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Article

Diversity Management: Homosexuality and the Labor Market

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Abstract: The main aim of this article is the study of the relationship between homosexuality and the labor market. Studies on minorities have gained a lot of emphasis; however, about sexual minorities, these are still not very expressive, especially regarding the labor context. Although sexual orientation is not professionally related, homosexual workers still suffer discrimination, the impact of which is reflected in their health, wages, and job opportunities. Thus, workers may decide to limit the disclosure of their sexual orientation at work or to assume it, decisions that vary according to their working environments. Inclusive organizational environments and policies are relevant tools that organizations need to adopt, to create safety and happiness at work. To achieve the study aims, an ethnographic approach was taken. An interview guide was elaborated and interviews conducted with homosexual workers to analyze their realities and professional experiences. The results allow us to conclude that homosexuality not only negatively influences the hiring of workers, who see their access to the labor market restricted, but also influences the daily lives of many of them, affecting their physical and mental wellbeing. Identity management differs according to the found working context. Most of the non-assumed workers are doing so as a form of protection, and those who are assumed do so due to the good environment that surrounds them as well as the friendly relationships created. Although it is a reality still far from desirable, the existence of policies to protect against discrimination and awareness of equal treatment are measures that stand out, manifesting themselves in more genuine labor relations and greater organizational satisfaction and commitment.

Keywords: discrimination; homosexuality; labor market; diversity; management



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1. Introduction

In recent years, as a result of the growing demographic heterogeneity of the workforce, the diversity and inclusion of minorities has gained increasing relevance in the organizational context. However, regarding sexual orientation, the reality is still below expectations. Despite the growing awareness, the fact is that the invisibility of sexual orientation in itself makes it a very particular category of diversity, compared to others such as gender or race (Beatty and Kirby 2006; Duncan 2020). The literature itself is, in comparison with that on other minorities, still not very extensive. Hence the main objective of this study is to understand the relationship between homosexuality and the labor market. Many gay and lesbian workers assume that they were negatively evaluated and passed over in the early stages of interviews, whether they came out or the other party “realized” that they were homosexual, even if they did not verbalize it (Croteau and Von Destinon 1994; Wax et al. 2018). Hence, it is important to understand how homosexuality interferes in the phase of access to the labor market.

The stigmatization and discrimination that this minority experiences are among the topics presented in all the studies analyzed. According to Croteau and Lark (2009), Van Den Bergh (2004), and Pichler et al. (2010), the most prevalent form of discrimination is the one that involves episodes of harassment and situations of questioned competence, non-assignment of functions, the delegation of tasks neglected by others, and threats of

dismissal, with negative personal and professional consequences for the victims. Thus, it becomes important to assess, with homosexual workers, whether discrimination in the workplace is a reality they encounter and, if so, what are the main types of episodes and their respective consequences, divided into consequences directed either to the personal or operational side. Sexual orientation represents a type of “unobservable” diversity, where gay and lesbian workers may choose not to reveal, to third parties, that “invisibility” that characterizes them as a minority (Beatty and Kirby 2006). Considered by Griffith and Hebl (2002) as one of the most difficult issues that gays and lesbians face, as it involves a considerable amount of fear, this reality embodies another of the purposes of the study: to understand the reasons why homosexual workers choose not to come out in the workplace, what strategies are adopted, and what consequences arise.

However, just as there are homosexual workers who choose not to reveal their identity, there are also those who do, mainly because of the friendships and organizational cultures existing in their workplaces (Griffith and Hebl 2002; Wax et al. 2018). Associated with an increase in well-being and greater organizational productivity and satisfaction, as Levine and Leonard (1984) and Croteau and Lark (2009) point out, disclosure may also expose workers to the possibility of facing less favorable situations. In this way, it becomes important to understand what motivates workers to assume their identities in the work environment, how the disclosure takes place, and what are the consequences for their lives, personal and professional, resulting from this decision.

According to the Human Rights Campaign, the issue of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) inclusion has gained prominence in the organizational strategies of large companies (Muñoz and Thomas 2006), being characterized as an effective test of the level of seriousness of an organization in creating an inclusive culture that embraces all diversity (Pride in Diversity 2013). In the opinion of Ellis and Riggie (1996) and Ellis (2014), the inclusion of sexual minorities encompasses the existence of policies to protect against discrimination and equal treatment. Thus, the last objective aims to determine whether the interviewees’ workplaces are committed to inclusive policies with regard to sexual orientation. It is hoped, with this study, to inform, raise awareness, and contribute to a more enlightened discussion about the reality faced by homosexual workers with regard to the world of work.

2. Theoretical Background

Divided into five sub-sections, this section seeks to provide a theoretical framework for this study.

2.1. Hierarchy between Sexualities

Heterosexuality is commonly equated with the natural sexuality of the human species, and the dominant social thought is based in the assumption that all individuals are heterosexual (Bohan 1996; Herek 1992; Fischer 2013). In addition, because they belong to the “norm”, heterosexual citizens do not have, in their daily lives, the need to rethink each movement, behavior, or way of acting and the respective consequences that may arise. As far as sexual orientation is concerned, they do not even have to explicitly or subtly mention it, as it is already socially understood that heterosexuality is the normative option (Herek 1996; Gomes 2000). Heterosexual citizens who, in socializing, are accompanied by their companions, in front of whom they show an exchange of affection, who talk about their relationships and about issues of their private life in public, among other examples, embody roles and behaviors that society sees as “desexualized”. That is, they are not seen through an erotic or sexually inappropriate prism, and will not trigger acts of hostility or violence on the part of third parties (Herek 1992; Herek et al. 1996).

Contrary to this reality, the roles associated with homosexuality are almost all sexualized and the same type of behavior by a heterosexual couple (as in the examples mentioned above), will be seen negatively when advocated by a couple of the same sex because, as a

rule, the public eye will generally assume this to be wrong and an unnecessary display of sexuality (Herek 1986, 2000).

This disparity between hierarchies leads to stereotypes, which are difficult to overcome since the stereotyped view appears almost automatically when the brain invokes a certain group or minority (Devine and Monteith 1993; Link and Phelan 2001). When it is necessary to make a value judgment about someone, information that is considered to be easily accessible is used, and stereotypes are often the first information to be “captured” (Tversky and Kahneman 1973; Fiske 2017).

Thus, individuals who feel prejudice toward the sexual minority, in the event that they need to remember some situation that targets this population, will be more likely to select the information that goes against their stereotyped beliefs (Herek 1990). According to Herek (1984, 2002), the stereotypes that homosexual workers face are based on the perception that gay men have feminine characteristics, with the reverse happening in the case of lesbian workers (Kite and Deaux 1987; Ahmed et al. 2013).

Deaux and Lewis (1984) found that there is a high probability that, with certain characteristics considered to be of the opposite sex, heterosexual men will be “cataloged” as gay, with the same being observed in the case of women, results identical to those presented by Kite and Deaux (1987), where stakeholders demonstrated similar treatment of gay citizens and heterosexual women, and lesbian citizens and heterosexual men (Ahmed et al. 2013).

The conclusion reached is related to the assumption that gay and lesbian citizens violate traditional gender roles, reversing them in fact, which may influence the occupation of certain jobs (Ahmed et al. 2013).

2.2. Discrimination in the Workplace

The field of studies, with regard to homosexuality, has gained more prominence and, if the 21st century is guided by the existence of entities and legislation that aim to prohibit and protect against discrimination, it is equally true that the answers to these demands are not all favorable (Pride in Diversity 2013).

