

Brazilian homoparental adoptive families: A systematic literature review

Famílias homoparentais adotivas brasileiras: Uma revisão sistemática da literatura

Familias homoparentales adoptivas brasileñas: Una revisión sistemática de la literatura

Familles adoptives homoparentales brésiliennes : Une revue systématique de la littérature

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Abstract

This study aimed to identify and analyze scientific articles about Brazilian adoptive homoparental families, based on a systematic literature review. A review of the metanalysis type was carried out in the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) Journal Portal, Virtual Health Library (BVS) and Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) databases, using the descriptors Homoparenthood AND Adoption. Thirty articles were found, mainly from the Psychology area, published between the years 2006 and 2021, by researchers from the Southeast, Northeast, and South regions of the country. The analysis allowed the construction of thematic categories and discussion about the political and social invisibility of this family arrangement; the prejudice against homoparental adoption; and the exercise of parental roles in the adoptive homoparental family. The data found denote the importance of conducting studies that approach this family experience from the perspective of its own members, especially adopted children and adolescents.

Keywords: family, homoparenthood, adoption, systematic review.

Resumo

Este estudo teve como objetivo analisar artigos científicos sobre famílias homoparentais adotivas brasileiras, a partir de uma revisão sistemática de literatura. Foi realizada uma revisão do tipo metassíntese nas bases de dados Portal de Periódicos da Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES), Biblioteca Virtual em Saúde (BVS) e Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), a partir dos descritores Homoparentalidade AND Adoção. Foram encontrados 30 artigos, sobretudo da área da psicologia, publicados entre os anos de 2006 e 2021, por pesquisadores das regiões Sudeste, Nordeste e Sul do país. A análise possibilitou a construção de categorias temáticas e discussão acerca da invisibilidade política e social desse arranjo familiar; do preconceito frente à adoção homoparental; e do exercício dos papéis parentais na família homoparental adotiva. Os dados encontrados denotam a importância de realizar estudos que abordem essa experiência familiar na perspectiva de seus próprios membros, especialmente as crianças e os adolescentes adotados.

Palavras-chave: família, homoparentalidade, adoção, revisão sistemática.

Resumen

Este estudio tuvo como objetivo identificar y analizar artículos científicos sobre familias homoparentales adoptivas brasileñas, a partir de una revisión sistemática de la literatura. Se ha realizado una revisión del tipo metátesis en las bases de datos Portal de Periódicos de

la Coordinación para la Mejora del Personal de Enseñanza Superior (CAPES), Biblioteca Virtual de Salud (BVS) y Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), utilizando los descriptores Homoparentalidad AND Adopción. Se encontraron 30 artículos, principalmente del área de Psicología, publicados entre los años 2006 y 2021, por investigadores de las regiones Sudeste, Nordeste y Sur del país. El análisis permitió la construcción de categorías temáticas y la discusión sobre la invisibilidad política y social de este arreglo familiar; el prejuicio contra la adopción homoparental; y el ejercicio de los roles parentales en la familia homoparental adoptiva. Los datos encontrados denotan la importancia de realizar estudios que aborden esta experiencia familiar desde la perspectiva de sus propios miembros, especialmente los niños y adolescentes adoptados.

Palabras clave: familia, homoparentalidad, adopción, revisión sistemática.

Resumé

Cette étude visait à identifier et à analyser des articles scientifiques sur les familles adoptives homoparentales. Il s'agit d'une revue systématique de la littérature, de type métasynthèse, réalisée dans les bases de données Portal de Periódicos de CAPES, BVS et SciELO, à partir des descripteurs Homoparentalité ET Adoption. Trente articles ont été trouvés, principalement dans le domaine de la psychologie, publiés entre 2006 et 2021 par des chercheurs des régions du Sud-Est, du Nord-Est et du Sud du pays. L'analyse a permis la construction des catégories thématiques et la discussion autour de l'invisibilité politique et sociale de cette configuration familiale, des préjugés envers l'adoption homoparentale, et de l'exercice des rôles parentaux dans la famille homoparentale adoptive. Les données trouvées soulignent l'importance de mener des études qui abordent cette expérience familiale du point de vue de ses propres membres, en particulier les enfants et les adolescents adoptés.

Mots-clés : famille, homoparentalité, adoption, revue systématique.

Family is a type of social organization characterized by continuous change. It is a human group that has existed since ancient times and is formed in different ways according to the historical moment (Zanardo & Valente, 2009). The expansion of the concept of family is one of the characteristics of contemporary times, with various family arrangements: single parent, recomposed, formed by couples without children, transparent and homoparental, made up of homosexual fathers and mothers and their children (Gurgel & Uziel, 2019). However, the image of the nuclear family, formed from heterosexual, monogamous and procreative marriage, persists as a reference in the collective imagination (Freires et al., 2021). This heteronormative expectation makes it difficult for other forms of family, such as homoparental families, to achieve due social and legal recognition (Ximenes & Scorsolini-Comin, 2018).

