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Social skills training as a strategy to combat prejudice against sexual and gender diversity

Treinamento de habilidades sociais como estratégia de combate ao preconceito contra a diversidade sexual e de gênero

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Abstract

Objective

The aim of this study was to verify the effectiveness of a social skills training program to reduce prejudice against sexual diversity.

Method

A total of 22 adolescents aged between 14 and 17 years who were 9th grade public school students, participated. The assessment instruments were the Social Skills Inventory for adolescents and the Scale of Prejudice Against Sexual and Gender Diversity. Both instruments were applied before and after training.

Results

The results indicated a significant reduction in the levels of prejudice against sexual and gender diversity, an increase in the frequency of the issuance of skills related to assertiveness, an affective approach and social resourcefulness and a decrease in the difficulties related to civility.

Conclusion

The social skills training program proved to be effective, indicating that this is a viable tool for greater acceptance of sexual and gender diversity.

Keywords: Adolescent behavior; Gender diversity; Homophobia; Sexual and gender discrimination; Social Skills.

Resumo

Objetivo

Verificar a efetividade de um programa de treinamento de habilidades sociais na redução do preconceito contra a diversidade sexual.

Método

Participaram 22 adolescentes com idades entre 14 e 17 anos, estudantes do 9º ano de escola pública. Os instrumentos de avaliação foram o Inventário de Habilidades Sociais para adolescentes e a Escala de Preconceito contra a Diversidade Sexual e de Gênero. Ambas aplicadas antes e após o treinamento.

Resultados

Os resultados indicaram a redução significativa nos níveis de preconceito contra a diversidade sexual e de gênero, aumento da frequência da emissão de habilidades relacionadas à assertividade, abordagem afetiva e desenvoltura social e diminuição das dificuldades alusivas à civilidade.

Conclusão

O programa de treinamento de habilidades sociais se mostrou eficaz indicando que esta é uma ferramenta viável para uma maior aceitação da diversidade sexual e de gênero.

Palavras-chave: Comportamento do adolescente; Habilidades sociais; Discriminação Sexual e de Gênero; Diversidade de Gênero; Homofobia.

In adolescence, failures in the processes of learning and acquisition of the behavioral repertoire, in the motivational variables and in the support of the environment are related to risky, antisocial behavior and deficits in socially competent behavior in different frameworks. For this reason, social skills are established as the behavioral peak of this development phase (Fogaça et al., 2019). Consequently, they favor healthier social interactions at different times in life and in different contexts, reducing vulnerability to different undesirable behaviors such as involvement in bullying situations, drug abuse (Pereira-Guizzo et al., 2018), and depression (Campos et al., 2018).

Among several undesirable behaviors, prejudice stands out as the object of study in this article. Prejudice can be defined as an attitude triggered against individuals belonging to a devalued social group (Allport, 1954; Dovidio, 2001) or hostility against specific groups (Rodrigues et al., 1999), simply because the individual belongs to that group, starting from the principle of assuming that he/she possesses all the negative qualities attributed to the said group (Allport, 1954).

For social psychology, prejudice is cognitively based on stereotypes, which are personal beliefs, considered as absolute truths, attributed to other individuals and groups and that generally refer to attributes – personality traits – or behaviors. Furthermore, this phenomenon is also formed by affective components, negative feelings, and behavioral components such as actions (Rodrigues et al., 1999). In this study, the relationship between the increase in the repertoire of social skills and the decrease in prejudice has been established. More specifically, prejudice against sexual and gender diversity, which is defined as the expression of negative attitudes towards groups or individuals of different sexual and gender identities being distinct from heterosexual norms (Costa et al., 2015; Herek, 2000).

In Brazil, the expression of this phenomenon occurs through the following characteristics: 1) the hatred, aversion, irrational fear and aggressive revulsion not only against homosexuals, but also against bisexuals, transsexuals, transvestites and transgenders, that is, to individuals who are not heterosexual; 2) also against any individual who presents a gender expression contrary to heteronormativity, that is, in disagreement with their biological sex (Costa et al., 2015; Herek, 2000). Consequent to it, a true gender surveillance emerges with consequent social punishment for those who deviate from the heterosexual pattern where prejudiced discourses and behaviors contribute to the strengthening and legitimation of heteronormativity (Andreo et al., 2016).