Analyzing several surveys, Croteau and Von Destinon (1994) found that approximately 66% of respondents had already experienced situations of discrimination and differential treatment in the workplace (Mays and Cochran 2001). In a study conducted by Out and Equal Workplace Advocates (2002) it was possible to verify that one in four homosexual workers were harassed, 12% were denied career advancement opportunities and 8% said they have been pressured to leave their job due to episodes of violence (Out and Equal Workplace Advocates 2002). In the study by Drydakis (2009), 60% of respondents reported situations of discrimination at work at least once in their lives, 38% say they had been victims of two or more incidents, and 44% fear being potential targets (Drydakis 2014).

According to Levine and Leonard (1984), gay and lesbian workers may be the target of two types of discrimination: formal and informal discrimination.

Formal discrimination is understood as a set of procedures that aim to restrict and condition the worker who runs the risk of, for example, not being selected for an interview or not being hired for a particular job (Levine and Leonard 1984; Machado and Vilarinho 2022). Thus, analyzing the initial stages of access to the labor market, a study involving countries such as Canada, the USA, Sweden, Greece, Cyprus, and Austria, concluded that approximately 20% of the homosexual workers interviewed claimed to have been passed over in the recruitment and selection stages (Drydakis 2014). According to Dovidio and Gaertner (2000), belonging to a minority, namely due to sexual orientation, the recruitment and selection phase may be particularly discriminatory for positions in teaching, the armed forces, and in typically male or female sectors, even if the skills and professional experience are required (Drydakis 2014).

However, the discrimination that, according to the literature, is most prevalent is informal discrimination, a more “subtle” type of discrimination that generally includes episodes of harassment by bosses or co-workers (Levine and Leonard 1984; Hudson-Sharp and Metcalf 2016). In a study carried out by Out Now (2018) and released by Vodafone,

it was concluded that 49% of young people surveyed had been the target of derogatory comments from co-workers. Moreover, according to the literature (Croteau and Lark 2009; Van Den Bergh 2004; Pichler et al. 2010), the main types of episodes of workplace harassment reported by homosexual workers were precisely jokes, homophobic comments and/or heterosexual, derogatory looks, and, in some cases, acts of violence. Ozeren (2014) also highlights the questioned professional competence, the non-attribution of benefits, the non-delegation of functions or delegating of those that had been passed over by others, and threats of dismissal. According to Drydakis (2014), several studies suggest that the remuneration of homosexual workers is lower than that of heterosexual workers.

According to data from the European Union, few incidents of discrimination in the workplace are reported, which is why crimes generally go unpunished and victims do not get justice, making it difficult to gauge the real dimensions of discrimination (Agência dos Direitos Fundamentais da União Europeia 2009).

Harassment and bullying in the workplace have harmful consequences for the lives of homosexual workers (Bohan 1996; Machado and Vilarinho 2022). According to Sears and Mallory (2011) and Ozeren (2014), the main consequences are lower productivity, combined with a decrease in organizational satisfaction and commitment. The same conclusions were reached by Ragins and Cornwell (2001), who pointed to the fact that discrimination is reflected in negative attitudes towards career and performance (Clair et al. 2005). Herek et al. (1999) found that homosexual workers who are victims of discrimination had low self-esteem, lack of confidence, problems with sleeping and eating, anxiety and stress, depression, and, in extreme cases, this was reflected in suicidal intentions (Ozeren 2014). According to Clair et al. (2005) and Ozeren (2014) victims of discrimination and harassment, hostile environments, and the impossibility of living a peaceful life, workers may feel the need and urgency to leave their jobs.

In order to avoid this type of incident, one of the strategies that many homosexual workers adopt is the non-disclosure or, as it is also called, the strategy of staying in the closet (Wright et al. 2006).

2.3. Not Revealing or Staying in the Closet

Managing sexual orientation in the workplace can be a very complex reality, where the dichotomy between hiding homosexuality or admitting it appears to be one of the main issues faced by this minority (Day and Schoenrade 1997). Thus, it becomes relevant to understand that, in a professional context, the self-management of a homosexual worker's identity may encompass being: not assumed, where no one within the organization or company is aware of their sexual orientation; partially assumed, when it is assumed, but only by a very small number of people, and not the overwhelming majority; not assumed; and fully assumed, where there are no reservations as to who may have knowledge of this information (Clair et al. 2005).

Several studies (Levine and Leonard 1984; Croteau 1996; Beek et al. 2016; Out Now 2018) arrived at the conclusion that a large percentage of the homosexuals targeted by their studies hide their sexual orientation in the workplace. There are cases in which, although fully committed in the remaining areas of their lives, many homosexuals feel the need to return to the closet when entering the job market (Out Now 2018).

The impact of disclosure is something totally unknown, since it is not known to what extent it may influence relationships with co-workers or the worker's own career (Pride in Diversity 2013). Very often, the decision not to reveal or limit the disclosure of sexual orientation in the work context is fundamentally due to the fear of episodes of discrimination (King and Cortina 2010; Beek et al. 2016), as well as the existence or perception of hostile or markedly heterosexual organizational environments (Silverschanz et al. 2008). Wright et al. (2006), however, are of the opinion that non-disclosure can be a voluntary option if the gay or lesbian worker understands that the disclosure of their sexuality is unnecessary, not for fear of possible negative consequences, but only because of their choice, or as a matter of privacy.

In this context, and in order to avoid negative situations in the work context, the use of lying or hiding aspects related to their private life, and their identity, is assumed to be a common and frequently adopted strategy (Griffin 1992; Herek 1996; Ragins and Cornwell 2001; Out Now 2018). Gates and Viggiani (2014), in turn, are of the opinion that neutralizing the partner, distancing themselves from certain conversations, and avoiding topics involving relationships, are some of the tactics that these workers most frequently adopt.

However, opting for the apparent “protection” that remaining in the closet provides, especially with regard to avoiding situations of discrimination and differential treatment, is not an option that can be considered entirely beneficial (Herek 1996). Barreto et al. (2006), King and Cortina (2010), Critcher and Ferguson (2011), Everly et al. (2012), are just some of the authors who, from the early stages of research into this subject, have been emphasizing that hiding the orientation in the workplace is a decision that is associated with a decrease in organizational effectiveness and productivity. Likewise, Smart and Wegner (2000) drew attention to the fact that non-disclosure may increase the chances of developing physical and mental/psychological symptoms, which can lead to restless sleep, crying spells, depression, as well as suicidal intentions.

Briefly reviewing some of the motivations and consequences of non-disclosure, it is necessary to approach the issue from another perspective, that is, what motivates a worker to assume himself in the work environment and what are the main results inherent to this decision.

2.4. Disclosure of Homosexuality in the Workplace

Workers who decide to reveal their sexual orientation opt for the coming out path, an abbreviation of the term coming out of the closet, which corresponds to the personal affirmation of a citizen to assume his/her homosexuality or gender identity, in this case, in the workplace (Vincke and Bolton 1994; Wax et al. 2018).

There is often the misconception that the disclosure of homosexuality concerns a unique situation in the lives of these citizens. However, quite the contrary, it is a continuous life process of understanding, acceptance, and self-knowledge. Ragins (2008), later corroborated by Out Now (2018), emphasized that among the factors that motivate a worker to reveal their homosexuality in a work context, friendships and the existence of inclusive organizational environments stand out.

Acceptance of homosexuality helps these workers to be themselves in the workplace (Bowleg et al. 2008), thus providing greater physical and mental well-being, more happiness, and authenticity in interactions (Gates and Viggiani 2014), contributing to higher levels of satisfaction and productivity in the workplace. However, despite this positive aspect, assuming one's sexual orientation in the work context may, on the other hand, have negative consequences for homosexual workers. According to Croteau and Lark (2009) and Croteau and Von Destinon (1994), workers who choose to come out will find themselves in a vulnerable situation and, consequently, are more likely to experience episodes of discrimination and stigmatization. The same conclusion was reached in the study by Levine and Leonard (1984), where the revelation of homosexuality among lesbian workers resulted in an increase in acts of hostility and conflicts with colleagues (Ragins and Cornwell 2001; Ragins et al. 2007).