Adoption is one of the main forms of access to homoparenthood (Zambrano, 2006). It is a legal way of establishing filioparental relationships, which makes it possible to meet the interests of the child or adolescent, when it favors their insertion into a family entity capable of guaranteeing the security and stability necessary for their development (Ximenes & Scorsolini-Comin, 2018).

However, homosexual couples continue to be the targets of prejudiced positions from the technical teams during the adoption process. These acts are expressed through judgments about the couple's ability to exercise parental roles, as well as rejections of applications for registration without fair explanations (Cabral & Coutinho, 2018; Coitinho et al., 2015; Silva et al., 2018). In this sense, the main difficulties faced by adoptive homoparental families refer to situations of prejudice, such as the judgment that adoptive parenting is less legitimate than biological parenting, and about homoparenting, expressed through positions against the possibility of this family arrangement, on the grounds that homosexual couples would not be able to raise a child (Rosa et al., 2016; Santos et al., 2013; Tombolato et al., 2019). These judgments culminate in discriminatory acts against these individuals, which generate suffering and oppression. In this sense, Gurgel and Uziel (2019) warn of the current political¹ and social situation in Brazil, characterized by the rise of conservatism and the election of politicians who defend discriminatory ideas that exclude families formed by same-sex couples. These events have led to setbacks, which makes this study even more socially relevant.

Furthermore, periodically carrying out systematic literature reviews, with the aim of finding out what has already been produced on the subject in question and indicating possible research objectives, makes this research academically relevant,

¹ According to Firmiano (2020), the presidential administration of Jair Messias Bolsonaro (2019-2022) was characterized by the destruction of labor rights; the scrapping of public education and health; the unrestricted exploitation of ecological and natural resources; the encouragement of the arms industry and increased violence; the repression of any form of dissent and social and political activism; the defense of Christian and conservative values; as well as the attack on any social, cultural, affective and sexual expressions of diversity.

since it opens up avenues for searching for what has not yet been studied (Oliveira et al., 2015). In view of the above, this study aimed to analyze scientific articles on Brazilian adoptive homoparental families, based on a systematic review.

Method

This study is bibliographical in nature. It is a systematic literature review, of the meta-synthesis type. The aim was to go beyond synthesizing and condensing the data found, in order to build new knowledge and a broader understanding of the object studied. This happened by cross-referencing the information collected and the relationships established between them (Oliveira et al., 2015).

To carry out the meta-synthesis, the following steps were followed: exploration, refinement, cross-referencing, description and analysis. In the exploration stage, we sought to select the data sources for the research, as well as analyzing the viability of this source, based on selective reading of the material found (Oliveira et al., 2015). In this study, due to their historical relevance to the development of national science, three data sources were selected: Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES) Journal Portal, Virtual Health Library (BVS) and Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) databases. The following descriptors were used in the searches: *Homoparentality AND Adoption*.

Then, in the refinement stage, through a careful definition of the sample, the data began to be processed (Oliveira et al., 2015). In this study, the sample was selected based on the following criteria: (1) they had to be national productions published in article format between 2006 and 2021; (2) they had to be available online and entirely in Portuguese; (3) they had to discuss issues related to the adoptive homoparental family in the Brazilian context. Articles that only mentioned this family formation or dealt with the experiences of foreign families were excluded. In this way, the period selected comprised the time interval available in the platforms' search filters. The titles, abstracts and keywords of the articles found were read, and those related to the object of study were pre-selected for floating reading.

Later, in the cross-referencing stage, to avoid inconsistencies in the sample found, we tried to check if there were any repetitions between the results obtained in each of the databases, as well as if there were articles indexed in more than one platform, excluding duplicate materials. In the fourth stage, description, with the aim of obtaining an overview of the sample, as well as identifying the materials with the greatest analytical potential, tables and graphs were produced with information on the selected productions. In addition, the volume of the material was also assessed, but without the need to establish new cut-off criteria (Oliveira et al., 2015).

Finally, in the analysis stage, we sought to go beyond descriptive information to build new knowledge. To do this, the selected material was read in depth and had its content analyzed, which allowed the identification of thematic categories for discussion (Oliveira et al., 2015).

Results and Discussions

Initially, 126 articles were found using the descriptors in the exploration stage. This number gradually decreased during the refinement stage, becoming 89 articles after using the search filters; then 53 articles after reading the titles, abstracts and keywords; and finally 43 articles after floating reading the material. In the cross-referencing stage, 13 duplicate articles were identified and excluded from the sample. Table 1 shows the number of articles selected according to the meta-synthesis stages.

