MINORITY STRESS: DOES SEXUAL ORIENTATION REALLY MATTER ?

ESTRESSE DE MINORIAS: A ORIENTAÇÃO SEXUAL REALMENTE CONTA ?

ESTRÉS MINORITARIO: ¿CUENTA REALMENTE LA ORIENTACIÓN SEXUAL?

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to compare the degree of work stress experienced by heterosexual and non-heterosexual men. For this, a survey was conducted with 225 white male executive employees at different companies. Sexual orientation was self-declared which made possible to isolate two groups of respondents: 104 of whom defined their sexual orientation as heterosexual, and 121 as non-heterosexual. A work stress scale was applied. Results indicated that there was no statistically significant difference between the work stress experienced by the two groups. The analysis developed indicated that for groups that are like the sample used, being heterosexual or non-heterosexual is not enough to determine the degree of stress that one can suffer.

Keywords: Minority stress; Stress at work; Sexual orientation; Sexual orientation discrimination.

RESUMO

O objetivo deste estudo foi comparar o grau de estresse no trabalho vivenciado por homens heterossexuais e não heterossexuais. Para isso foi realizada pesquisa com 225 funcionários executivos, homens, brancos, de diferentes empresas. A orientação sexual foi autodeclarada, o que tornou possível isolar dois grupos de respondentes: 104 deles definiram sua orientação como heterossexual e 121 como não heterossexual. Uma escala de estresse no trabalho foi aplicada. Os resultados indicaram não haver diferença estatisticamente significante entre o estresse no trabalho vivenciado pelos dois grupos. A análise desenvolvida indicou que para grupos similares ao da amostra usada, ser heterossexual ou não heterossexual não é suficiente para determinar o grau de stress que alguém pode sofrer.

Keywords: Estresse de minorias; Estresse no trabalho; Orientação sexual; Discriminação por orientação sexual.

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este estudio fue comparar el grado de estrés laboral experimentado por hombres heterosexuales y no heterosexuales. Para esto, se realizó una encuesta con 225 empleados ejecutivos blancos de diferentes compañías. La orientación sexual fue auto declarada, lo que permitió aislar a dos grupos de encuestados: 104 de ellos definieron su orientación como heterosexual y 121 como no heterosexual. Se aplicó una escala de estrés laboral. Los resultados no indicaron diferencias estadísticamente significativas entre el estrés laboral experimentado por ambos grupos. El análisis desarrollado indicó que, para grupos similares a la muestra utilizada, ser heterosexual o no heterosexual no es suficiente para determinar el grado de estrés que uno puede sufrir.

Palabras clave: Estrés de minorías; Estrés en el trabajo; Orientación sexual; Discriminación por orientación sexual.

1 INTRODUCTION

The present study relates two important subjects in the field of organizational behavior: stress and sexual diversity management. The former occupies a position of prominence in the field for many decades. The latter emerged more recently as a relevant subject in the work world, though with the same prominence and impact. Our goal was to use a quantitative survey to compare the degree of work stress experienced by heterosexual and non-heterosexual men in the corporate environment. The main purpose was to gain further insights into the nature of minority stress in a notoriously unequal society such as Brazil, which, however, uses the notion of meritocracy to deal with social problems (Souza and Grillo, 2009). In Brazil like elsewhere in the world, social movements advocating rights for minorities have grown more important and have had an increasing impact, particularly movements related to people of LGBT sexual orientation. Corporations are aware of such movements and have been adhering to understandings for the respect and promotion of rights, thus creating codes of conduct or even emphatically changing their communication and marketing strategies (Castro, 2016; Clève, 2016; Gonçalves and Gastaldi, 2008; Pompeu and Souza, 2018). But are good practices on diversity management really going hand in hand with studies on the origins of sexual orientation-based stigma, prejudice, and discrimination? Is sexual orientation-based social identity really enough to determine a socially discriminated group susceptible to the actions of stressors as a whole? Our findings differ from our initial idea that non-heterosexual men suffer more stress than their heterosexual counterparts, which challenges ideas proposed both in the local literature (Costa, 2007; Irigaray and Freitas, 2013; Irigaray *et al.*, 2010; Medeiros, 2007; Saraiva and Irigaray, 2009; Siqueira *et al.*, 2009) and in international literature (Cochran, 2001; Meyer 1995; McLaughlin *et al.*, 2010). We should then consider the possibility that other variables apart from sexual orientation can affect the experience of stress or understand that sexual orientation is not enough to make a distinction between the groups. It is also worth reflecting on the limits and possibilities of the quantitative studies that carry out comparisons and on suggestions for further research.