2.5. Protection against Discrimination and Equal Treatment

According to Ozeren (2014), the workforce is becoming increasingly diverse, whether in terms of gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, which leads different stakeholders (employers, human resources managers, and public authorities) to conclude that there are growing challenges that require commitment. According to the Campaign for Human Rights, the issue of sexual orientation and the search for the main aspects that can ensure more inclusive work environments have gained relevance among large companies (Muñoz and Thomas 2006). In addition, the inclusion of LGBT workers increasingly reflects how serious an organization can be in maintaining a safe organizational culture that accepts all

diversity (Pride in Diversity 2013). In terms of protection policies, Van Den Bergh (2004) emphasizes that these, aiming at the prohibition of discrimination and the prevention of harassment, are increasingly adopted by different organizations. For this author, these policies should be known to all, reinforcing Nam Cam Trau and Härtel (2004) that a proactive stance focused on unacceptable attitudes in a work context will contribute to the maintenance of a safer organizational culture. A mirror of socially responsible organizations, training actions will be important to raise awareness of the legislation in force, demystify stereotypes, and discourage intolerant behavior, contributing to better and more effective awareness and better dialogue between the different hierarchical levels (Ozeren 2014). Day and Greene (2008), in turn, reinforce the concept of straight allies (workers belonging to a dominant group (heterosexuals), who help LGBT workers and colleagues), who can positively contribute to the maintenance of a good work environment. The existence and extent of partner invitations to workplace events (Van Den Bergh 2004), and equal treatment for gays and lesbians (who are afforded the same benefits as the rest of the workforce) (Pride in Diversity 2013; Gates and Viggiani 2014), are other possible measures to be implemented in the workplace.

It should be noted that, in addition to the positive impact that these policies have on the personal and professional lives of homosexual employees, employers can also benefit from their implementation. More specifically, recruitment will become more diversified and the workforce more heterogeneous, giving rise to the implementation of new ideas, and a lower turnover of workers, which will translate into greater retention of talent and lower human resources costs (Ozeren 2014). By acting in a socially responsible manner, organizations benefit from their image and business, which contributes to attracting new business sectors and customers (Badgett et al. 2013).

More and more companies are betting on measures to protect against discrimination and ensure equal treatment, subscribing to the United Nations standards of conduct, and also being part of the CEI report, “best places to work for LGBT equality” (Gates and Viggiani 2014). It is possible to perceive that the implementation of inclusive practices for minorities, where sexual orientation is included, focuses, above all, on large companies. Little information exists about this reality in smaller companies, and many, with scarce resources, may not even consider this type of initiative (Day and Greene 2008). However, regardless of the size of the organization, it must always promote an organizational climate and environment of safety and well-being for the entire workforce, regardless of their heterogeneity.

3. Materials and Methods

Having presented the theoretical support of the study, it is important to clarify the methodological choices that underlie it as well as the sample characterization.

3.1. Main Objectives

This study aims to understand the relationship between homosexuality and the labor market. In this way, for a more factual analysis and knowledge, the following objectives were defined:

- To understand whether the issue of homosexuality has an influence on the initial steps of recruitment and selection;
- Assess whether workers are victims of discrimination in the workplace and, if so, what are the common types of personal and professional incidents and consequences;
- Understand what leads a homosexual worker to remain “in the closet”, what strategies are adopted, and what are the main consequences;
- Understand what motivates workers to come out in the workplace and what are the results of that decision;
- Assess whether the interviewees work, or have worked, in companies that have policies to protect against discrimination and ensure equal treatment, based on sexual orientation.

3.2. Type of Study and Data Collection Tool

The methodology adopted in this study is qualitative in nature, as it seeks to analyze and interpret attitudes and values, compatible with a closer knowledge of certain human realities which would not be so feasible using other techniques (Barañano 2004). This is an ethnographic approach whereby the researcher uses knowledge acquired and shared in the social context, in order to better understand the observed aspects of human activity (Jones and Smith 2017; Wilson and Chaddha 2010). The main method of data collection is participant observation, in which the researcher is an active member of the group being studied.

Through qualitative research, knowledge happens interactively between the researcher and the investigated subject (Silva 2010). This interactivity is achieved through the data collection tool adopted, in this case, the interview method, more specifically the semi-structured interview. For this purpose, an interview guide (with 12 questions—see Appendix A) was prepared, in the light of the literature review carried out, with key questions for a better understanding of the central objective of the study, that is, to investigate the relationship between homosexuality and the labor market. The interview guide was directed at and applied to homosexual workers who are currently employed or, on the other hand, unemployed, but who have performed professional activities in the past.

3.3. Implementation of Interviews and Type of Sampling

Before asking about the different topics under study, the interviews begin with some personal questions, namely age, current profession, and past and current professional experiences. After these initial questions, interviews took place, addressing the different issues of the topic under study; more specifically: the interviewees were asked if, in the recruitment and selection stages, they felt any kind of differentiated treatment, and if their eventual non-hiring could have been due to the sexual orientation.

Then, addressing the reality of workers already fully engaged in professional functions, it was imperative to understand if they had been victims of discrimination. If the answers were positive, they were asked about the type of incident, whether they reported what happened, and what impact these episodes had on their lives. Then, they were asked about the management of their identity in a professional context.

Aimed at workers who identify themselves as not assumed or partially assumed (assumed only for one or, possibly, two people, and for the rest, non-assumed), the focus of the questions were the reasons that led them not to come out, which strategies they adopted, and the consequences for personal and professional life. On the other hand, and specifically aimed at workers who are fully assumed in the workplace, they were asked about their motivations for doing so, how the disclosure took place, and its impact from a personal and work point of view. In the final part of the interview, workers were asked about the existence, in their previous or current workplaces, of policies to protect against discrimination and ensure equal treatment with regard to sexual orientation.

The interviews were scheduled and subsequently carried out depending on the availability of the interviewees. They were done individually: 16 remotely (via Skype), the remaining 5 in person and, as a general rule, lasted 1 h. A total of 21 interviews were conducted over 3 months (starting on 20 December 2018, and ending on 25 March 2019).

It should be noted that the interviews were carried out and based on the assumption of secrecy, meaning that all personal data are safeguarded. To guarantee this, the names of the interviewees in the study are hidden.

The choice of participants was based on a non-random sample, since concrete criteria, regarding the population to be analyzed, are at stake. That is, the choice derives from particular and representative characteristics of the group that are considered relevant to the research objectives (Babbie 2005).

Furthermore, the sampling is based on the snowball technique. This method presents itself as a continuous process of obtaining the size of the sample that, as its name implies, starts from the idea of forming a snowball, where the sample of the study increases as

the selected and interviewed workers suggest others, the process culminating, as [Vinuto \(2014\)](#) mentions, at the so-called saturation point (epistemological instrument reached at the moment when observations are no longer necessary, as little or no new information is added, the same information being repeated ([Thiry-Cherques 2009](#))).

3.4. Sample Characterization

As illustrated in Table 1, the interview guide was addressed to 21 homosexual workers. Although the difference is not significant, the interviewees were mostly male (twelve), with nine being female, ranging in age from 23 to 38 years old (Table 1). Regarding the academic level, seven were high school graduates (twelve years of schooling), eight had a bachelor's degree, five had a master's degree, and one had a Ph.D. (Table 1).

Table 1. Interviewees' biographical data.