Table 1:

Articles selection

Databases	Exploration	Refining			Crossroads
		F.B.	T.R.P.	L.F.	
CAPES	88	54	32	23	15
SciELO	9	8	6	5	4
BVS	29	27	15	15	11
Total	126	89	53	43	30

Notes. F.B. = after using the search filters, T.R.P. = after reading the titles, abstracts and keywords, L.F. = after floating reading.

The final sample selected for analysis consisted of 30 articles, published in 2006 (two articles), 2009 (one article), 2010 (one article), 2012 (one article), 2013 (two articles), 2015 (two articles), 2016 (four articles), 2017 (five articles), 2018 (five

articles), 2019 (six articles) and 2021 (one article). These publications are marked with an asterisk (*) in the references. No articles published in 2007, 2008, 2011, 2014 or 2020 on adoptive homoparental families in Brazil were identified.

It was observed that 26 of the 30 articles found were published after 2012, which shows a significant increase in publications on the subject in the last 10 years. These data are in line with those found by Silva et al. (2017), who identified an increase in publications on same-sex adoption from 2011 onwards, the year in which the Plenary of the Federal Supreme Court (STF) (2023) equated same-sex relationships with stable unions between men and women, thus recognizing same-sex unions as a family nucleus.

In order to get to know and map the places in the country where the adoptive homoparental family has been the subject of studies, information on the region of the first author (or main author) was analyzed in each of the articles. This revealed that the largest number of articles came from the Southeast (13 articles), followed by the Northeast (10 articles) and then the South (7 articles). There were no articles whose main author was from the Midwest or North regions.

We also tried to find out and analyze the area of knowledge to which the first author of each article was linked. In this respect, we found that psychology is the main area of connection, present in 24 articles (80% of the total). To a lesser extent, there were also articles on law (two articles), sociology (two articles), anthropology (one article) and education (one article).

Finally, the material selected for analysis had a balanced number of empirical (16) and theoretical (14) studies, making it possible to identify articles resulting from empirical research on the subject, which has become more frequent since 2012. In addition, regarding the research subjects, the studies included the participation of homoparental fathers and mothers (Araldi & Serralta, 2019; Féres-Carneiro et al., 2017; Machin, 2016; Rosa et al., 2016); only homoparental fathers (Rosa & Pessôa, 2019); only homoparental mothers (Lira et al., 2016a, 2016b; Pontes et al., 2017; Tombolato et al., 2019); psychology and justice professionals (Cecílio et al., 2013; Cecílio & Scorsolini-Comin, 2018; Ximenes & Scorsolini-Comin, 2018); social work and law students (Cerqueira-Santos & Santana, 2015); and other groups in the Brazilian population (Cerqueira-Santos et al., 2017; Freires et al., 2021; Santos et al., 2018; Rezende et al., 2019).

In addition, empirical research with homoparental fathers and mothers has often used the method *snowball* (*snowball*) to get volunteer participants. In this sense, the study participants themselves indicated other possible participants, who were contacted by the researchers and invited to take part in the research (Araldi & Serralta, 2019; Cecílio & Scorsolini-Comin, 2018; Machin, 2016; Lira et al., 2016b; Pontes et al., 2017; Rosa et al., 2016).

From the in-depth reading and analysis of the selected material, it was possible to identify similarities and differences in the articles read, which made it possible to define three thematic categories: (1) The (in)visibility of the homoparental family; (2) Prejudice against homoparenting; and (3) Parenting on the scene. The results of the thematic analysis will be presented and discussed below.

The (in)visibility of the homoparental family

This first category covers the articles that discussed the invisibility of the homoparental family and its consequences in historical, legal and academic terms, as well as those that addressed the importance of the visibility acquired by these families in recent legal achievements that have guaranteed rights.

According to Zambrano (2006) and Pontes et al. (2017), studies show that homoparental families, although treated as new, have coexisted with the nuclear and patriarchal family since at least the 1960s. Of course, this is not a harmonious coexistence, but often veiled or with limited social inclusion, since there is resistance from a large part of society, especially due to the influence of Christianity, to recognizing and respecting homosexual orientation and, consequently, the possibility of these individuals starting a family.

In this sense, the term “homoparenting” began to be used during the 1990s to bring visibility to, and enable social recognition of, parenting by homosexual people and/or those in same-sex relationships. Although it is considered a controversial term, as it associates the homosexuality of fathers/mothers with parenting, it is also seen as politically important, as it brings this social category out of invisibility (Féres-Carneiro et al., 2017; Pontes et al., 2017; Rosa & Pessôa, 2019; Zambrano, 2006; Zanardo & Valente, 2009).

