








News media coverage of the LGBTQIAPN+ population and its health implications

Mídia jornalística sobre pessoas LGBTQIAPN+ e suas implicações na saúde

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to analyze news media coverage in two major newspapers about the LGBTQIAPN+ population and its health implications. **Methods:** this documentary study, grounded in Social Representations Theory, examined news reports about the LGBTQIAPN+ population in two major newspapers. The discursive material was processed with IRaMuTeQ software using Descending Hierarchical Classification and similarity analysis. **Results:** the analysis yielded five classes: LGBTQIAPN+ Pride Parade; LGBTQIAPN+ population in the state of Ceará, Brazil; Struggle for LGBTQIAPN+ rights: context of vulnerability; LGBTQIAPN+ in popular and musical movements; and Struggle for LGBTQIAPN+ rights: federal context. The maximum tree diagram highlighted the acronym and LGBTQIAPN+ people, the visibility movement, barriers, and legal advances. **Conclusion:** news reports emphasized social, political, and cultural aspects, while giving less attention to this population's health. **Contributions to practice:** the study informs the work of health professionals, managers, and communicators by highlighting the need to give visibility to the demands of the LGBTQIAPN+ population in the media.

Descriptors: Vulnerable Populations; Sexual and Gender Minorities; Social Representation.

RESUMO

Objetivo: analisar a cobertura jornalística de dois jornais de grande circulação a respeito da população LGBTQIAPN+ e suas implicações na saúde. **Métodos:** estudo documental fundamentado na Teoria das Representações Sociais com base em notícias sobre população LGBTQIAPN+ em dois jornais de grande circulação. O material discursivo foi processado no *software* IRaMuTeQ por meio da Classificação Hierárquica Descendente e da análise de similitude. **Resultados:** o material gerou cinco classes: Parada do Orgulho LGBTQIAPN+; População LGBTQIAPN+ no estado do Ceará, Brasil; Luta pelos direitos da população LGBTQIAPN+: contexto de vulnerabilidade; LGBTQIAPN+ no movimento popular e musical; e Luta pelos direitos da população LGBTQIAPN+: contexto federal. A árvore máxima destacou a sigla e as pessoas LGBTQIAPN+, o movimento de visibilidade, os entraves e os avanços legais. **Conclusão:** as notícias enfatizam aspectos sociais, políticos e culturais, com menor atenção à saúde dessa população. **Contribuições para a prática:** o estudo contribui para qualificar a atuação de profissionais de saúde, gestores e comunicadores ao evidenciar a necessidade de dar visibilidade às demandas da população LGBTQIAPN+ na mídia. **Descritores:** Populações Vulneráveis; Minorias Sexuais e de Gênero; Representação Social.

Introduction

The media play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and social representations. They can influence society positively or negatively, contributing—or failing to contribute—to social, cultural, political, and economic development, while also affecting people's autonomy, identity, and democracy⁽¹⁾.

The use of social media to discuss health issues has been on the rise in recent years. Media outlets display diverse content whose power to shape perceptions and behaviors may bring both advantages and disadvantages for the self-care of lay users⁽²⁾.

In a country such as Brazil, where issues related to gender and sexuality have frequently been placed at the center of public debate, the way the media portray lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender people, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual/aromantic, pansexual, non-binary people, and other identities represented by the “+” (LGBTQIAPN+) can significantly affect access to and the quality of health services provided to this population⁽³⁾.

Although the media play an important role in constructing and circulating social representations of historically marginalized groups, health is rarely addressed as a relevant field of social representation in journalistic coverage of the LGBTQIAPN+ population. This lack of attention to health contributes to the ongoing exclusion⁽⁴⁾.

This gap renders the specific demands of this group invisible and limits professionals' and managers' understanding of how media narratives can influence perceptions, attitudes, and practices in health care⁽⁵⁾. In light of this scenario, there is an urgent need for an epistemic turn in global health that embraces social justice and diversity in building a truly inclusive and equitable health field⁽⁶⁾.

Therefore, this study aimed to analyze news media coverage in two major newspapers about the LGBTQIAPN+ population and its health implications.

Methods

Type and study design

This is a documentary study with an interpretive analysis grounded in Social Representations Theory⁽⁷⁾.