Identification	Gender	Age	Academic Degree
Interviewee 1	Male	28	High School
Interviewee 2	Male	29	Master
Interviewee 3	Male	29	High School
Interviewee 4	Male	34	High School
Interviewee 5	Female	28	Master
Interviewee 6	Female	24	High School
Interviewee 7	Male	28	Ph.D.
Interviewee 8	Female	30	Bachelor
Interviewee 9	Female	25	Bachelor
Interviewee 10	Female	24	High School
Interviewee 11	Male	24	Master
Interviewee 12	Male	38	High School
Interviewee 13	Male	23	Bachelor
Interviewee 14	Female	24	Bachelor
Interviewee 15	Female	24	Bachelor
Interviewee 16	Male	26	Master
Interviewee 17	Female	24	High School
Interviewee 18	Male	23	Bachelor
Interviewee 19	Male	28	Bachelor
Interviewee 20	Female	30	Bachelor
Interviewee 21	Male	29	Master

Source: Own elaboration.

Most of the interviewees were working in Portugal, the country where the study took place (only interviewees 2, 9, and 18 currently work abroad, respectively in Zurich, Switzerland, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and Dublin, Ireland), it is observed that with regard to current professions, nine of the workers interviewed maintain the same professions they had in the past, namely primary school teachers, physiotherapists, nurses, quality analysts, graphic designers, software engineers, computer programmers, workers, and anatomy technicians (table two).

The remaining twelve worked in areas other than the previous ones, with the exception of interviewees 1 and 21 who, despite past professional experiences, were at the time of this study unemployed (Table 2).

With regard to the sexual identity of the workers interviewed, in their workplaces, it is important to understand the position of each one, that is, to understand whether they are non-assumed, partially assumed, or totally assumed workers.

In this specific study, by fully assumed, we mean the workers interviewed who assume, in the work context, their sexual orientation, both in past and current professional experiences, without any embarrassment or impediment in mentioning the subject. In this way, it is possible to identify that the majority of the interviewees are totally assumed in the workplace, in this case twelve workers, five female and seven male (Table 3).

Table 2. Interviewees labor data.

Identification	Current Job	Previous Job(s)
Interviewee 1	Unemployed	Shop assistant/worker
Interviewee 2	Bartender	Shop assistant/Restoration
Interviewee 3	Shop assistant	Warehouse worker
Interviewee 4	Communications assistant	Call center
Interviewee 5	Primary school teacher	Primary school teacher
Interviewee 6	Administrative	Customer Service
Interviewee 7	Chemical engineer	Hospitality
Interviewee 8	Physiotherapist	Physiotherapist
Interviewee 9	Nurse	Nurse
Interviewee 10	Quality Analyst	Quality Analyst
Interviewee 11	Shop assistant	Workman
Interviewee 12	Graphic designer	Graphic designer
Interviewee 13	Software engineer	Software engineer
Interviewee 14	IT	IT
Interviewee 15	Consultant	Bartender
Interviewee 16	Contract manager	Call center
Interviewee 17	Workwoman	Workwoman
Interviewee 18	Flight attendant	Shop assistant/designer
Interviewee 19	Programmer	Call center
Interviewee 20	Anatomy technician	Anatomy technician
Interviewee 21	Unemployed	Professor

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 3. Workers' identity in the workplace.

Identification	Fully Assumed	Non-Assumed	Partially Assumed
Interviewee 1	X		
Interviewee 2	X		
Interviewee 3	X		
Interviewee 4			X
Interviewee 5	X		
Interviewee 6		X	
Interviewee 7		X	
Interviewee 8			X
Interviewee 9			X
Interviewee 10			X
Interviewee 11			
Interviewee 12	X	X	
Interviewee 13			X
Interviewee 14	X		
Interviewee 15	X		
Interviewee 16	X		
Interviewee 17	X		
Interviewee 18	X		
Interviewee 19	X		
Interviewee 20	X		
Interviewee 21		X	

Source: Own elaboration (The "X" in the "non-assumed" column means the interviewee is "non-assumed", the "X" in the "fully assumed" column means he/she is "assumed", and the "X" in the "partially assumed" column means he/she is "partially assumed").

With regard to non-assumed, the designation encompasses workers whose sexual orientation is imperatively unknown to everyone within the company/organization, both in past and current work experiences. In this case, four workers belonged to the range of interviewees identified here as non-assumed: one female worker and three male workers (Table 3).

Finally, partially assumed workers in this study include those whose sexual orientation is known, but only by one or, possibly, two people, being, for the rest of the workforce,

non-assumed. There is, however, a very particular case that concerns the worker identified here as interviewee 9. In this case, she is positioned as a worker partially assumed by a unique and distinct condition from the others. Here, the identity of partially assumed is explained by the fact that, although once fully assumed in her work context, it is now not assumed by necessity. As she currently works in Saudi Arabia, a country where homosexuality is a crime and even punishable by the death penalty, the worker opted for the only possible solution; she does not come out as a lesbian in the workplace, hence appearing in the range of interviewees identified here as partially assumed. Thus, in this case, for partially assumed workers, five were identified: three female workers and two male workers (Table 3).

4. Results Analysis

The results analysis that follows is divided into five segments, each of which seeks to respond to the objectives initially established.

4.1. Recruitment and Selection Processes

Among the 21 workers interviewed, Interviewees 1, 2, and 3 felt that, in the recruitment and selection stages, they were not selected because of their homosexuality.

None of the workers interviewed said they have ever mentioned their sexual orientation and 18 say they have never felt any difference in treatment from the interviewer(s). The generality declared that:

“people can’t do it like that (...) on a first impression... detect, if it’s detectable”; (Interviewee 10)

“I don’t think I was transparent enough in that sense”. (Interviewee 19)

Of the interviewees who, in the stages of access to the labor market, felt they were being overlooked, three said that the factor that “betrayed” them was body language,

“because as much as we are discreet, in a way there is something there that reveals you (...) the body language betrayed me and I think I was being judged”; (Interviewee 1)

“people look at me and say ‘look, he’s a homosexual’”. (Interviewee 3)

Moreover, it is through non-verbal language that the interviewers became aware of the sexual orientation of those targeted and, from that moment on, they were treated differently:

“the gentleman interviewed me and then told me ... that I had more schooling for what they were looking for (...) it was an excuse, so much so that I told him that I knew perfectly well that CVs were pre-selected and if I had more skills, I hadn’t even been called (...) I felt perfectly that I was discriminated against”; (Interviewee 3)

“it wasn’t just the person talking ... it was the way the person looked at me... and that, I pass the expression, paralyzed me”. (Interviewee 1)

Interviewee 1 felt that the person who was interviewing him showed, “discomfort and hostility”.

This position of discomfort and hostility is explicitly mentioned by one of the workers by stating that, during the interview,

“the HR director was the only one to talk to me who, for example, wouldn’t look me in the eyes (...) she had no problem looking anyone in the eyes, it was me ... and it was because I was gay, clearly”. (Interviewee 2)

In this way, the three homosexual workers whose non-verbal language “betrayed” them were not selected, a fact that confirms the opinions of [Berg and Lien \(2002\)](#) and [Drydakis \(2009\)](#), where homosexual workers claim to be passed over in the access phases to the labor market as soon as employers become aware of their sexual orientation.

4.2. Discrimination in the Workplace

Of the 21 workers interviewed, five reported having been, at some point in their lives, victims of harassment and discrimination in the workplace. This was reported by Interviewees 1, 2, 11, and 18 (male) and Interviewee 15 (female).

As can be seen, the majority are gay workers, a fact mentioned by Herek (1998), Crow et al. (1998), and Herek (2000), and based on the assumption that discrimination is more frequently experienced by male workers.

In addition, all five are workers identified as fully assumed, a fact that is in line with what Croteau and Von Destinon (1994) and Croteau and Lark (2009) reported, where fully assumed workers may be more vulnerable to potential situations of stigmatization.