According to Custódio (2012), although the existence of a multiplicity of family arrangements, characterized by affection and the desire to build lasting relationships, is currently recognized, there are families that remain invisible, especially in Brazilian legislation. The author denounces the fact that parliament has been silent on issues related to homosexuality, citing that bills with the aim of regularizing homosexual civil unions have been going on for years in the National Congress, without any effective mobilization for this issue to be discussed and voted on (Custódio, 2012).

Regarding the recent changes in adoption legislation, Coitinho et al. (2015) point out that none of them dealt with homoparental filiation. In this sense, adoptive filiation by same-sex couples continued, at least in legal terms, to be left up to the judge, based on case law. This point was also addressed by Cabral and Coutinho (2018), who reported that, although there are several bills in the pipeline that deal with adoption, Brazilian legislators have not adequately addressed homoparental adoption.

As a result, the gaps left by this parliamentary position have been filled by the Judiciary through the jurisprudence of the STF and the Superior Court of Justice (STJ) without, however, guaranteeing effective security for these couples, since there is no specific legislation on the matter (Cabral & Coutinho, 2018). This feeling of insecurity was also identified by Zambrano (2006) in his anthropological study, the results of which showed that all the participants, even if they were in a conjugal partnership, chose to adopt individually.

The fact that many homosexual adoption applicants present themselves alone at the beginning of the process, even though they are in stable relationships, was also identified by Cecílio and Scorsolini-Comin (2018) and Ximenes and Scorsolini-Comin (2018), in studies carried out with professionals from the justice system. These professionals believe that the search continues in this way due to the lack of information on the part of the applicants about their rights, as well as fear of suffering prejudice related to homosexual orientation and homosexual conjugality.

Coitinho et al. (2015), when analyzing adoption proceedings in a district in Rio de Janeiro, gave a good picture of the reason for this insecurity. In their study, the researchers identified the case of a prosecutor who, based on article 1.622 of the Civil Code (Law n° 10.406, 2002), expressed his opposition to an application by a homosexual couple, on the grounds that it would be legally impossible for two men to jointly adopt a child, as they did not fit into any legally established family model. As a result, the couple were advised to opt for individual adoption, even though they knew that the child would be cared for by both parents.

Still about invisibility of homoparental families, Pontes et al. (2017) discussed the importance of the legal bond between homoparental mothers and their children, even those who gained access to motherhood through the use of new reproductive technologies. In the case of the participants in this study, although both had planned motherhood together, the place of the non-biological mother was constantly unrecognized by families and society, which led some of these mothers to file for unilateral adoption of their children, who were already affectionately theirs. In this sense, also in an empirical study, Araldi and Serralta (2019) identified that most of the participants had to rely on legal aid to access rights already guaranteed to heterosexual couples, such as maternity/paternity leave.

The legal bond produces effects of recognition and legitimization of these families, not only in the courts, but also in society. Kornatzki and Ribeiro (2019) argue that the discourses produced through legislative and legal actions can enable the recognition or invisibilization of certain forms of family, which may or may not guarantee them access to constitutional rights. In this way, the Federal Constitution (1988), for having broadened the meaning of family beyond conjugality and consanguinity, is pointed out as an important discursive milestone in the rights of homoparental families.

From this perspective, the authors point out that the Civil Code (Law° 10.406, 2002), in defining a family entity as a stable union between a man and a woman, produces discourses that do not contribute to the fight for equal rights. The same applies to the resistance of political and religious groups to expanding the concept of family, sometimes expressed through bills that defend the nuclear family model as the only acceptable one (Custódio, 2012; Kornatzki & Ribeiro, 2019).

Many rights have been won by Brazilian homoparental families in the last decade. In view of this, Cabral and Coutinho (2018) highlight the importance of the struggles of social movements in these achievements. Among the rights won, the articles mention: the recognition of stable unions by same-sex couples by the STF (2023), in May 2011, which made it possible for these couples to adopt children and adolescents jointly; the decision of the National Council of Justice (CNJ), in May 2013, which ordered Brazilian registry offices to promote the celebration of same-sex civil marriages and to convert the stable unions of these people into marriages (Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship, 2013); the recognition of adoption by same-sex couples by the STF (Instituto Brasileiro de Direito de Família [IBDFAM], 2015), in March 2015, claiming that the concept of family can also be applied to these couples; and, finally, the understanding of the 4th Panel of the STJ (2018), in May 2017, about the possibility of same-sex couples adopting children of any age (Cabral & Coutinho, 2018; Coitinho et al., 2015; Ribeiro et al., 2017; Rosa & Pessôa, 2019).