Study period and setting

Data collection took place in July 2024 and was based on two major newspapers from the state of Ceará, Brazil: *Diário do Nordeste* and *O Povo*. Journalistic publications (2017–2024) containing explicit mentions of the LGBTQIAPN+ population were selected. Extracted information included the title, date, full text of the report, and main themes addressed. The search was conducted online on the newspapers' official websites, using the acronym LGBT to screen and maximize the number of reports. Articles that mentioned the acronym LGBT or LGBTQIAPN+ but did not focus on this population were excluded.

Population and sample

A total of 340 reports were analyzed, including 111 from *Diário do Nordeste* and 229 from *O Povo*, published between 2017 and 2024.

Data analysis

The texts were organized into a corpus and analyzed with the software *Interface de R pour les Analyses Multidimensionnelles de Textes et de Questionnaires* (IRaMuTeQ) version 0.7 alpha 2, R 3.1.2. This procedure enabled Descending Hierarchical Classification (DHC) based on lexical analysis. Three central theoretical axes of Social Representations Theory guided the analysis: (1) *Who knows and from where*, focusing on the identification of social actors

and sources of symbolic production in journalistic narratives; (2) *What is known and how it is known*, referring to the analysis of content, values, and symbolic constructions expressed in the reports; e (3) *What is known about and with what effects*, addressing the symbolic and social effects of these representations in reproducing stigma and prejudice⁽⁸⁾. As a result of the DHC in IRaMuTeQ, five classes emerged, along with similarity analysis.

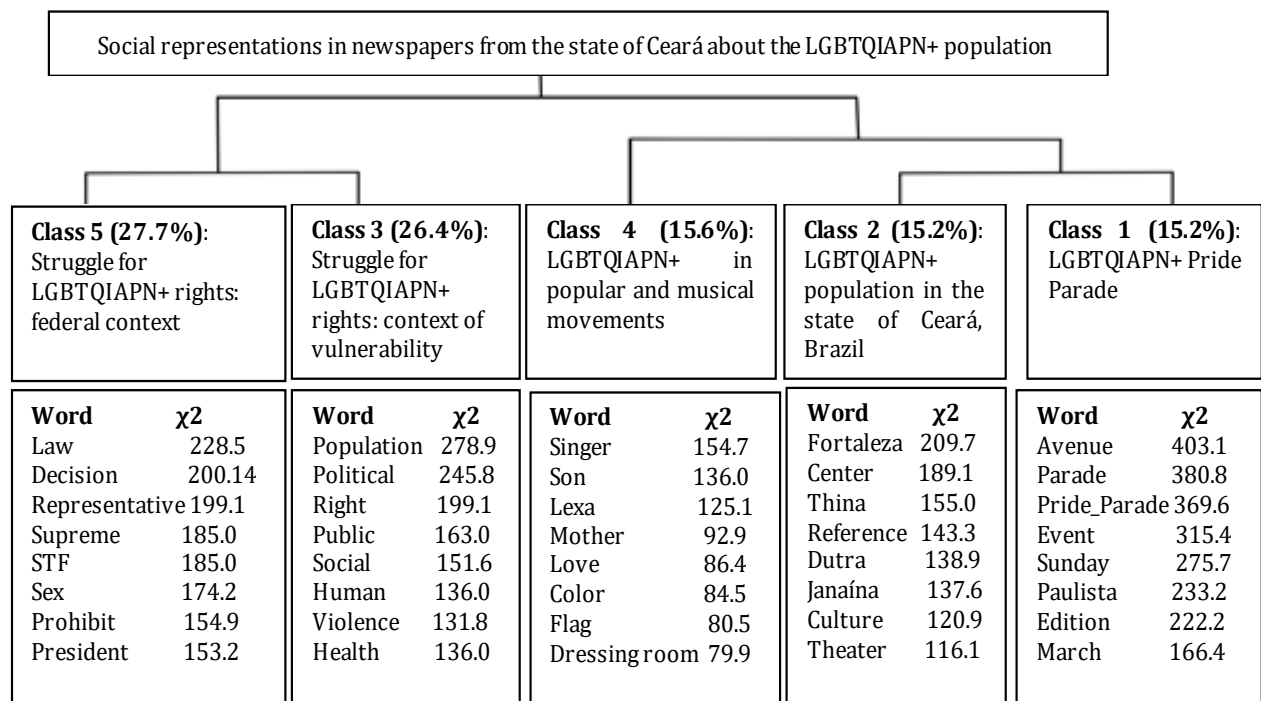
Ethical aspects

Ethical approval was not required, as the data were publicly available.