When asked about the types of incidents they felt were most egregious, jokes and homophobic comments were highlighted:

“they were humming a song, but it was not the original version (...) and others had arrived, from another sector, and they were all there laughing... saying obscene and lewd things”; (Interviewee 1)

“that person started calling me fag and that I must have been an abortion (...) even on the plane itself, with passengers who are either already a little drunk or who are in their group of friends... saying ‘fucking faggot’”; (Interviewee 18)

as well as the looks of disdain,

“I felt that I was always being observed, studied, analyzed in minute detail... like a laboratory animal”; (Interviewee 1)

“I remember a client who looked at me with contempt... the same way you look at garbage”. (Interviewee 2)

This evidence agrees with the findings presented by Out Now (2018), and mentioned by Croteau and Lark (2009), Van Den Bergh (2004), and Pichler et al. (2010), regarding the main forms of harassment inflicted on homosexual workers.

With regard to discrimination and differential treatment in the exercise of functions, the interviewees emphasized the following:

“since he knows about my homosexuality, (the boss) teases me about everything; he is always saying that I don’t work, that I don’t do anything”; (Interviewee 11)

“my boss started saying that my girlfriend couldn’t come to the cafe (...) that I couldn’t talk to my colleagues (...) at the time he had cameras, and he called me to see the footage, accusing me of everything and something else (...) yelled at me in front of everyone, including clients”; (Interviewee 15)

“imagine I think I was the dustbin (...) everything others didn’t want, I had to do (...) they tried... to make me like, pushed down, like, trampled, in the same sense of... of tasks”; (Interviewee 1)

“when I told, I was fired after a few weeks, I received the letter of dismissal; they said I wasn’t working enough”. (Interviewee 11)

These statements confirm the findings of Ozeren (2014) where the questioned professional competence, the attribution of functions passed over by third parties, and dismissals are a mirror of acts of discrimination in certain work contexts.

With regard to wages, none of the interviewees claimed to have felt disparities, a fact that corroborates the studies of authors such as Badgett (1996), Black et al. (2003), and Arabsheibani et al. (2005), who point to a slight, but existing, salary difference between heterosexual and homosexual workers, in the performance of the same functions.

When asked whether they reported the events that had occurred, they replied:

“it’s not just me alone who can prove it, they all came together, how could I do it?”; (Interviewee 1)

"I did not complain (...) there could be interference in my stay"; (Interviewee 11)

"it was wrong of me, I was afraid (...) now I was able to be more direct". (Interviewee 15)

These statements are consistent with the observations of [Herek \(2000\)](#) and [Out and Equal Workplace Advocates \(2002\)](#), in which more than half of the respondents confessed to never having complained about the incidents.

With regard to the consequences of discrimination from the labor point of view, the literature points out that they involve a decrease in productivity and lower satisfaction and organizational commitment.

However, the results of the interviews point to a different view:

"I was happier doing the work, I always did more than the others"; (Interviewee 1)

"I tried to fill my 'failure' by being better at what I did (...) the case of Starbucks ... every month I worked there I was the best salesperson"; (Interviewee 2)

"it did not affect my levels of professionalism, despite having changed some things in my way of working, I think it was even for the better". (Interviewee 18)

These testimonies contradict data from [Ragins and Cornwell \(2001\)](#), [Sears and Mallory \(2011\)](#), and [Ozeren \(2014\)](#) where, due to discriminatory acts, productivity, commitment, and performance would be harmed.

What can be seen is that the aforementioned are consequences of a personal nature:

"I would come home and stay awake until late (...) until today I am not able to coordinate sleep (...) I was getting very thin... I had no appetite to eat (...) I had very depressive periods, a lot, to the point of thinking about committing suicide"; (Interviewee 2)

"I was late and got dressed quickly, but for you to see how I was ... I didn't even see that I was without shoes (...) I didn't even remember the basic things anymore because of that pressure (...) I was walking the path and thinking 'I want to go back, what am I doing here?'; I feel that only one body was going, my soul was not going (...) I think that if I stayed there more than 1 year ... I couldn't take it". (Interviewee 1)

These reports confirm the results reported by [Herek et al. \(1999\)](#), on the consequences of discrimination for personal life, including sleep disturbances, lack of appetite, stress, depression, and suicidal intentions.

Still on the consequences of discrimination and harassment at work:

"It started to get very difficult to be inside (...) I let myself be consumed by that environment, I really had to get out of there, there was no going back"; (Interviewee 1)

"I am fully aware that I could have stayed there longer if it weren't for the hostile experience (...) I would work thinking about when it would end (...) there comes a time when you say, enough". (Interviewee 2)

These statements confirm the study by [Olson \(1987\)](#) and the statements of [Clair et al. \(2005\)](#), and [Ozeren \(2014\)](#), when they mention that one of the solutions for victims of discrimination is to leave their jobs.

4.3. Non-Disclosure in the Work Context

The analysis of this section focuses on workers who identified themselves as non-assumed, in this case, Interviewees 6, 7, 12, and 21, and those who positioned themselves as partially assumed, Interviewees 4, 8, 9, 10, and 13.

When asked about the reasons for this decision, the majority said:

"I could suffer from the leadership (...) they advised me not to say; not that I had any intention..., but after they told me that, I had no intention of revealing myself, at all"; (Interviewee 7)

"I don't make a point of telling (...) much less to the employer (...) I don't know if it would be something they would really like"; (Interviewee 8)

“there it is, these things, they are things that are commented on (...) and it can reach the mouth of the wrong people”; (Interviewee 9)

“when I worked at school, I made sure my students didn’t know ... in fact, my biggest problem would really be ... daddies and teachers ... it would be a throwing weapon”. (Interviewee 21)

These statements confirm the conclusions of [Levine and Leonard \(1984\)](#), [Croteau and Lark \(2009\)](#), and [Ragins et al. \(2007\)](#), where one of the main reasons for homosexual workers to remain in the closet, in whole or in part, has to do with the fear of being discriminated against.

In addition to fear of discrimination:

“the kind of environment I was in, which if it was already hostile ... you just have to think that with that ‘stamp’ of negativity in my image it would be much more unpleasant”; (Interviewee 21)

“there was a ... boy who normally worked at the cashier opposite ... he was very open and ... he (boss) said he was munchies ... there it is, a person listening to this might think ‘I will never say’”; (Interviewee 6)

“my work environment is all boys, computer engineering is more male than female ... and when I’m in that environment I obviously don’t feel comfortable saying (...) there were occasionally jokes in which I kept thinking ‘the typical joke of someone who, when he finds out, will not be comfortable with the situation’”. (Interviewee 13)

Reports that confirm the conclusions of [Conyers and Kennedy \(1963\)](#), [Croteau \(1996\)](#), and [Ragins \(2008\)](#) that non-disclosure is strongly associated with the perception of hostile and/or heterosexist climates.

In addition to the fear of discrimination and hostile environments, the interviewees reported:

“I work with a girl who is Brazilian and hardly anyone knows her name ... she is the Brazilian one, and that’s what I really don’t want to happen; is to label the person for what he/she is”; (Interviewee 10)

“for example, in an organization, you are the only one out of ten who is gay, and that starts to define you, you no longer have your name (...) it will categorize you”. (Interviewee 21)

These facts corroborate what was mentioned in studies by [Becker \(1963\)](#) and [Pride in Diversity \(2013\)](#) where knowledge of the sexual orientation of workers is a reason to “catalog” them.

However, three interviewees in particular emphasized that their decision, as far as identity management is concerned, is a strictly personal option:

“for me, that’s what my job is, I arrive, do my work and leave”; (Interviewee 4)

“at work, I never felt ... it’s not an obligation ... like, I don’t think it’s something ... important for my work (...) I don’t really need to be there ... telling the story of my life, I don’t care ...”; (Interviewee 7)

“I don’t think it’s necessary, I don’t have to carry a sign saying what I am and what I’m not ... I don’t need to be exposing my life to anyone”. (Interviewee 12)

These statements are in line with those of [Bohan \(1996\)](#), where the decision to remain in the closet, in whole or in part, can only be a personal decision.