The invisibility of the adoptive homoparental family, however, is not only present in the legal and political spheres. Studies on this family model are still scarce in Brazil (Cecílio et al., 2013; Rosa & Pessôa, 2019; Santos et al., 2013; Silva et al., 2017), including in the field of psychology (Tombolato et al., 2019), especially when it comes to empirical research (Araldi & Serralta, 2019). One of the consequences of the lack of studies is that little is known about the specificities of homoparental families and their forms of parenting, which can make it difficult, for example, to build effective public policies for this population.

Based on the results of the studies by Cecílio and Scorsolini-Comin (2018) and Ximenes and Scorsolini-Comin (2018), it is possible to infer that discussions about homoparenting are also “invisible” in the training of professionals who work directly with issues related to homoparental adoption. The professionals interviewed in both studies reported insecurity and unpreparedness to handle these cases and pointed to their professional training as insufficient to support their work.

As mentioned, homosexuality and homoparenthood are controversial issues in the eyes of public opinion. Therefore, these advances are also accompanied by a lot of resistance from conservative and traditional groups in society, including the Brazilian political class. These groups often use various forms of violence against homoparental families, the main and most subtle of which is expressed through stigmatization and prejudice, as will be discussed in the following category.

Prejudice against homoparenting

In this thematic category, we present and discuss articles that dealt with acts of discrimination experienced by adoptive homoparental families. These are theoretical and empirical studies that point to the historical roots of prejudice against homoparenting and the opinions of sectors of Brazilian society about adoption in this family arrangement.

According to Rosa et al. (2016), adoptive homoparenting is the target of prejudice in two ways. The first is related to the experience of adoption, more precisely to the discriminatory idea that adoptive parenting is inferior and less legitimate than biological parenting. The second refers to the homosexuality of the parental figures, listed as one of the reasons for questioning whether a same-sex couple would be able to raise a child, since there is no representation of both genders in the parental pair.

In this vein, Farias (2010) points out that society's current view of homosexuality and, consequently, homoparenthood, has historical reasons. The rise of Christianity and the association of homosexuality with sin, as well as the rise of medical science and the pathologization of homosexuality, are seen as responsible for the myths that surround homosexuality and homoparenting today. Among the persistent myths, the author mentions promiscuity as a characteristic of all homosexuals; homosexuality as a deviation/disease; the negative influence of parents' homosexuality on their children's affective/sexual development. Thus, in addition to these myths, there are also ideas that the child will suffer discrimination for having two fathers or two mothers and will also have impairments in understanding sexual differences and gender expectations (Cabral & Coutinho, 2018; Silva et al., 2017).

Rezende et al. (2019), in turn, point out that prejudice against homoparenting is directly influenced by heteronormativity, which establishes rigid gender standards and roles for men and women. Based on heteronormative logic, stable homosexual unions, as well as the adoption of children by homoparental couples, are seen as something that transgresses what is supposedly ideal for society. This conception, according to the authors, contributes to stigmatization and to the manifestation of acts of violence against this family arrangement.

In this sense, Cabral and Coutinho (2018) refer to homoparental adoption as a controversial issue because it questions the current family ideal, which is still based on heterosexuality for the purposes of procreation. According to the authors, one of the main prejudices related to homosexual conjugality and homoparenting is that these couples are unable to provide an environment suitable for the development of a child or adolescent.

The study by Silva et al. (2018) also identified, based on a systematic review of adoptive parenting, that the gender identity and sexual orientation of adopters is a significant aspect of the adoption process. It was also found that homoparenting (whether adoptive or not) still gives rise to prejudice, often from the very services responsible for the adoption process, a fact that often leads adopters to deny their personal values to achieve their desire to be fathers or mothers.

In this sense, Coitinho et al. (2015), when analyzing adoption proceedings in a district of Rio de Janeiro, identified prejudiced positions, expressed in a subtle way, regarding requests for joint adoption by homosexual couples. One of them claimed that same-sex couples did not form a family entity and therefore could not adopt jointly. Another also denied the request, arguing that adoption should guarantee the best interests of the child and adolescent and not of sexual minorities. The third, finally, although it dealt with a favorable ruling for a homosexual male couple, had restrictions on the age and gender of the child, not applied to heterosexual couples.

In the study carried out by Tombolato et al. (2019), with the aim of analyzing the adoption trajectory of a lesbian couple, the participants reported having suffered prejudice both when trying to sponsor a child in a shelter and when applying for adoption. At the shelter, the request for sponsorship was rejected without any clarification. The participants, based on the hostile attitudes of the professionals, said they believed the reason for the rejection was that they were a same-sex couple. Regarding adoption, a situation was reported with the professionals at the Forum, who took an uncompromising and suspicious stance on the couple's ability to play the maternal role.