Results

It was observed that the number of reports on this theme has remained stable in *O Povo* but has declined in *Diário do Nordeste* over the years. IRaMuTeQ divided the corpus into 4,543 text segments, identifying 61,109 occurrences and 8,776 forms. The DHC generated five classes, retaining 4,024 text segments, with a retention rate of 88.5%.

Based on the DHC, the textual domains were analyzed and interpreted to give meaning to the classes. The following were identified: LGBTQIAPN+ Pride Parade; LGBTQIAPN+ population in the state of Ceará, Brazil; Struggle for LGBTQIAPN+ rights: context of vulnerability; LGBTQIAPN+ in popular and musical movements; and Struggle for LGBTQIAPN+ rights: federal context (Figure 1).



LGBTQIAPN+: lesbians, gays, bisexuals, travestis and transgender people, intersex individuals, non-binary people, and other gender identities and sexual orientations represented by the "+" symbol; POP: Popular; STF: *Supremo Tribunal Federal* (Supreme Federal Court)

Figure 1 – Descending Hierarchical Classification of the social representations of the LGBTQIAPN+ population in newspapers (n=340). Redenção, CE, Brazil, 2025

Class 5: Struggle for LGBTQIAPN+ rights: federal context

The reports in Class 5 are grounded in the legal advances and challenges faced by the LGBTQIAPN+ community in Brazil and worldwide, as reflected in words such as *law*, *decision*, *Supreme*, *Supreme Federal Court (STF)*, and *prohibition*. Other examples include *deputy* and *president*.

These reports present the struggle for LGBTQIAPN+ rights as a recurring theme in political debate, highlighting their constant presence on the agenda of the National Congress. The terms in Class 5 underscore judicial decisions that safeguard the civil rights of the LGBTQIAPN+ population, such as same-sex marriage and the right to a social name, in contrast with legal limitations and the lack of adequate regulation.

Class 3: Struggle for LGBTQIAPN+ rights: context of vulnerability

In the analyzed newspapers, Class 3 often anchored the struggle for LGBTQIAPN+ rights in discussions that also involved contexts of vulnerability and other forms of social exclusion. This was expressed through words such as *right*, *violence*, *health*, and *social*, which characterized political and population-related text segments.

In this class, the social dimension and the context of the struggle for LGBTQIAPN+ rights were evident. Issues faced in society were addressed, as well as vulnerabilities associated with this population, particularly its efforts to confront violence and social discrimination and its struggle for equitable access to education and health services. This situation was also reflected in the resistance encountered by this population in the legislative arena, marked by the difficulty in passing fundamental laws such as the criminalization of homophobia.

Class 4: LGBTQIAPN+ in popular and musical movements

In Class 4, the reports anchored the presence of LGBTQIAPN+ artists in music and popular culture as a form of cultural resistance, in which marginalized voices gained visibility through art. This observation was reflected in words such as *singer*, *dressing room*, *color*, and *flag*. Moreover, this representation was linked to media disputes and controversies, as well as to the significant representativeness of these artists.

Class 2: LGBTQIAPN+ population in the state of Ceará, Brazil

The anchoring of the reports in Class 2 highlights the significant role of the state of Ceará in strengthening citizenship and promoting the social inclusion of the LGBTQIAPN+ population, characterized by words such as *center*, *culture*, *theater*, and *reference*. These were associated with text segments including *Fortaleza*, *Thina*, *Dutra*, and *Janaina*.

Findings indicated that Fortaleza promotes social and cultural events and activities involving the LGBTQIAPN+ population. Reports also mentioned the *Centro Estadual de Referência LGBT+ Thina Rodrigues* (State LGBT+ Reference Center Thina Rodrigues) and the *Centro de Referência LGBT Janaína Dutra* (LGBT Reference Center Janaína Dutra), institutions that provide support and care services.