In an article dealing with the practice of psychotherapists, Cochran (2001) says it is urgent to recognize work-related differences, challenges and even difficulties concerning the mental health of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals compared to heterosexuals. The author argues that these groups are faced with situations that make them more likely to develop depression and distress due to the many situations where they find themselves as socially stigmatized groups. Such stress experiences include exposure to verbal assault, rejection, violence and other forms of discrimination related to being gay/lesbian. Additionally, gay men and lesbians often report high levels of perceived stigma, that is, fear of being rejected or discriminated against because of their minority status. In examining the mental health difficulties they face to develop work competencies, Cochran (2001) underlines their resistance and refusal to participate in studies, due to their fear of being identified and, consequently, stigmatized. Finally, the author highlights that this kind of study is always limited in that it cannot be conducted in pairs, i.e., comparing heterosexual and non-heterosexual groups while making sure all other characteristics are similar and do not interfere with the comparison.

In the present work, we attempt to overcome the obstacles pointed by Cochran (2001). We did not take on the perspective of health care professionals, but rather that of managers who are concerned with complex diversity issues in organizational policies. Using online social networks, we were able to form two distinct groups, i.e., heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals, while preserving all other social and demographic characteristics of both samples. Our results allow repeating the question asked by Cochran (2001) nearly two decades ago: “Does sexual orientation really matter ?”.

2 DISCRIMINATION AND DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT IN BRAZIL

Homosexuality has been recognized as a legitimate way of experiencing sexuality, with various developments, including in work organizations. An important landmark is found in the work of Cain (1991), who reports that homosexuality was removed from the list of psychological illnesses (mental disorders) in EUA only in 1974. Thus, not even fifty years have passed since homosexuals were no longer classified as mentally ill. Even so, during this short period, visibility has increased with the purpose of curbing and denouncing manifestations of prejudice and discrimination, which continue to occur in various contexts. It is no wonder, therefore, that the main survival strategy in the workplace is still secrecy. For homosexuals, hiding their sexual orientation remains the main form of defending themselves against stigma (Cain 1991; Goffman 1963; Ragins *et al.*, 2007). Several approaches can be considered valid and comprehensive for the theme of homosexuality in society, involving legal and health aspects, social movements, the school environment, the media, work, and organizations. Nevertheless, homophobia and lesbophobia are present in the personal and professional trajectories of LGBT men and women. Homophobia is a complex, variable phenomenon that exists in all social segments, and can manifest itself implicitly, covertly, or through direct, explicit manifestations of hatred and even physical aggression. This terminology is normally used to denote the attitude of hostility towards homosexuals. It is a way of showing the different as contrary, inferior or abnormal, implying the social construction of a stigmatization of homosexuals and lesbians (Goffman, 1963; Griffith and Hebl, 2002).

In Brazil, in the late 1970’s, various social movements emerged from the progressive efforts for the return of a democratic regime to ensure rights and promote citizenship (Gohn, 2011). Among these, it is worth highlighting the LGTB Movement, a denomination adopted in 2008, during the National Conference of Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals, Transvestites, and Transsexuals (GLBT), coordinated by the Special Secretariat for Human Rights of the Presidency of the Republic (Ministério da Saúde do Brasil, 2013); the adoption of the acronym LGBT – Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transvestites and Transsexuals – reinforced the political and social visibility of women in the movement, stressing the fight against gender-based inequalities.

In 2008, the then government defined as one of its guidelines to eliminate the discrimination and marginalization of LGBT people, in accordance with the Yogyakarta Principles, a document published in November 2006, in the city of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The document was an initiative of the International Commission of Jurists and the International Human Rights Service (Príncipios de Yogyakarta, 2007), and it contains 29 principles intended to apply the standards of international human rights law to the life and experience of people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities. It sets forth binding international legal standards that must be complied with by all states as well as other actors. The document has important definitions that underpin debates and studies on gender, identity and sexual orientation (Príncipios de Yogyakarta, 2007, p. 7):

Sexual orientation is understood to refer to each person’s capacity for profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.

Gender identity is understood to refer to each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.

Following the Yogyakarta Principles, the Ministry of Health launched the LGTB Policy (Ministério da Saúde do Brasil, 2013) to promote greater equity and fight inequalities in the health care provided for LGBT people by Brazil's public Unified Health System. The policy was a milestone in the recognition of rights, in addition to advancing specific health care and establishing an institutional recognition of the characteristics of this public.