The prejudice experienced by female homoparental families was also identified by Lira et al. (2016a). The participants reported having been victims of violence of various kinds and in the most varied areas of life, such as in the family environment, at work and also by strangers. Among the violence experienced, the participants mentioned being the target of stigmatizing discourse, with judgments about their moral capacity to raise a child, as well as physical violence. One of them reported having suffered an attempted murder for homophobic reasons.

Still about prejudice experienced by homoparental families, we have the study by Freires et al. (2021), in which questions were asked to contrast opinions on the adoption of children by homosexual and heterosexual infertile couples. It was found that adoption of children by homosexual couples was more opposed, while adoption by heterosexual infertile couples was more accepted. Among the positions against homoparental adoption, it was suggested that the moral conditions of homosexual couples in caring for a child were impossible, claiming that the child would be traumatized by the prejudice experienced by the parents.

Santos et al. (2018), on the other hand, sought to analyze the social representations of adults from different Brazilian

regions about adoption by same-sex couples. Various types of positions were identified, most of them in favor of adoption. There was, however, a recurring comparison between the homoparental family and that formed by heterosexual couples, in the sense of stating that the homoparental family was like the heteroparental family and therefore “normal”. The authors problematize the fact that the nuclear family is taken as a reference for normality, as this establishes a specific way of being a family, which does not encompass the diversity of contemporary family arrangements.

It is also worth highlighting the lack of responsibility of some participants, who were against homoparental adoption because they considered “society to be prejudiced”, on the grounds that the child would suffer prejudice and would therefore have difficulties in their development process (Santos et al., 2018). This lack of responsibility was also present in the discourse of psychologists working in the justice system, who pointed out the prejudice of others, including homosexuals towards themselves, without recognizing the prejudiced speeches made (Ximenes & Scorsolini-Comin, 2018).

The beliefs of law and social work students about homosexuality and adoption were investigated by Cerqueira-Santos and Santana (2015). They found that social work students had more favorable opinions about homosexuality and same-parent adoption than law students. Among the positive beliefs, it was mentioned that the homosexuality of parental figures will not negatively influence the child’s development, as well as that a child raised by homosexuals will be a socially adapted adult. As for the negative beliefs about homosexuality, they pointed to the supposed promiscuity experienced by homosexuals, as well as drug use, living away from religion and having fewer lasting relationships.

In view of the results found, the authors point to the need for discussions on human development and sexuality as part of school education, from primary and secondary schools, and also in the academic training of professionals, especially those who may work in the area of adoption. In this way, it will be possible to avoid professionals having moralistic conceptions on the subject and, consequently, making unfair and prejudiced judgments (Cerqueira-Santos & Santana, 2015).

Cerqueira-Santos et al. (2017) investigated the influence of interpersonal contact with gays and lesbians on beliefs about homoparental adoption. They found that prejudice in the assessment of homosexual adopting couples was associated with the participants’ low degree of contact with homosexual people. Therefore, interpersonal contact was seen as relevant in demystifying negative representations about homoparenting.

Given this, it is possible to see that the biggest obstacle to adoption by same-sex couples continues to be the prejudice that exists in our society, since there is no scientific evidence of any damage to the child’s development related to being raised in a homoparental home (Custódio, 2012; Zambrano, 2006). After all, what determines the quality of child development are the characteristics of the environment, the couple’s psychosocial conditions, the affective investment and the quality of the relationship that parents establish with their children (Amazonas & Braga 2006; Zambrano, 2006; Ribeiro et al., 2017; Rolim & Carlesso, 2019).

In this sense, it should be noted that a significant part of the difficulties experienced by the children of same-sex couples comes precisely from the prejudice experienced socially (Lira et al., 2016a, 2016b; Silva et al., 2017). It is also important to emphasize that being a victim of social prejudice alone does not imply that the child will grow up carrying traumas, because with a family base that prioritizes their care and well-being, the child will acquire resources to deal with and cope with these situations (Ribeiro et al., 2017; Rolim & Carlesso, 2019; Silva et al., 2018). Even so, the prejudice experienced by homosexual adopters and homoparental families can be pointed to as a complicating factor in adoptive parenting, which will be discussed in the following category.

Parenting on stage

This third and final category presents and discusses the results of the theoretical and empirical articles that dealt with the homoparental family experience, especially aspects related to the parental project of adoption and the exercise of parental roles.

According to Ribeiro et al. (2017), paternity and maternity are not merely biological processes. It is always necessary for fathers and mothers, regardless of the family configuration, to desire and adopt their children symbolically. Therefore, parental experience is a process that begins with the decision to have a child and is established through relationships experienced on a daily basis.