The terms in Class 2 underscore the importance of initiatives that combine cultural activities with narratives fostering inclusive public policies. These services aim to ensure psychological, legal, and social support and play a crucial role in promoting citizenship and addressing the inequalities experienced by the LGBTQIAPN+ population.

Class 1: LGBTQIAPN+ Pride Parade

In Class 1, the reports anchored the coverage of

events such as the LGBTQIAPN+ Pride Parade to historical resistance movements and Brazilian popular celebrations such as Carnival, reflected in words like *march*, *avenue*, and *event*. These were associated with text segments such as *Pride Parade* and *Paulista*.

The similarity analysis synthesized the highlighted classes, in which the terms *LGBT*, *gay*, *year*, *right*, and *say* structured the perception of the reports

about the population. This synthesis emphasized the acronym (*LGBT*), the individuals represented (words linked to *gay*), the visibility movement (words linked to *year*), the means through which this occurred (words organized around *say*), and the legal barriers and advances that still need to be addressed (words linked to *right*) (Figure 2).

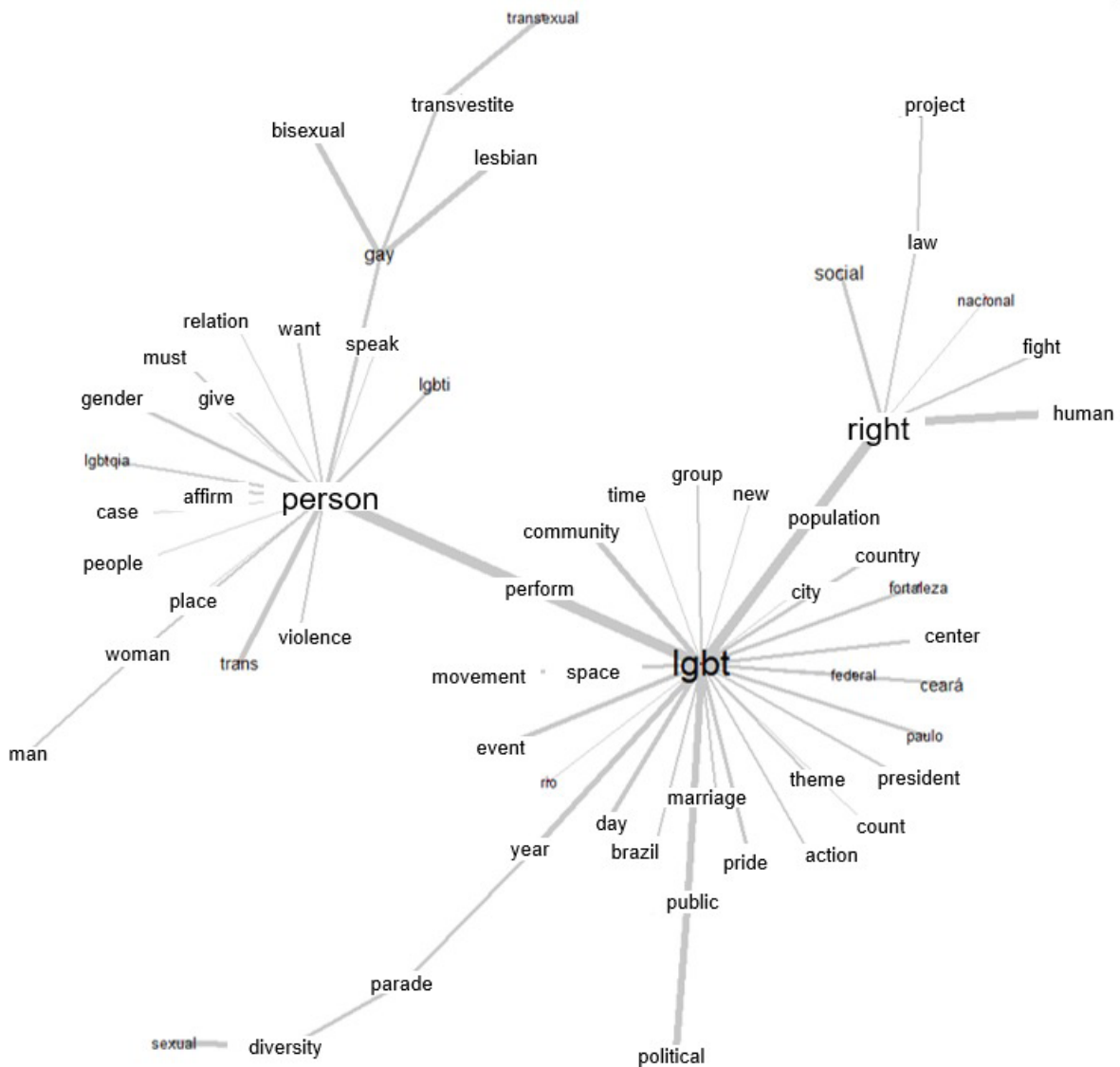


Figure 2 – Maximum tree diagram generated from news reports processed in IRaMuTeQ (n=340). Redenção, CE, Brazil, 2025

The maximum tree diagram corroborates the finding that health did not emerge as a lexical cluster associated with LGBT, underscoring the plurality of meanings attributed to this population in other contexts.

Discussion

The reports analyzed in this study indicate that media coverage has largely focused on the struggles and resistance of the LGBTQIAPN+ population in their pursuit of dignity and social recognition. In this context, the LGBTQIAPN+ Pride Parade emerges as one of the main cultural and political symbols of this mobilization. Although the literature points to 1997 as the milestone for the Pride Parade in Brazil, it is important to note that sociopolitical and cultural demonstrations led by LGBTQIAPN+ people had already been recorded in different parts of the world since the 1960s, gaining strength and visibility in the subsequent decades⁽⁹⁾.

The LGBTQIAPN+ population continues to face major barriers to accessing social, leisure, and cultural spaces, despite advances achieved through struggles and symbols such as Pride Parades. Discrimination persists even in progressive countries, and the global reality for this population remains challenging. In Brazil, violence against this population is alarming, disproportionately affecting Black and low-income individuals, thereby exacerbating marginalization⁽¹⁰⁾. A total of 302 recorded cases of violence were identified, classified as interpersonal violence (62.2%). In more than half of these cases (54.3%), the motivation was related to homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia, or transphobia, including assaults based on sexual orientation or gender identity⁽¹¹⁾.