Health initiatives flourished in other fronts with a view to promoting the demands of organized LGBT movements in the areas of civil, political, social and human rights. Issues such as civil union, the recognition of LGBT parenting, the decrease of violence, the guarantee of sexual and reproductive rights, among others, began to enter government political agendas. In 2013, the Ministry of Health launched the National Policy for Comprehensive Health of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transvestites and Transgenders (Ministério da Saúde do Brasil, 2013), a document which consolidated in a single legal framework what several other laws, ordinances, and norms had previously established.

In May 2011, the Supreme Federal Court recognized same-sex marriage as a family unit, by analogy with the so-called stable union (Supremo Tribunal Federal, 2011a; Supremo Tribunal Federal, 2011b). This was a milestone in terms of LGBT civil rights, particularly property rights for same-sex couples. In May 2013, the National Council of Justice issued a resolution obliging all registries in the country to register same-sex marriages (Conselho Nacional de Justiça, 2013).

There were also important milestones in promoting rights and fighting discrimination in the workplace. In 2015, the United Nations and its partners in Brazil (OIT. UNAIDS. PNUD., 2015) launched the handbook "The Promotion LGBT Human Rights in the Workplace", which defines homo-lesbo-transphobia, or simply homophobia, as the denial of rights on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. The handbook also describes it as a form of violence that turns sexual diversity characteristics into a reason for inequalities, vulnerability, exclusion, and risks of all kinds. The handbook's goal was to ensure not only the right to work but also an inclusive environment in which an LGBT person has the same opportunities for development without barriers and the same treatment as non-LGBT people. This material reinforces the idea that it is necessary to think about diversity in the corporate world.

All these initiatives are important milestones for the civil rights of the LGBT population. However, there is criticism that actions are still at the programmatic stage, i.e., in documents and special events that not always translate into actions in the life of LGTB citizens in Brazil. Mello *et al.*, (2012) argue that the "great culprit" for the lack of effectiveness of plans and programs is precisely the merely programmatic nature of the devices that form them. Therefore, the fight against inequality and discrimination cannot be thought of as being actually dealt with.

Sexual orientation has become so important that to address the issue of equity and fairness for non-heterosexual workers, as well as create an environment that is more conducive to disclosure of non-heterosexual orientation, some organizations are beginning to include statements in their equal employment opportunity policies that protect lesbian and gay employees from discrimination. Hiding sexual orientation or any other form of coping behaviors to avoid violence and stigma might be considered a powerful form of stress, which targets a certain, specific group (Kimmel and Mahalik, 2005; Lewis *et al.*, 2003; Meyer, 2003). The intent of such statements is to relieve some of the stress and anxiety that gay workers experience due to perceived coworker intolerance and fear of discrimination. Additionally, they are designed to enhance gay workers' feelings of satisfaction with work and commitment to the organization. However, the incidence of such policies is unknown, as is their effectiveness in creating a more accepting environment. There is still plenty of room for research on working conditions of LGBT people, such as studies focusing on stress.

3 STRESS, WORK STRESS, AND MINORITY STRESS

Stress has become an important source of concern, being recognized as one of the most serious risks to the psychosocial well-being of individuals (Bateman and Strasser, 1983; Karasek Jr., 1979; Parker and DeCotiis, 1983).

According to the study of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), the stress phenomenon is related to the adaptation of the organism to an experience that is particularly demanding physically or psychically, and it stems from the interaction between people and the context they live in. Other studies (McCormick and Cooper, 1988; Cooper, 1984; Cooper *et al.*, 2001; Cooper, 1998) also assume that individuals tend to seek a balance and that in order to achieve it they will go through adaptation processes, which may or may not involve coping strategies. The psychological reaction of stress appears when individuals predict that the demands of the context require them to have skills that are superior to the ones they possess (Ganster *et al.*, 1982; Parker and DeCotiis, 1983). This is the origin of what psychology calls adaptation, a designation by which stress is understood in terms of adaptation strategies governed by the principle of balance. Stress is, therefore, an imbalance that results in the need to restore homeostasis.

There are two characteristics that are worth emphasizing about stress studies. Firstly, stress cannot be understood outside the individual-environment relationship; it is not just the result of individuals' carelessness about their food, sleep or exercise habits as it may appear from mainstream media's treatment of the subject. Despite the importance of caring about one's health, stress is as much an environmental as it is an individual issue. Stress is not merely a physiological response to a stressful situation. Stress is an interaction between the individual and a source of demand within his environment. Psychological tension and its related manifestations, such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and nervousness, occur in response to an environmental overload that imposes on the individual a demand that he feels is beyond his ability to cope (Colligan and Higgins, 2005; Parker and DeCotiis, 1983). Second, stress is a subject of macro-social importance for public health and social wellbeing policies, as well as at the organizational and individual level; this puts it into the list of concerns for organizational policies, especially those relating to the management of people in organizations. At that level, they refer to studies on work stress "*defined as the change in one's physical or mental state in response to workplaces that pose an appraised challenge or threat to that employee*" (Colligan and Higgins, 2005).