In this sense, Rosa et al. (2016) point out that parenting is constructed from the discourses and social practices in force at the time. Therefore, parental functions are not contained in anatomy, but are linked to desire, the characteristics of those who exercise them and the significance of the child. Therefore, both fathers and mothers can exercise the functions socially identified as maternal (caring for and naming the child, recognizing it and identifying with it) and paternal (establishing the law and enabling the symbolic separation of the child from those who occupy the maternal position) (Ribeiro et al., 2017), which shows that good parenting is independent of the affective-sexual orientation of the parents (Rosa et al., 2016).

According to Rolim and Carlesso (2019), having a child is an important factor for the social recognition of the homoparental family that has been built. This concept is in line with the discussion made by Amazonas and Braga (2006), who problematize homoparenthood as a way used by homosexuals to conform to the social norm. In this sense, having

children would be a way of accessing society's symbolic and material resources, which until then had only been available to heterosexuals. In contrast to this position, Silva et al. (2017) point out that the homoparental family arrangement makes it possible to deconstruct paradigms related to the way of being a family in our society.

Adoption is usually the main means of access to parenthood (Ribeiro et al., 2017; Zambrano, 2006; Zanardo & Valente, 2009), especially by male same-sex couples. It is a form of legal filiation and, for some, a social commitment to do good and offer a home to a child who did not have one (Lira et al., 2016b; Machin, 2016). Adoption is characterized by the need for parents to be specifically prepared to receive a child who has a previous history and comes from a different family and social context. It is pointed out that parents and children need to adapt to this new reality and that parents need to make an extra effort to provide satisfactory environmental conditions for their child (Ximenes & Scorsolini-Comin, 2018).

Applicants for homoparental adoption tend to be more flexible when defining the profile of the child they wish to adopt, in aspects such as gender, age group, race, presence of a health problem and/or physical disability. This flexibility is pointed out because of the feelings of identification that these children/adolescents arouse in homosexual adoptive couples, given that they have also experienced abandonment and violence throughout their lives (Rolim & Carlesso, 2019; Silva et al., 2018).

In this sense, Machin (2016), when investigating the types of adoption requests made by homoparental couples, identified that their parenting projects were strongly influenced by their personal histories and the relationships established with their families of origin. The author also points out that the couples interviewed sought children outside the most sought-after profiles, especially in terms of ethnicity/race.

The bureaucracy involved in formalizing and carrying out the adoption was pointed out by Machin (2016) and Rosa et al. (2016) as one of the biggest difficulties experienced by the applicants during the process. However, despite the delay, the participants recognized legal adoption as important to guarantee a secure bond with the child, given the fear of losing the child to the biological mother in a future court case. In addition, the homoparental fathers and mothers reported that, after becoming legally responsible for the children, there were few perceived difficulties.

Regarding the performance of the parental role in adoptive same-sex couples, Rosa et al. (2016) and Rolim and Carlesso (2019) characterize them as having more creativity, fluidity and fairness when compared to heteroparental couples. They mentioned that it was easier to make parenting tasks more flexible, based on the availability and personal identifications of each member of the couple, since the responsibilities called "maternal" and "paternal" are carried out by both members.

The absence of fixed roles to be played by the members of the parental pair is also mentioned by Zambrano (2006), Féres-Carneiro et al. (2017) and Silva et al. (2017) as a structuring characteristic of the homoparental family. Therefore, as mentioned, the exercise of maternal and paternal functions is not directly related to traditional gender identities, but to the desire and emotional conditions of each member of the parental pair (Araldi & Serralta, 2019; Rolim & Carlesso, 2019).

However, it would be wrong to consider that homoparental families are unscathed by the cultural imprints of the social roles of fathers and mothers. According to Rosa et al. (2016), homoparental pairs have also incorporated gender stereotypes into their roles. These stereotypes, as well as influencing the construction of homoparenthood, generate misconceptions and stigma about homoparenthood, such as whether a same-sex couple would have the necessary conditions to raise a child, since there is no representation of both genders, as discussed in the previous category.

In this sense, Santos et al. (2018) identified greater acceptance of couples made up of two women, to the detriment of couples made up of two men. In this regard, the authors discussed the probable influence of the social belief that women are more likely to care and that mothers have a maternal "instinct" to love their children. These results are in line with the study by Lira et al. (2016b), in which it was found that, in the case of lesbian women, the arrival of a child tends to make their sexual orientation invisible, and they are seen only as mothers. This ends up contributing to greater social acceptance of the couple's homoerotic experience, which has repercussions on the social support they receive.