As for the strategies adopted, the workers describe them as follows:

“I felt the need to lie (...) it was a way of defending myself, because unfortunately a person has to have this type of mechanisms”; (Interviewee 12)

“I’ve been (an actress) and I’ve invented names and I’ve invented stories... you hide, and then you invent a lie ... then you invent a name”; (Interviewee 10)

“when they ask if I have someone, I have to lie (...) especially when they ask me ‘are you in a relationship’ or ‘what is his name’ ... I have to lie, I say I have a boyfriend”. (Interviewee 6)

These statements allude to data from Woods and Jay (1993), Ragins and Cornwell (2001), and Out Now (2018), who note the need that homosexual workers have to lie and fabricate aspects of their lives, as a way of protecting themselves.

In addition to lying and identity fabrication, the literature also points to another strategy, which is hiding/avoiding personal information:

“I usually said ‘The person’, I didn’t talk about gender, he or she; I end up talking about my personal life, but I end up not giving details”; (Interviewee 9)

“my strategy is usually: they ask a question, hmm, which could reveal me, but it is not straight to the point ... I give an answer without giving more information”; (Interviewee 13)

“(the strategy) is to avoid questions, or try to run away from them; it is to find a diversion that evades the question”. (Interviewee 10)

These testimonies are illustrative of the strategies mentioned by Herek (1996) and Messinger and Topal (1997), which involve caution with all types of interactions, from neutralizing the partner’s gender to avoiding more compromising approaches.

According to the results pointed out by Chrobot-Mason et al. (2001), Barreto et al. (2006), and Critcher and Ferguson (2011), the constant need to cover up aspects of personal life will be reflected in a decrease in performance and professional income, a fact that is not verified in any of the interviewees’ testimonies.

Despite the “protection” that staying in the closet gives them, the testimonies show negative consequences, not on the operational side, but on the personal level:

“maybe I’m less spontaneous ... it’s not me, I’m sad, deep down yes, because I spend 8 h of my day there and it’s maybe 8 h when I’m not ... I’m not being what I am”; (Interviewee 8)

“sometimes, hmm, I miss not being able to have a more open conversation because I don’t want to be exposing this ... this side of me ... it makes me a little apprehensive ...”; (Interviewee 7)

“you never feel completely comfortable because you are not sharing equally”. (Interviewee 10)

These realities that in line with the findings of Ellis and Riggle (1996), Day and Schoenrade (1997), and Beatty and Kirby (2006), who emphasize the defragmentation of identity and feelings of loneliness and alienation as consequences of covering up sexual orientation in the workplace.

In addition to these consequences, others stand out, such as the following:

“I used to have peaceful nights, now I have nightmares every night”; (Interviewee 9)

“it’s a pressure of you being afraid that someone will find out ... of falling down, of the stories not being right ... it’s an emotional drain because you end up not being able to ... count on your emotions ... not just deal with them”; (Interviewee 21)

“anxiety, I still suffer today, I think I will suffer all my life (...) panic attacks for example, I had some (...) I can tell you that I was even treated for depression (...) suicidal thoughts (...) you have a pressure of having a double life, of not knowing what happens if they do”. (Interviewee 21)

These data elucidate the physical and psychological symptoms mentioned by Cole et al. (1996) and Frable et al. (1998), which may range from anxiety, to sleep disturbances, depression, and even suicidal intentions.

4.4. Disclosure in the Work Context

Regarding fully assumed workers, 12 are identified as such, in this case Interviewees 1, 2, 3, 5, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20.

Concerning the way in which the revelation took place, they declared:

"I was posting pictures with her so that the people around us also started . . . to suspect something (. . .) and then . . . ok, a person starts listening to conversations and . . . it came naturally"; (Interviewee 5)

"in conversations I start saying 'my ex-boyfriend' . . . it comes out in a normal conversation topic"; (Interviewee 18)

"with time I started talking normally . . . and people just noticed (. . .) it was very subtle". (Interviewee 19)

These testimonies show, as in the studies by [Colgan et al. \(2007\)](#), that revelation happens naturally in the various day-to-day interactions.

All interviewees emphasized the importance of friendship with colleagues and/or bosses in their decision making, highlighting the following statements:

"my colleagues know that I am gay (. . .) we have a perfect relationship, we all get along very well"; (Interviewee 11)

"we (co-workers) spent more time together than with our family, so we ended up being basically familiar with each other (. . .) I ended up being lucky with the people I was working with (. . .) my supervisor yes, too (knows)"; (Interviewee 17)

"we noticed that people accept us (in the company), everyone knows, even the boss knows, so . . . "; (Interviewee 3)

"I think, without a doubt, that relationships with co-workers and even with the employer are very important for us to decide whether to disclose"; (Interviewee 5)

"with my friends (at work) I am completely at ease when the subject comes up (. . .) the person who is by my side (mentor) and who accompanies me also knows"; (Interviewee 19)

These statements confirm the premises of [Schneider \(1986\)](#), [Lewis \(1979\)](#), [Cain \(1991\)](#), and [Griffith and Hebl \(2002\)](#), who focus on the importance of friendly relationships in the workplace, both with colleagues and with managers.

Still on this topic, the interviewees point out:

"if we trust the people around us and feel good about them, we are more predisposed to come out . . . "; (Interviewee 5)

"as you build trust with people . . . it comes out naturally"; (Interviewee 16)

"proximity (with colleagues) helps of course, but honesty above all"; (Interviewee 19)

"of course, eventually, whoever gets along with me will have to know (. . .) people ask, they want to know me . . . "; (Interviewee 16)

"I think that what motivates is the need to live a transparent life and not lie every time someone asks a question in order to understand whether one is single or not". (Interviewee 20)

These testimonies not only confirm [Cain's \(1991\)](#) conclusions regarding the importance of trust and closeness, but also those of [Colgan et al. \(2007\)](#), about the fact that in this way lies and rumors are avoided.

In addition to friendship, the workers interviewed emphasize:

"I considered revealing because I am also in an environment where I know I can"; (Interviewee 3)

"In the company where I am, I come out, because I feel that people are civilized enough (. . .) I have a very inclusive environment". (Interviewee 19)

These testimonies corroborate those alluded to by [Schneider \(1986\)](#), [King et al. \(2008\)](#), and [Wax et al. \(2018\)](#) regarding inclusive organizational cultures and their importance for “coming out”.

Regarding the consequences, most workers said that the revelation had positive repercussions, namely from a personal point of view:

“when I came out in the workplace it was psychologically a huge relief, hmmm . . . how can I explain it, an inner peace . . .”; (Interviewee 2)

“it’s like you trying to hold your breath since you were born and on the day you say, you release the air and start breathing, because you start to live (...) it was a little bit around, it was a release, I feel more relieved”; (Interviewee 11)

“I felt very relieved . . . happier in everything (...) in terms of emotional and psychological stability, it definitely made me more balanced (...) be able, like, being yourself and being at ease and not even thinking what are you going to say . . . that alone, anything goes”; (Interviewee 5)

“I’m still the same as I used to be . . . maybe even more fun”; (Interviewee 3)

“I started to talk more, and to be more extroverted (...) it helped me to integrate, to be able to be myself (...) it was one of the best things that happened to me”; (Interviewee 17)

“I stopped living a lie and became completely me; we can only be okay with the people we like if we are okay with ourselves”. (Interviewee 20)

These testimonies confirm the facts expressed by [Colgan et al. \(2007\)](#) and [Bowleg et al. \(2008\)](#) about the positive effects of disclosure, namely on physical and mental well-being, on confidence and self-esteem, and the resulting greater freedom and authenticity of the worker.