Murphy (1995) describes five categories of workplace stress: (1) factors unique to the job, (2) role in the organization, (3) career development, (4) interpersonal work relationships, and (5) organizational structure/climate. The first category encompasses issues such as number of work hours, level of autonomy and ways of organizing work, considering how much each individual can decide about his own work. The second category deals with levels of responsibility and authority, considering also the stress caused by multiple roles or multiple authority and supervision relationships. The third category deals with stressors arising from perceptions of organizational (in)justice, safety, and promotion opportunities. The fourth category considers that work stress comes from the relationships between people and groups in the work environment. Problematic relationships may include harassment, discrimination, moral and physical violence, and bullying (Rayner and Hoel, 1997). The fifth category deals with issues related to organizational structure and climate, especially concerning the characteristics of communication in the organization.

For the purposes of this study, Murphy's (1995) fourth category is of particular importance, since we are interested in comparing how heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals deal with corporate environments sufficiently similar to allow assessing the stress that each group develops, each group being characterized by their self-declared sexual orientation. In studying workplace stress for LGBT individuals, we initially expected that interpersonal work relationships would be the most relevant stressors, given the need to develop strategies to cope with social situations in which an LGBT individual might consider himself unfit for full acceptance by others.

We adopted Goffman's (1963) concept of stigma, according to which, when an individual has a particular physical or mental characteristic, or a sexual orientation, race, gender, social/economic background, or any other source of individual identification that indicates asymmetry in relation to the group's social identity, it is highly unlikely that he will get healthy feedback in his daily exchanges, which leads him to self-isolate and develop a defensive attitude. The individual grows suspicious, depressed, hostile, anxious and confused. Therefore, recognizing that work stress can stem from a stigmatized status brings us to the concept of minority stress and the contributions it provides to this study. Briefly, Brooks (1981) argued that the inferior status ascribed to minorities leads to an increase in stressful life events (e.g. discrimination), which in turn leads to threatened self-esteem and a reduced sense of security. This ultimately results in the physiological and psychological experience of stress. Additionally, because people generally retain their minority identity across situations, Brooks contended that they are constantly confronted with inferior status and thus placed in a chronic state of stress.

Using a slightly different conceptualization, Meyer (1995, p. 39) argued that minority stress arises from 'the juxtaposition of minority and dominant values and the resultant conflict with the social environment ...'. Thus, according to Meyer's definition, it is not necessarily inferior status but rather conflicting ideologies that cause stress. Fingerhut *et al.*, Peplau, e Gable, (2010) affirm that at the end the result is the same, however, minority individuals are forced to be hyper vigilant in their social environments and are thus placed in a chronic state of stress.

Minority stress appears in the organizational world as stressors relate to stigmas and negative associations about groups of people with physical, social or economic characteristics that distinguish them in patterns that are socially recognizable and, therefore, subject to exclusion from healthy social relations and to stigmatization (Feinstein *et al.*, 2012; Feinstein *et al.*, 2017). Along the same vein, McLaughlin *et al.* (2010) demonstrated that LGBT individuals are more likely to suffer from mental disease involving depression, anxiety and suicide attempts than heterosexuals. Therefore, public policies specific to their characteristics should be developed. In Brazil, this idea led to the creation of the National Policy for Comprehensive Health of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transvestites and Transgenders (Ministério da Saúde do Brasil, 2013).

Some studies do not specifically address minority stress, but show the difference in treatment that sexual orientation can bring to people in the corporate environment, reinforcing the foundations of the present study. Aksoy, Carpenter, Frank, & Huffman (2019) present large-scale evidence on sexual orientation and workplace authority, documenting that gay men and lesbians are more likely to have workplace authority compared to heterosexual men and women. Authors also show that gay men face glass ceilings: their higher likelihood of authority is driven by their significantly higher odds of being low-level managers. In the same way, gay men are less likely than comparable heterosexual men to be in the highest-level managerial positions. Hamilton, Park, Carsey, & Martinez (2019) suggest that the extent of stereotypical gender expression (embodying stereotypically masculine vs. feminine traits or behaviors) impacts both the decision to disclose and the outcomes of disclosure in workplace contexts. Authors argue that intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, and societal considerations relate to lesbian disclosure in the workplace.