Greater acceptance of lesbian parenting, when compared to gay parenting, was also identified by Cerqueira-Santos et al. (2017). However, in contrast to the current stereotype, Rosa and Pessôa (2019) identified the preference of gay men to experience moments of care, affection and closeness with their children. The affective bond between caregiver and child was also pointed out by Silva et al. (2017) as fundamental to the development of relationships in homoparental families.

Féres-Carneiro et al. (2017) identified that members of homoparental families also tend to be more creative in naming those who exercise parental functions than members of heteroparental families. However, even in these families, the signs of the traditional family (father and mother) remain widely used and are considered important. To cite an example, the importance of being called dad (and not uncle, as the son initially called him) was pointed out by a member of a single-parent and homoparent family. In this sense, the authors argue that the participant's ability to recognize himself as a "father" needed his son's recognition in order to make sense.

Another case cited in the article dealt with the practice of naming in a female homoparental family, in which the son called both women "mom" and then added the first name of each. As a result, the authors show that there is no gender confusion in homosexual parenting: the children understand that they have two fathers or two mothers and name them as they prefer (Féres-Carneiro et al., 2017).

According to Araldi and Serralta (2019), gay fathers and mothers tend to experience parenting in a mostly positive way, establishing bonds of trust with their children, despite living in a prejudiced society, which brings with it a load of fears and challenges. In this sense, Rosa and Pessôa (2019) mention that gay fathers tend to be more concerned with meeting their children's needs than heterosexual fathers, as they feel under pressure to be competent and not make mistakes when carrying out their parental duties.

The transmission of values of equality, freedom and respect for children's differences are also pointed out by Araldi and Serralta (2019) as characteristics of homoparental fathers and mothers. In addition, the authors pointed out that becoming parents resulted in greater social inclusion and acceptance of the couple by the extended family, even in cases where the relationship was already long-lasting and stable before adoption.

The social support received was identified as fundamental in the face of the difficulties experienced in parenthood, as it enabled couples to feel more confident in the process of becoming fathers or mothers (Araldi & Serralta, 2019). In addition, the presence of support networks, such as community groups and parents' organizations, as well as legal recognition and protection, have been identified as important for the quality of homoparental family relationships (Lira et al., 2016b; Silva et al., 2017).

Finally, regarding existing studies on the homoparental family, Santos et al. (2013) stated that these families are usually analyzed in a comparative way to heterosexual nuclear families, in terms of the psychosocial development of the children or the parents' ability to exercise parenthood. The authors problematize this fact and point out that, nowadays, studies that address the understanding of homoparental fathers and mothers about their own experiences are essential, to consider and give visibility to the particular characteristics of this family arrangement.

Final considerations

As pointed out in this review, the homoparental adoptive family has been a growing target of research, especially in the last decade. Most of the articles on this topic were published between 2012 and 2021, by researchers working in the field of psychology, living in the Southeast and Northeast regions of the country. These are theoretical and empirical studies which, after being read and analyzed, made it possible to construct thematic categories and hold a brief discussion about the political and social invisibility of this family arrangement, prejudice against homoparental adoption and the exercise of parental roles in the adoptive homoparental family.

It was possible to see that despite the rights won in the last decade, the homoparental family continues to be made invisible by the Brazilian legislature and other sectors of society, such as academia, since it is a topic that is little discussed in the training of professionals who will work directly with these cases. This attitude reinforces the prejudice experienced by adoptive homoparental families, which has a negative impact on the exercise of parental roles by these fathers and mothers.

Thus, although it was possible to identify an increase in publications on the subject, just over half of the studies involved members of homoparental families and, in this sense, addressed the homoparental family experience. The situation worsens when it comes to the perspective of adopted children and adolescents, as no articles were found on this topic. This is noteworthy given that the purpose of adoption is to ensure the best interests of the child/adolescent. Studies in which both members of the parental pair took part were also rare. However, it is important to highlight the choice of scientific articles as the exclusive material for analysis as one of the limitations of this study.

In this sense, it is suggested that new research be carried out with the aim of identifying and analyzing the discussions held on the subject, based on published theses and dissertations. Further research into the homoparental adoptive family is also essential, especially studies that involve all family members, especially the adopted children. It is also important to carry out studies on this topic in the Midwest and North regions of the country, as well as in the fields of law, education and social work. In addition, it is essential that professionals in these areas are prepared in their training to discuss, assess and intervene in situations such as adoption by same-sex couples.

Furthermore, given the results found in this study, it is important to make the existence of homoparental adoptive families visible and recognized, so that the state and society can effectively understand their specificities and meet their needs. In this sense, it is also urgent that the Brazilian legislature sees members of homoparental families as citizens and makes it possible to pass bills that promote equal rights.

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