Thus, creating social and cultural spaces for the LGBTQIAPN+ population constitutes a key strategy to promote representativeness and inclusion of a historically marginalized group in different social spheres, including memory institutions such as museums and art centers. These spaces function not only as respons-

es to demands for recognition of lived experiences but also as instruments of sociocultural transformation. They are also emphasized as territories for symbolic, cultural, social, artistic, and leisure construction⁽¹²⁾.

Although limited, Brazil has made progress in implementing public policies aimed at improving the quality of life of this population. A notable example is the LGBT Human Rights Reference Centers, created in 2007 by the Special Secretariat for Human Rights of the Presidency of the Republic. However, due to funding challenges, many of these centers—particularly those linked to non-governmental organizations—were forced to close⁽¹³⁾.

In contrast, more recent initiatives identified in this study—such as the *Centro de Referência LGBT Janaína Dutra* and the *Centro Estadual de Referência LGBT+ Thina Rodrigues*, in Fortaleza, as well as the *Centro de Referência LGBT*, in Juazeiro do Norte—demonstrate efforts to serve and protect the LGBTQIAPN+ population.

The struggle for equal rights of this population encompasses fundamental dimensions such as health, education, employment, and housing, aiming to reduce the multiple vulnerabilities affecting this social group. In the Brazilian context, the Health Reform spurred the development of public policies oriented toward universality, comprehensiveness, and equity of care, generating a growing demand for strategies to ensure fair and inclusive attention to this population⁽¹⁴⁾.

In this scenario, the incorporation of health into digital media has been recognized as a new determinant of health⁽¹⁵⁾. Thus, the lack of visibility of the LGBTQIAPN+ population's health in the media, as identified in this study, is not merely a matter of absent information but also a social and political issue with direct impacts on the lives of this group. The inclusion of health-related agendas is an essential resource to broaden representativeness and foster public policies.

Nevertheless, the media debate on the health of this population contributes to acknowledging the inequalities they face, mobilizes social actors, and

strengthens the political pressure needed to build more equitable and inclusive policies. These processes of visibility and advocacy support the creation of inclusive public policies such as the *National Comprehensive Health Policy for Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Travestis, and Transgender People*, aimed at reducing vulnerabilities and promoting the principles of the Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS)^(16–17).