Having concluded this section, in which we sought to understand how sexual diversity management came into organizations in Brazil and how the condition of socially represented minority can lead to minority stress experiences, we can now consider the hypothesis of the present study, i.e., that non-heterosexuals suffer more from stress than heterosexuals in the workplace. We sought ways of comparing the work stress of two groups with similar characteristics, except for their self-declared sexual orientation. Our goal was to confirm the hypothesis that the level of stress among non-heterosexuals is higher than that for heterosexuals.

4 METHODOLOGY

To achieve our goal for the present work, we conducted a quantitative, descriptive and cross-sectional survey to compare work stress between non-heterosexuals and heterosexuals. To that end, we designed a questionnaire based on the Work Stress Scale (WSS), which was created and validated by Paschoal and Tamayo (2004). The WSS is a general scale formed by a single factor comprising items that relate varied stressors and emotional reactions often associated to them. It was originally developed in two versions, a regular one, with 23 items, and a reduced one, with 13 items, both, according to the authors, with solid psychometric standards. For the present study we chose the reduced scale as, in our view, a longer questionnaire would lead to greater respondent disengagement. In addition to the scale, we included questions to determine the profile of participants.

Data were collected using convenience sampling and the snowball technique. The target public was white non-heterosexual and heterosexual men whose careers and job characteristics involved work in a corporate environment. We chose these characteristics in order to eliminate other variables that might interfere with the perception of work stress, such as gender and color. Despite that, there was no restriction to participation at the collection phase, even if a respondent did not fully match our criteria, in order to avoid interrupting the snowball process because of some skewed perception on the part of respondents.

The questionnaire was administered electronically (Google Forms®) and the WSS items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, in which the respondent indicated how much he/she agreed to each statement presented (1 = I totally disagree; 5 = I totally agree). In order to reduce common method bias risk, mentioned in the literature as a possibility in this type of data collection (Conway and Lance, 2010; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012; Podsakoff and Organ 1986), some techniques were adopted following the suggestions formulated by Podsakoff *et al.* (2003), such as: a) protection of respondents' anonymity; b) telling respondents that there were no right or wrong answers and what mattered was their honest opinion on the statements; c) presenting the questions to respondents in a random order.

Our quantitative method involved descriptive statistical analysis, exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis and comparison of means by Student's *t*-test. All calculations were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics® 20.0 and IBM AMOS 22.0 software.

5 RESULTS ANALYSIS

We received a total of 615 responses, with respondents denominating themselves heterosexuals, homosexuals, bisexuals and pansexual. Because data were electronically collected, we were able to prevent incomplete questionnaires from being sent, therefore, all responses received could be used. Table 1 shows the respondents' profile.

Table 1 – Respondents' profile – Total sample

Gender	**Frequency**	**%**
Male	327	53.2%
Female	288	46.8%
Age	**Frequency**	**%**
18 to 21 years	36	5.9%
22 to 25 years	164	26.7%
26 to 30 years	144	23.4%
31 to 35 years	66	10.7%
36 to 40 years	52	8.5%
41 to 45 years	41	6.7%
46 to 50 years	46	7.5%
More than 50 years	66	10.7%
Sexual Orientation	**Frequency**	**%**
Heterosexual	369	60.0%
Homosexual	218	35.4%
Pansexual	1	0.2%
Bisexual	27	4.4%
Skin color	**Frequency**	**%**
White	462	75.1%
Black	50	8.1%
Brown	87	14.1%
Yellow	14	2.3%
Indigenous	2	0.3%

Source: Elaborate by the authors.

As shown in the table above, there was a balance in terms of respondent gender, with a practically even distribution between men and women, while with regard to age group there was a higher concentration (around 50%) of respondents from 22 to 30 years old. With regard to color, three quarters of the respondents declared themselves white, followed by the self-declared brown (around 14%). In terms of sexual orientation, 60% declared themselves heterosexual, whereas the remainder predominantly declared themselves homosexuals (35%), though these were not the only self-declared sexual orientations.

As mentioned earlier, we extracted from this general group the respondents who fit the profile sought, i.e., men, white, in executive positions and heterosexual or non-heterosexual, totaling 225 respondents, which was the final sample of interest, 104 in the former and 121 in the latter group. The non-heterosexual group comprised any self-declared sexual orientation which was non-heterosexual. Table 2 shows their specific characteristics.

Table 2 – Respondents' profile – Specific sample

Age	Frequency	%
18 to 21 years	14	6.2%
22 to 25 years	57	25.3%
26 to 30 years	67	29.8%
31 to 35 years	25	11.1%
36 to 40 years	16	7.1%
41 to 45 years	12	5.3%
46 to 50 years	16	7.1%
More than 50 years	18	8.0%
Sexual Orientation	**Frequency**	**%**
Heterosexual	104	46.2%
Homosexual	115	51.1%
Pansexual	1	0.4%
Bisexual	5	2.2%

Source: Elaborate by the authors.

