should be the family. Father and mother, that’s God’s original plan. Same-sex couples shouldn’t bear a child. I’m in favor of the model that God created, what goes beyond that is anathema” (Participant No. 196, heterosexual woman, 35 years old, Protestant religion).

Class 4 – Prejudice is in society

This class comprises 15.03% (f = 26 TS) of the total analyzed corpus and consists of words and stems in the range between $\chi^2 = 29.11$ (Prejudice) and $\chi^2 = 11.53$ (Deserve). It is characterized by heterosexuals of Protestant religion, neutral or against adoption by homosexual couples, with a medium level of religious fundamentalism and political positions aligned to the far right. These are people who are not as significantly opposed to adoption as class 3, but still manifest opposition at some level, justifying their attitudes not in their own prejudices, but in society, which is prejudiced and will harm children adopted by homosexual couples.

“I don’t agree, thinking about the child’s future, because, one way or another, these children will suffer prejudice even if they come into a reasonable financial situation, but they will experience that.” (Participant No. 88, heterosexual woman, 54 years old, Catholic religion).

Class 5 – Favorable to the dream of being parents

This class comprises 12.14% (f = 21 TS) of the total analyzed corpus and consists of words and stems in the range between $\chi^2 = 44.49$ (Yes) and $\chi^2 = 6.76$ (Homosexual). It is characterized by people in favor of adoption by homosexuals who have a low rejection of intimacy. Several arguments were used, some of them being the desire and dream that many homosexuals have of having their own children through adoption.

“Yes, because they have the dream and a lot of desire to be parents. The right to adopt would help society a lot.” (Participant No. 71, heterosexual woman, 32 years old, Catholic religion).

Class 6 – Favorable to children in need of love and a home

This class comprises 13.87% (f = 24 TS) of the total analyzed corpus and consists of words and stems in the

range between $\chi^2 = 36.05$ (Exist) and $\chi^2 = 9.17$ (Character). It features people in favor of adoption and with political positions slightly to the left. Adoption is mainly supported by the argument that there are many abandoned children in need of love and a home that could be helped by homosexual couples interested in adoption.

“Adoption is an act of love, so if there is love to give to a child no matter where it comes from.” (Participant No. 179, heterosexual woman, 33 years old, Spiritist religion).

Class 7 – Ability of homosexuals to educate and raise

This class comprises 17.92% (f = 31 TS) of the total analyzed corpus and consists of words and stems in the range between $\chi^2 = 23.58$ (Problem) and $\chi^2 = 13.98$ (Sexual option). It is composed, above all, of people with political positions on the left and who declared themselves in favor of adoption by homosexuals. The arguments involve the fact that sexual orientation does not influence or compromise the ability of these couples to educate and raise children.

“I believe that the ability to love, raise and train other people for life will not depend on your sexuality, but on what is inside you as a person in the first place.” (Participant No. 51, heterosexual woman, 29 years old, Catholic religion).

DISCUSSION

This research aimed to analyze the attitudes of people of different religious affiliations about civil marriage and the adoption of children by same-sex couples. Through the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data, it is believed that this objective has been achieved. Overall, the results show a negative relationship between attitudes in favor of LGBs’ rights and the variables of religious fundamentalism, prejudice (rejection of intimacy and negative emotions) and right-wing political orientation. Such attitudes are supported by various arguments.

In relation to attitudes towards civil marriage among homosexuals, it was found that four out of the five classes found are in favor of this right and only one is unfavorable. Classes that comprise favorable attitudes are based on various arguments and discourses, which include criticisms of prejudiced society, the comparison between homosexuals and heterosexuals, the legitimization of any form of love and the evocation of the Constitution and laws that govern Brazil and guarantee equality for all, regardless of sexual orientation.

Regarding attitudes towards the right to adoption by homosexual couples, it was observed that of the seven

classes found, five were favorable and two unfavorable to this right. Among the favorable classes, the arguments involved comparisons between homosexuals and heterosexuals, demonstrating their similarities; equality of rights and duties; desire and aspiration of homosexual couples to have children; demand for children in the adoption service; and the understanding that sexual orientation does not interfere with the skills needed to raise and train children.

Given the diversity of attitudes, some aspects should be highlighted and discussed in greater depth. Initially, class 2 is emphasized in the corpus referring to civil marriage. This class was mostly made up of inclusive Protestant homosexuals, who express the defense of the right to civil marriage between people of the same sex based on legalistic and political arguments, evoking civil rights granted to everyone by the Brazilian Constitution. This type of argument is consistent with the emergence of the first inclusive churches in Brazil in the 1990s, a time when significant political manifestations of sexual minorities began (Natividade, 2010). In this sense, one can see from this class, a discourse formed by Christian homosexuals who fight for rights and equality, supported by laws, without, however, abandoning their

religious precepts, which demonstrates the real possibility of reconciling Christianity and homosexuality.

The only class against civil marriage was class 5, mainly characterized by heterosexuals, affiliated with Protestantism or Catholicism, with a high level of religious fundamentalism and extreme right-wing political affiliation. This class of the corpus referring to civil marriage aligns with classes 3 and 4 of the corpus referring to adoption. These classes, in turn, were composed predominantly of Protestants, with a medium or high level of fundamentalism, a right-wing political position and, just in the case of class 3, with a high or medium rejection of intimacy with homosexuals. These results can be explained by the conservative perception that Christians have in relation to sexuality, defending the heterosexual relationship as the only legitimate one, as it enables procreation. These findings corroborate national and international research that identified negative attitudes towards homosexuals in Catholics and Protestants (Droogenbroeck et al., 2016; Gomes & Souza, in press; Pereira et al., 2011; Gross et al., 2018).