These repercussions are reflected, simultaneously, at the professional level:

“there were people who, knowing this, were able to feel open to talking to me about certain things they normally don’t talk about . . .”; (Interviewee 15)

“the person actually starts to truly interact with others and that, even for work levels, makes an abysmal difference”; (Interviewee 18)

“we used to say more jokes, I’m always joking (...) I’m more relaxed, I’m much more relaxed”; (Interviewee 16)

“if you are not worried about anything else, be careful with the way you speak, what you say . . . of course you are happier, more productive”. (Interviewee 19)

These arguments assert the data presented by [Levine and Leonard \(1984\)](#), [Croteau and Lark \(2009\)](#), and [Day and Schoenrade \(1997\)](#), which focus on the existence of more genuine interactions and increased productivity of workers assumed to be homosexuals in the workplace.

However, despite the positive aspects mentioned, the interviewees emphasize that the fact that a worker assumes responsibility may expose him to unfavorable episodes:

“it continues to be a place where there are several people, several personalities, several ways of thinking and, as such, the more you expose your personal life, who you are . . . conducive to being judged”; (Interviewee 15)

“I make a mistake . . . I am much more exposed to people saying ‘because this, because that, that is gay’ . . . of course it does, without a doubt it can have a great influence, and a negative one”; (Interviewee 2)

“It is as if those who discriminated were then sure (...) while the person is still in the closet, everything remains very much in doubt, in the assumption . . . , but when the person

comes out of the closet, then there are no excuses, it’s like, “she said it herself”; (Interviewee 18)

In line with this reality, two statements stand out in particular, which report unfavorable episodes resulting from the decision to “come out of the closet” in the workplace. Despite considering that the disclosure was much more beneficial to him, Interviewee 18 emphasized a particularly negative professional moment,

“I was flying with a colleague who was new to the base . . . and this is where we started talking . . . and he starts showing, like, in those magazines ‘oh this girl is good, this girl I don’t know what . . .’ and then an image of some male celebrity comes along . . . and I start talking good about the person and he ‘hey, but are you gay?, ups, I shut up’ and almost didn’t talk to me all day anymore (. . .) so far so good, there were jokes and so on, and from that moment on, it was all over”. (Interviewee 18)

Interviewee 1 said that coming out as a homosexual was so harmful to him that, in a next professional experience, he would consider not doing it,

“the less they know about you in the job market . . . especially that kind of stuff, the better (. . .) I felt so corroded by that bad energy that came from them (. . .). After having a longer contact with the job market, nowadays I would not do it, even in a sector that was not a factory, which was a doctor, dentist . . . because these are weapons they have to create a bad environment for you”. (Interviewee 1)

These realities elucidate the data of [Levine and Leonard \(1984\)](#), [Croteau and Lark \(2009\)](#), [Croteau and Von Destinon \(1994\)](#), when they mention that the disclosure of sexual orientation in the work context can translate into unfavorable treatment.

4.5. Protection against Discrimination and Equal Treatment

Based on the analysis of the interviews, it is possible to verify that, from the 21 workers interviewed, only 6 mentioned that the companies where they currently work or, in the case of Interviewee 9, worked in the past, have anti-discrimination policies.

The targeted workers are therefore Interviewees 2, 3, 14, 15, and 16, as workers fully assumed in the workplace, and Interviewee 9 (who, in an earlier professional context was fully assumed, but not currently due to the country where she is now located, Saudi Arabia).

This finding is thus in line with the conclusions of studies by [Driscoll et al. \(1996\)](#), [Burgess \(1997\)](#), and [Ioverno et al. \(2016\)](#), which relate the existence of protection policies against discrimination to higher rates of “coming out”.

Therefore, the workers interviewed emphasize the adoption of certain measures by the organizations/entities where they exercise or, in the case of interviewee 9, exercised professional functions,

“if I talked to a superior about the fact that I was feeling discriminated against for being a lesbian, measures were taken, they make a point of . . . saying that if we have a problem . . . that we can talk . . . and they usually give us a card with a number and an email that we can contact if something happens”; (Interviewee 9)

“we signed a term . . . everyone signed it, everyone read it, everyone knows (. . .) how far it can go . . . there was a sanction . . . or a fine, it was like any item”; (Interviewee 3)

“protocols against discrimination exist . . . by the way, it is in the company’s rules . . . people are encouraged . . . to accuse and are protected in relation to it (. . .) there is always news on the portal . . . we always have that little pop-up that says ‘don’t have fear of suffering reprisals for assuming what you are . . .’”; (Interviewee 14)

“they have something like the ‘five golden rules’ and the third is inclusion, respect (. . .) any type of discrimination, the smallest discrimination that you can imagine, is . . . dismissal for just cause on the spot (. . .) there are no meetings here, there is nothing, yeah . . . discrimination they don’t even tolerate”. (Interviewee 2)

These facts confirm the claims of [Friskopp and Silverstein \(1996\)](#) and [Van Den Bergh \(2004\)](#) about the importance of measures to protect against discrimination for the maintenance of a safe working environment.

The interviewees also point out the following:

“we have an orientation when we start, in any hospital (...) not only because of people’s sexual orientation, but because of everything ...”; (Interviewee 9)

“everyone who joins the company has training on diversity, including sexual training, and this training (...) forces the idea of “we want something that does not discriminate, that does not make anyone uncomfortable” (...) if it were necessary to do new training ... are constantly publicized”; (Interviewee 14)

“everyone has mandatory training, it is the company that trains you in this sense (...) and I think that employees end up getting into the spirit by assimilation (...) it ends up being collective, then goes home, passes from home to the children, from the children to school ...”. (Interviewee 16)

These arguments validate the conclusions of [Williamson et al. \(1993\)](#) and [Wright et al. \(2006\)](#) about inclusive organizations that bet on training/guidance on diversity, including sexual diversity.

Another factor, mentioned by one of the workers, focuses on the existence of,

“specialized people (...) there was a psychologist within that team ... to deal with this type of problems, such as discrimination, whatever it may be”. (Interviewee 9)

This finding supports the aforementioned study by [Washington and Evans \(1991\)](#) as well as [Hampson et al. \(2020\)](#), which is based on the existence, in the workplace, of people prepared to deal with situations and episodes of discrimination. One of the interviewees, currently working in a multinational, also mentions that,

“at Google they sponsor the Pride Parade ... there is an involvement, that is, they support the LGBT rights and it’s a totally open company, I mean, you see people on Google, men, dressed as women (...) there you are what you want, be what you want, they give you total freedom”. (Interviewee 2)

Socialization was another reality mentioned by the interviewees, which goes in line with the findings of [Van Den Bergh \(2004\)](#),

“every Friday there is a party ... for the employees, and there is one of them, once a month, which is extended to the family, who is ‘closer’ ... and people know who they want to bring”; (Interviewee 2)

“we at the center are not just a work group (...) there was already a dinner ... and my boss said ‘let’s have dinner, but you talk to your girlfriend ... she’s going to dinner too with us’”. (Interviewee 5)

On the issue of equal treatment, namely with regard to professional benefits, the workers interviewed declared that they were receiving the same as the other colleagues, with no particular measure being emphasized.

5. Results Discussion

From the analysis carried out as a whole, it is observed that, at the current juncture, the workforce is increasingly diverse. Despite race, ethnicity, and gender being the most discussed topics, with regard to organizational diversity, the issue of sexual orientation has gained visibility. However, information is still scarce, hence the purpose of the study, which aimed to understand the relationship between homosexuality and the labor market.

Regarding the first objective, that is, to understand whether the issue of homosexuality has an influence on the recruitment and selection phases, the answers obtained allow us to confirm the findings of [Berg and Lien \(2002\)](#) and [Drydakis \(2009\)](#). That is, if there is knowledge or assumption on the part of the employer(s) regarding the sexual orientation

of the candidates, which, as the testimonies allude, is based on non-verbal language above all, there is different treatment, culminating in the subsequent non-hiring of the targeted workers.