In spite of the differences among the non-heterosexuals, we chose this general classification in order to facilitate the comparative analysis with heterosexuals. With regard to age group heterosexuals concentrated in two groups (22 to 30 years old and 46 to 50 or older), while non-heterosexuals concentrated in the 22-30 group.

The Work Stress Scale (WSS) developed by Paschoal and Tamayo (2004) and used in our questionnaire was submitted to an exploratory factor analysis to assess the relationship between the indicators and the construct. The factor loadings of each statement were analyzed for their significance and sample representativeness. Factor loadings are the correlation between each variable measured (indicator or statement) and the factor (construct) related to it, indicating the degree of correspondence between the variables and the factor. Factor loadings are a means of interpreting the role each variable plays in defining the factor, and greater loads make the variable more representative of the factor (Hair *et al.*, 2009).

According to Hair *et al.* (2009, p. 120), factor loadings greater than 0.55 guarantee the significance of samples greater than 100 records, with factor loadings from ± 0.30 to ± 0.40 being considered to meet the minimum level for structure interpretation. Due to low communality or low factor loading, some statements in the initial questionnaire were disregarded, leaving only those that met the recommendations of the literature (Hair et al., 2009). At this phase of the analysis, all remaining loads found for the responses were above the minimum threshold values, which corroborates the sample size of 225 respondents.

With regard to measures of sampling adequacy, the values we found through KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) test was 0.921, considered adequate. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant (χ^2 = 1,031.835; df = 55; $p < 0.001$), indicating that factor analysis was adequate (Hair *et al.*, 2009, p. 110). The variables resulting from factor analysis had adequate reliability level, with Cronbach's alpha above 0.700 (Hair *et al.*, 2009, p. 126), namely 0.895. Despite the fact Cronbach's alpha is a relatively common indicator used for scale reliability, some literature present concerns regarding its application as the only one to support psychometric characteristics of the collection tool (Marôco & Garcia-Marques, 2006).

Hereupon we performed a confirmatory factor analysis by the maximum likelihood methodology as a complementary step to assure scale reliability and validity.

As for normality, studies show that even data without a normal distribution may be acceptable as long as the ordinal element used in the data collection is greater than or equal to five points and the frequency distribution approaches a normal curve, giving a continuous character for the variables, without great distortions in the adjustment (Marôco, 2014). In addition, it is recommended that univariate skewness and kurtosis measures (from each indicator) approach zero and are not higher, in magnitude, to 2 and 7, respectively (Marôco, 2014). The results of the univariate normality tests, as measured by the skewness ([-0.239 : 0.781]) and kurtosis ([-1.313 : -0.534]) parameters, indicated that none of the variables presented $|Sk| > 2$ and $|Ku| > 7$, showing no extreme violation of normality.

The final model presented good fit indices (χ^2=20.502, df=12, χ^2/df = 1.709, GFI = 0.0974, NFI = 0.971, RFI = 0.949, IFI = 0.988, TLI = 0.978, CFI = 0.987, RMSEA = 0.056 [<0.001 : 0.097]) and construct reliability (CR), factorial validity (factor loadings) and convergent validity (AVE = average variance extracted) according to established by literature (Byrne, 2010; Marôco, 2014) which can be saw in table 3. Due to low factor loading in confirmatory factor analysis and issues caused in convergent validity, some statements which had undergone the exploratory factor analysis phase were disregarded, leaving only those that met the recommendations of the literature. After confirmatory factor analysis, the construct scores (latent variable) were calculated by the mean of the indicators (measurable variable) associated to it.

Table 3 – Indicator's factor loading

Items		Factor loadings	CR	AVE
Code	Description			
P4	The way the tasks are distributed in my area has made me nervous.	0.683	0.876	0.504
P7	The lack of autonomy in the execution of my work has been exhausting.	0.767		
P8	I have been bothered by my superior's lack of confidence in my work.	0.728		
P18	I have felt uncomfortable with the deficiency in the training for professional qualification.	0.605		
P20	I get annoyed at being undervalued by my superiors.	0.835		
P21	The few prospects of career growth have made me anguished.	0.683		
P24	The lack of understanding about my responsibilities in this job has caused irritation.	0.642		

Source: Elaborate by the authors.