In addition, the higher level of religious fundamentalism in these groups is also corroborated by other studies, which identified greater negative attitudes towards homosexuals in people with a higher level of fundamentalism (Anderson & Koct, 2015; Cunningham & Melton; 2013; Doebler, 2015). From Doebler (2015), it is understood that fundamentalist people tend to see their religion as unique and perfect and believe that any changes in their dogmas would be wrong. Such people are not open to other possibilities of beliefs, which increases the likelihood that they are more intolerant of lifestyles different from their own, such as a homosexual one.

These comments were still characteristically delivered by participants politically aligned to the far right, which is

congruent with international studies (Scherman et al., 2020) and reflects what Quintão (2017) affirms about the growing conservative wave of the far right in the Brazilian political scenario, especially in the Chamber of Deputies, where the Evangelical Parliamentary Front has been articulating since 1986 in defense of its agendas. These, most of the time, imply the obstruction of the path towards the conquest of rights and the legitimization of LGB identities, such as the right to civil marriage and adoption by persons of the same sex.

It is noteworthy that one of the arguments used by Protestants against adoption refers to the suffering that society's prejudice can inflict on the child. This argument can be explained by Protestants' conception of homosexuality as something acquired, that is, influenced by external aspects, such as childhood trauma, upbringing by dysfunctional families or sexual abuse. In this sense, they are against adoption, as they argue that they fear for the well-being of children, as they would be part of a homophobic society that could cause them physical, psychological or social harm. This argument, however, has no scientific basis, as it can be seen in the review studies carried out by Lira and Moraes (2016) and Colwell (2017).

It is also observed that participants from classes that were more favorable to marriage, such as class 1 and 2 of corpus 1, and more favorable to adoption, such as class 5 of corpus 2, had less prejudiced attitudes, evidenced by the lower rejection of intimacy and the greatest expression of positive emotions. While classes against rights, such as class 5 in corpus 1 and class 3 in corpus 2, expressed greater rejection of intimacy with homosexuals compared to the previous classes, which implies more prejudiced attitudes from the participants of this group, that is, in right-wing fundamentalist Christians.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In summary, the results show that despite negative attitudes towards marriage and adoption by homosexuals, positive attitudes predominated, unlike previous studies that identified a predominance of opposing attitudes (Scherman et al., 2020; Tomczak & Zawadzka-Witt, 2021; Gato & Fontaine, 2016), including from people with religious beliefs (Gross et al., 2018; Lee & Multz, 2019; Vecho et al., 2016; Whitehead & Perry, 2016).

These findings may, on the one hand, reflect a changing society, in which homosexuals' rights are being gradually recognized by Brazilian institutions and increasingly occupy public spheres of society, making their demands, languages and existences more recognized and respected (Mello et al, 2012). On the other hand, it is necessary to make considerations when analyzing such results, as these may have been influenced by the phenomenon of social desirability. This phenomenon consists of the fact that, in the face of normative pressures and anti-prejudice legislation, which preach egalitarian values, people seek to adapt their

attitudes according to what they believe society expects (Lima, 2020). Thus, participants may have responded not only according to their attitudes, but were influenced by pressures and anti-prejudice norms.

In regard to a limitation of this research, the fact that it has restricted itself to the rights of the LGB population, not including the transsexual population, is highlighted. Future research involving these different publics is necessary to understand that, although they have aspects in common, each segment has a unique experience, which permeates different perceptions of religion. Furthermore, future research should focus on the target audience affiliated with these religious institutions, especially the most fundamentalist ones. It is also emphasized that it is important to evaluate the different denominations within each religion, considering that the present research did not assess this diversity of segments with different historical, theological and dogmatic perspectives.

Among the main contributions of this study, its innovation is highlighted in view of the lack of national research that

addresses these five religious affiliations together, including religions that are still little covered and that have gained strength in Brazil, such as those of African origin and inclusive Christian ones. We trust that this research will bring contributions not only at the scientific level, but also at the social level, given the relevance of LGB themes in contemporary society and the opportunity that the research offers to analyze how they are reflected in these issues. Therefore, the study revealed a society in transformation, in which a significant number of participants, affiliated with the most prevalent religions in Brazil, have favorable attitudes in relation to civil rights to marriage and adoption. These transformations are due to the growing strength of social movements articulated by the LGB population, which has been fighting for the last 50 years for the recognition of their rights and citizenship.

Despite this, there is still a group of people who oppose the legitimization of the civil rights of sexual minorities. It is noteworthy that previous studies addressed religiosity in a generic way, without considering the multiple dimensions of this construct. While this research shows that the simple association between prejudice against sexual diversity and religiosity is not enough to explain this phenomenon, the

results point to the opposition of LGB rights by a specific religious group, formed by fundamentalist Christians with right-wing political affiliation.

This exclusionary and extremist perception in relation to LGBs has even given ideological support to proposals by Christian psychologists that aim at reversing sexual orientation, which, in addition to not having a scientific basis and contradicting the position defended by the Federal Council of Psychology, can cause psychological distress to this population and violates their basic rights. This influence of Christian religiosity is particularly dangerous for the maintenance of the rights of the LGB population when one observes the presence of fundamentalist religious individuals occupying positions of power in the political arena (in the Senate, the Chamber of Deputies and even in the Planalto Palace in Brasilia) and making decisions that concern marginalized populations based on their own beliefs, practices and values, neglecting the secularity of the State and denying these populations various rights. Debating critically on this issue, therefore, offers the possibility for transformation and reflection on the urgency of implementing public policies that can promote the realization of the rights of LGBs.

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