The second objective, centered on the issue of discrimination in the exercise of functions, aimed to assess whether workers were victims of discrimination and, if so, what were the common types of incidents, whether they were reported, and the consequences for the lives of those injured. With regard to negative experiences, jokes, comments, looks, questioned competence, attribution of functions passed over by others, and dismissals were the realities mentioned, reflecting the prejudice existing in certain work contexts.

It should be noted that one of the topics present in several studies is related to wage inequalities between homosexual and heterosexual workers, a reality denied by all interviewees and which thus contradicts the conclusions presented by authors such as [Badgett \(1996\)](#), [Black et al. \(2003\)](#), and [Arabsheibani et al. \(2005\)](#).

The analysis of the testimonies allows us to conclude that episodes of discrimination are not reported due to the fact that workers feel that they cannot prove them or are afraid of the outcomes of any complaints. Assessing the consequences of discrimination, at the operational level, [Ragins and Cornwell \(2001\)](#), [Sears and Mallory \(2011\)](#), and [Ozeren \(2014\)](#) point to the fact that discrimination is reflected in a decrease in organizational performance and commitment, a fact confirmed by all the interviewees. They claimed that, because they belong to a minority, they demand the maximum from themselves as a way of suppressing the “failure” they represent, being homosexual, none of them reviewing themselves in the aforementioned facts.

What the testimonies do reflect are consequences at a personal level, such as lack of appetite, sleep disturbances, anxiety, depression, and, in some cases, abandonment of job(s) and suicidal intentions, as pointed out by authors such as [Herek et al. \(1999\)](#), [Clair et al. \(2005\)](#), and [Ozeren \(2014\)](#).

Although some workers had already experienced hostile and very negative moments, it is concluded that this is a reality that varies according to the circumstances that each one encounters and their own identities in the work environment.

Following these guidelines, the third and fourth objectives emerge, focused on the issue of managing homosexual identity in the workplace.

Therefore, the third objective aims to understand, with workers who are not assumed and are partially assumed, which factors weigh in the decision to not reveal their sexual orientation, which strategies are adopted, and what consequences arise from it. The fear of being discriminated against and treated differently, of having hostile or heterosexual environments around them, and of being categorized by sexual orientation, are the main reasons why most workers choose to not come out as homosexuals in the workplace. Only a minority say that there are no fears, and that the decision is made only by choice, as pointed out by [Bohan \(1996\)](#). Regarding the strategies adopted, it is concluded that workers feel a constant need, in the various day-to-day interactions, to lie or fabricate aspects of their identity, or to avoid more private approaches.

Regarding the consequences of non-disclosure, on a more personal level, constant stress, sleep disturbances, depressive and suicidal thoughts, as well as the feeling of loneliness, defragmentation, and inauthenticity stand out. At the operational level, no worker felt that “staying in the closet” had harmed their performance, thus corroborating the data presented by [Barreto et al. \(2006\)](#), [Critcher and Ferguson \(2011\)](#), and [Chrobot-Mason et al. \(2001\)](#).

The fourth objective, centered on the issue of disclosure of homosexuality in the workplace, aims to assess the motivations for disclosure and the inherent consequences of this decision. As the main reasons, it is concluded that friendship and proximity/trust relationships with colleagues and/or managers, and safe and inclusive work environments, governed by policies to protect against discrimination, are the main factors that lead gay and lesbian workers to assume their identities. Regarding the consequences of this position, the testimonies show, at a personal level, very positive results, ranging from physical

and psychological well-being, greater confidence, self-esteem, and authenticity and, at an operational level, the existence of more genuine labor relations and greater productivity. However, the testimonies of two workers stand out, who claim that revealing their sexual orientation triggered difficulties in relationships with some colleagues, thus affecting their well-being, a fact present in studies by [Levine and Leonard \(1984\)](#), [Croteau and Lark \(2009\)](#), and [Drydakis \(2014\)](#).

Finally, the last objective is to understand if the interviewees' workplaces, previous or current, are governed by policies of protection against discrimination and equality of treatment, as far as sexual orientation is concerned. According to studies by [Driscoll et al. \(1996\)](#) and [Burgess \(1997\)](#), the existence of this type of culture allows for higher rates of coming out, and what can be seen is that interviewed workers who claim to work in this type of organization, despite being few, are assumed by their colleagues to be gay and lesbian workers.

The testimonies refer to various measures adopted by these workplaces that are considered inclusive, such as: investing in training actions, the existence of specialized people to deal with cases of discrimination, dismissals if discrimination actually occurs, sponsorship of events, and the extension of invitations to socialization to workers and their companions, without exception.

Regarding the issue of equal treatment, information is scarce, but [Pride in Diversity \(2013\)](#) and [Gates and Viggiani \(2014\)](#) allude to equal access to benefits. Asked about this point, the interviewees did not mention any measure in particular.

6. Conclusions

Thus, it is concluded that the issue of homosexuality in the workplace brings with it particularities and challenges not faced by heterosexual workers, and the insertion of gay and lesbian professionals into the labor market and their respective work experiences are sometimes complex.

The development of this study allows us to understand that there are currently still workers who, due to their sexual orientation, see their access to the labor market conditioned or who, in the course of episodes of discrimination and prejudice, feel their personal and professional lives are harmed.

Moreover, it is precisely the prejudice that makes many workers hide their identity in the workplace, and this is a decision, in most cases, imposed by themselves as a way of protecting themselves, with harmful consequences.

However, it should be noted that hostility and discrimination do not affect all workers in the same way, since, as previously mentioned, these are realities that vary according to the professional environments encountered by each one.

A reflection of this are the various testimonies that reflect, in turn, excellent working environments and relationships between colleagues and/or bosses, where the homosexual orientation of each one is accepted and, more importantly, respected.

It was possible, through this study, to realize how important it is for organizations to bet on inclusive cultures, guided by policies of protection against discrimination, where gay and lesbian workers can feel safe, without fear of reprisals for being who they are.

However, the analysis of the testimonies allows us to perceive that this is a reality to a degree still below expectations, as only a minority claimed to work in this type of organizational environment.

This study is also important because it alludes to good practices that some companies adopt and whose strategy may guide many other organizations, because with the increasing mutability of labor demography, this should be an increasingly real path to follow.

With regard to limitations, the availability of interviewees was one of the difficulties encountered, making the process of collecting information take longer than planned. The results of exploratory research should also be highlighted, where sociodemographic characteristics constitute limits that must be considered.

With regard to recommendations for future investigations, it would be interesting to carry out a study that focused on stereotypes in the workplace, in sectors of activity that, as Friskopp and Silverstein (1996) allude, may be potentially problematic for homosexual workers, such as is the case of professions linked to education, religion, or military service.

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Appendix A. Interview Guide, Key Questions

- 1—When applying for a job, have you ever felt different treatment or that your non-hire was due to sexual orientation?
- 2—In the performance of your duties, have you ever been a victim of discrimination? (if the answer is no, proceed to question 5)
- 3—What incidents have you been the target of? Did you report what happened to anyone?
- 4—What impact did discrimination have from a personal and professional point of view?
- 5—As a homosexual, what is your identity in the workplace? (if the answer is assumed, proceed to question 9)
- 6—What reasons make you choose to stay in the closet?
- 7—Did you use any particular strategy?
- 8—What are the personal and professional consequences of this decision?
- 9—What motivates you to reveal your sexual orientation at work?
- 10—How and towards whom did you do it? What are the reasons for this choice?
- 11—Was coming out in the workplace more beneficial or more harmful to you?
- 12—Is your current or previous workplace governed by policies to protect against discrimination and equal treatment? If yes, what measures do you highlight?

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