As major test performed measures the correlation between answers in a questionnaire through the analysis of the answers given by the respondents, presenting a mean correlation between the questions, it was chosen to verify the correlation between the variables used in the research. Table 4 shows these results as well as the mean and standard deviation of each variable. As can be seen, all correlations are significant, even those of lower value, giving more strength to the results of internal consistency found.

Table 4 – Means, Standard Deviation and Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	P4	P7	P8	P18	P20	P21	P24
P4	2.83	1.399	1						
P7	2.63	1.408	0.378**	1					
P8	2.22	1.290	0.482**	0.593**	1				
P18	3.02	1.431	0.457**	0.456**	0.365**	1			
P20	2.93	1.428	0.559**	0.628**	0.639**	0.490**	1		
P21	3.19	1.450	0.481**	0.494**	0.433**	0.493**	0.600**	1	
P24	2.80	1.439	0.584**	0.518**	0.490**	0.394**	0.508**	0.431**	1

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Elaborate by the authors.

Before proceeding to the next phase of analysis, we used a procedure to determine how sensitive our data collection was to common method bias and, consequently, whether there was common method variance (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003; Podsakoff *et al.*, 2012). To test for common method bias, we used a partial correlation approach, which is recommended by Lindell and Whitney (2001) and has been used in researches that examined common method variance, such as the studies of Jarvenpaa and Majchrzak (2008) and the studies mentioned by Richardson *et al.* (2009). In this method, the measurable variable (indicator) with the lowest positive correlation compared to the other measurable variables is chosen as the marker. The logic to this technique is that because that variable has a low correlation with the other variables, any correlation theoretically observed is not due to a true relationship, therefore, it must be due to something else the variables have in common, e.g., common method variance. The minimum correlation between what is now called marker and the variables studied is subtracted from the correlations of the variables studied to adjust the common method bias. In the present study, this procedure did not affect the significance of the relationships between the variables, which suggests that the results cannot be associated with common method variance.

Once we had finished confirmatory factor analysis and created Work Stress construct scores for each group studied, we proceeded to analyze them comparatively. We used Student's *t*-test to compare the means of the reflexive indicators (questionnaire sentences) that were used to generate the values for the construct of each group used in the study (Table 5).

Table 5 – Work stress – Heterosexuals vs. Non-heterosexuals

Construct	Heterosexuals		Non-heterosexuals		Difference	*t*-value	p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Work stress	2.820	1.117	2.789	1.018	0.031	0.0221	0.0826

Expected: $p<0.05$

Source: Elaborate by the authors

Table 5 shows that there was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) in work stress between the groups of white heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals' men.

6 DISCUSSION

The goal of the present work was to investigate through quantitative methods whether the degree of work stress suffered by non-heterosexuals is the same as that suffered by their heterosexual counterparts. In our literature review, we identified a validated Work Stress Scale (Paschoal and Tamayo 2004) and used it to design a questionnaire to identify the respondents' work stress level, grouping them into two samples, namely self-declared heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals. Though sufficient for statistical analysis, the number of respondents limited results to groups formed by white men (75% of respondents). Student's *t*-test showed with 95% confidence there was no relationship between work stress and sexual orientation for white males, as both heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals had values that were statistically the same for the construct studied. Thus, we emphasize that it was not possible to confirm the hypothesis that stress in the sample of non-heterosexuals is superior to that for heterosexuals.

The studies we examined in our review of the literature allowed building the hypothesis that non-heterosexuals tend to suffer from a higher degree of stress in the workplace compared to heterosexuals (Cochran, 2001; Costa, 2007; Feinstein *et al.*, 2017; Fingerhut *et al.*, 2010; Irigaray and Freitas, 2013; Irigaray *et al.*, 2010; Lewis *et al.*, 2003). Considering this hypothesis, we set about conducting our study to obtain quantitative results on the level of stress, comparing heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals.

However, contrary to what we expected, results showed that stress among non-heterosexuals cannot be said to be higher than among heterosexuals. We then focused on interpreting this unusual finding, considering the literature on the subject of minority stress among people with a homosexual orientation. Based on the data we obtained for this sample of white male executives, the level of stress is not related to sexual orientation. It is worth underlining that the questionnaire we administered had no questions related to sexual orientation, but rather to work stress, thus keeping respondents restricted to this topic. Sexual orientation was an open-ended question, with a self-declared response, i.e., the participants defined their own sexual orientation. Thus, contrary to Cochran (2001), we were able to isolate two groups of respondents while preventing the questionnaire affirmations from generating any bias regarding sexual orientation, since that topic was not addressed in the questions.