Although progress in the field of LGBTQIAPN+ health has been significant, challenges remain, including the lack of sufficient studies to develop specific health indicators, the inadequate training of health professionals, and the persistent invisibility of this population—particularly trans and lesbian people⁽¹⁷⁾.

Regarding the health of this population in the state of Ceará, the issue involves intersectoral participation, but it does not constitute a specific health agenda as a public policy⁽¹⁸⁾. This may be one of the factors that reverberates in social representations, where health did not appear as the focus of any class nor in the similarity tree.

Asscience advances, our perceptions and understandings of the world also evolve. The LGBTQIAPN+ population, historically marked by prejudice and stigmatization in the struggle against Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), began to have their health addressed through relevant actions, such as the inclusion of the social name on the SUS Card and the expansion of the gender-affirming process within the SUS, enabling specialized care services⁽¹⁹⁾.

Nevertheless, this study reveals that the social representations conveyed by the media did not highlight health as a central axis. This omission may directly impact care practices, given the insufficient and superficial knowledge about gender and the health of the LGBTQIAPN+ population. Compounding this is the lack of preparation and, in many cases, the unwillingness of professionals to recognize this group's specific needs, which creates barriers to accessing health services⁽²⁰⁾.

Therefore, addressing the health of the LGBTQIAPN+ population as a collective issue is crucial

for generating effective policy responses, recognizing both specific needs and common demands. Social movements have played a pioneering role in incorporating this health agenda, but vigilance is needed against threats and setbacks—particularly in the Brazilian political context, where conservative sectors attempt to pathologize and delegitimize these demands, rejecting scientific evidence in favor of prejudices such as the so-called “gay cure” and “therapeutic actions”⁽²¹⁾.

The constitutional phrase “Health is a right of all and a duty of the State” often seems utopian in the face of exclusion and violations of fundamental human rights, especially for minority social groups such as lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender people (LGBT). These groups—subject to social stigma, prejudiced professional practices, and barriers to accessing health services—are more vulnerable to health problems such as alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drug abuse, unprotected sex, mental disorders, and violent behaviors⁽²²⁾.

In this sense, the results of the similarity analysis reinforce that rights and the struggle for recognition are central elements in social representations, highlighting the advances and challenges faced by the LGBTQIAPN+ population. This finding corroborates studies that emphasize the role of public policies and social movements in building a more equitable society. These networks of social movements, through collective actions, exchanges of experiences, and the union of their bases, demonstrate their capacity to overcome the barriers imposed by state bureaucracy⁽²³⁾.

Through their struggles, however, the LGBTQIAPN+ population has been driving concrete changes and securing the defense of rights often neglected by formal systems.

Study limitations

The selection of only two major newspapers from the state of Ceará may have limited the diversity of social representations analyzed, as other media ou-

tlets could have offered complementary perspectives. Nevertheless, the choice of these newspapers allowed for a relevant analysis of the published content, reflecting important trends on the topic and contributing to future studies.

Contributions to practice

The results of this study provide evidence to enhance the practice of health professionals, public managers, social communicators, and journalists in addressing the inequalities experienced by the LGB-TQIAPN+ population. By revealing that media discourses prioritize political and cultural aspects over health issues, this work highlights the need for intersectoral actions that promote visibility of this population's health demands in the media.

In addition, it underscores the urgent need to strengthen inclusive public policies, with an emphasis on professional and social training through health education strategies that incorporate themes addressing the needs of the LGB-TQIAPN+ population.

Conclusion

This study showed that the media exert a strong influence on the construction of social images of the LGB-TQIAPN+ population, directly affecting public perceptions and access to rights, including in the health field. The way the media portray this population can either reinforce negative stereotypes or promote a more inclusive and respectful perspective, shaping how society perceives them and how their members are treated.

Authors' contributions

Conception and design, or data analysis and interpretation; drafting of the manuscript, or critical review of its intellectual content; approval of the final version of the manuscript to be published; responsibility for all aspects of the manuscript in ensuring the

accuracy and integrity of any part of the work: Monte LRS, Brito OD, Sousa LB, Silva HG, Freitas MC, Chaves AFL, Frota NM.

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