Another point worth mentioning is the fact that locally conducted research was qualitative and exploratory (Irigaray and Freitas, 2013; Irigaray *et al.*, 2010; Saraiva and Irigaray, 2009; Siqueira *et al.*, 2009), which implies marked methodological differences. Studies of a quantitative nature seek a relationship between variables or constructs, and research is conducted by operationalizing relationships. The present study relates the variables sexual orientation and stress, the former being given by self-declaration and the latter by using a scale. If the literature has contents indicating that sexual orientation determines stress that is particular of people in a vulnerable condition, then the result of a close comparison between the variables may be complementary to an understanding that sexual orientation alone is not the sole source of stress. In other words, the result of this study points to the idea that studies on work stress with people susceptible to stigmatization require a greater effort to define their identities beyond a definition by sexual orientation.

Rather than studying particularly sexual orientation in a work context, studies such as those of Griffith and Hebl (2002), Irigaray and Freitas (2013), Ragins, Singh and Cornwell (2007), Saraiva and Irigaray (2009) and Siqueira *et al.* (2009) examined other variables such as non-heterosexual identity disclosure, minority inclusion policies, the involvement of top management in homophobia-related issues, management permissiveness and the adoption of survival strategies.

The Work Stress Scale (WSS) proposed by Paschoal and Tamayo (2004), which we used in the present study, covers environment categories which are both work-related and capable of being stress triggers. However, by relating studies that have been conducted on non-heterosexual relationships in the workplace and the Work Stress Scale, we can see that this scale does not address aspects dealt with by the theories that involve the relationship of non-heterosexuals with their work environment.

Although there are qualitative studies indicating that non-heterosexuals tend to suffer more stress than heterosexuals, the quantitative analysis presented in this study indicates that, for populations that are like the sample used, being heterosexual or non-heterosexual does not determine the degree of stress that one can suffer. Thus, our study's initial hypothesis, i.e., that there is a difference related to an individual's sexual orientation and stress in the work environment, cannot be confirmed.

7 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

More and more, the rights and conditions of people in particular positions of social vulnerability, popularly called minorities, are being openly discussed. Based on the clear importance of the inclusion of, and equality and respect for minorities, this study aimed to contribute to research on the work experience of minorities, in this case, non-heterosexuals.

The research conducted in this study used a quantitative methodology to evaluate the stress experienced between groups of non-heterosexuals and heterosexuals and compare these values in order check the hypothesis that there is a difference between the degrees of work stress suffered by both groups. Despite turning into numbers what is not directly measurable, with a view to helping with the understanding of a phenomenon, the methodology used has some limitations. In order to isolate variables to obtain a valid result for comparison, this study does not include factors that may or may not be determinant to conditions of greater or lesser stress among non-heterosexuals. Some of these conditions were already mentioned in previous studies, such as diversity policies in organizations (Saraiva and Irigaray, 2009), undisclosed sexual orientation (Siqueira *et al.*, 2009) and the use of survival strategies within the work environment (Irigaray and Freitas, 2013). Prejudice and discrimination may have different impacts on work stress and should be considered in future studies of this nature.

As mentioned earlier, research indicates that non-heterosexual men tend to devise survival strategies for dealing with hostile work environments. Considering this tendency, future studies related to work stress and sexual orientation could divide participants in groups of “fully self-disclosed”, “partially self-disclosed” and “not self-disclosed” non-heterosexual individuals, identify the level of stress in each of these groups and whether there are similarities or differences related to stress stimuli.

Some reviewers, after reading our work, may suggest that the findings can be related to a significant percentage of respondents up to thirty years old or less, which might indicate a generational attitude toward discrimination. However, we cannot disregard the work of Cucina *et al.* (2018) which affirmed that although generational gaps receive extensive attention both from open media and scientific research, still a lot of conflicting findings and methodological inconsistencies persist.

Future studies’ methods might do well to consider that sexual orientation does not fully account for the social identity of a person in vulnerability, since such inequalities may intersect with other characteristics. In the case of Brazilian society, one can learn from Souza and Grillo (2009) that a sample of individuals who are white male executives already takes us to a social stratum separated from the Brazilian ‘ragtag and bobtail’, i.e., the respondents are people who historically occupy privileged social positions, even though their sexual orientation is stigmatized. Thus, one must be aware that our method has limitations, but it reveals possibilities for new interpretations, including counter-intuitive ideas. Organization managers concerned about working for environments that have dignity, diversity and inclusion need to go beyond recognizing the existence of vulnerable groups or minorities. It is necessary to think of social identity as something that requires a definition by multiple characteristics, lest the peculiarities and complexities of Brazilian society be disregarded.

Artigo submetido para avaliação em 05/09/2019 e aceito para publicação em 20/04/2020

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