Although research in Brazil has contemplated prejudice against young subjects, few investigations address sexual and gender orientations and expressions (Gaspodini & Falcke, 2019). Therefore, some issues still remain unexplored. In the case of social skills, from 2015 to July 2022, on the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), *Portal de Periódicos Eletrônicos em Psicologia* (PePSIC) and Science Direct platforms, no research was found using this construct as a way of coping with prejudice in the school environment, especially using interventions directly with adolescents. In this connection, most of the scientific production points to studies with parents and teachers or studies of data collection only.

Given this scenario, interventions are necessary and urgent to transform negative representations about sexual and gender diversity, since prejudice and violence against people outside the heterosexual pattern is present in educational institutions (Santos & Cerqueira-Santos, 2020). Thus, there is a demand to test interventions that make use of new strategies.

In this investigation, social skills were tested as a way of coping with prejudice against sexual diversity through a direct intervention with adolescents. In general, this study aimed to verify the effectiveness of a social skills training program in reducing prejudice against sexual diversity in adolescents. Specifically, several contributions were aimed at: (a) the instrumentalization of strategies to face prejudice in a broad way; (b) provide opportunities for modifying individual beliefs that lead to prejudiced behavior, making young people more socially competent in dealing with individuals who do not follow the rule of heteronormativity; (c) from a theoretical point of view, fostering a new interventional area of social skills that is still unexplored, helping the school community with difficulties in dealing with issues of sexual orientation that deviate from the heteronormative standard; and, (d) provide the adolescent audience with the strengthening of values and skills that contribute to the development of an identity free of prejudice.

Method

A quasi-experimental discontinuous time series study with pretest and post-test was performed. The pre-test consisted of carrying out an exploratory survey of the levels of prejudice against sexual diversity and social skills of the adolescents participating in the survey. Subsequently, the experimental treatment was carried out, that is, the training of social skills focused on questions about sexual diversity and, finally, the post-test of the levels of social skills and prejudice of these young people was carried out. These data were compared with those obtained in the pre-test, thus enabling a comparison before and after the intervention.

Participants

A total of 22 adolescents, students of the 9th year of a public school, participated in this investigation. Out of these, 12 were male and 10 female, aged between 14 and 17 years with an average of 15.95 years.

Instruments

Social Skills Inventory for Adolescents (SSIA) by Del Prette and Del Prette (2009) – It is an instrument specifically designed for adolescents aged 12 to 17 years and aims to assess the main social skills required in adolescence. The scale makes it possible to measure both the frequency of the reaction and the degree of difficulty that the adolescent feels in displaying a certain behavior. However, for this study, only the skills frequency scores were used. In addition, the inventory produces

scores on six subscales relevant to subclasses of social skills considered relevant in adolescence. They include: empathy, self-control, civility, assertiveness, affective approach and social resourcefulness.

Scale of Prejudice Against Sexual and Gender Diversity (Costa et al., 2015) – The Scale consists of 16 items, validated and adapted to the way sexual and gender prejudice is presented in Brazil, that is, evaluating these two constructs together. Items are also arranged on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from “totally disagree” (1) to “totally agree” (5), with the aim of checking prejudice against sexual orientation and against gender conformity. The items specifically address prejudice against lesbians, gays, transgenders and gender non-conformity and the closer the answers to score 5, the greater the evidence of prejudice.

This study is based on the norms of Resolution nº 466/12 of the National Health Council in relation to the Guidelines and Regulatory Norms for Research Involving Humans and was approved by the Research Ethics Committee (Opinion nº 1,275,967). In addition, the adolescents who voluntarily agreed to participate, along with their guardians, signed Free and Informed Consent Forms authorizing the use of the data collected and giving consent for participation in all stages of the investigation. The school involved in the investigation also granted its authorization to carry out the study.

Procedures

The research began after authorization from the school, parents and acceptance of the invitation by the young people. All stages of the research were described and young people were invited to participate in the Social Skills Training (SST) group and respond to the selected instruments. After completing the training, the instruments were applied again. The two applications, as well as the implementation of the training, were carried out in a group, at the school where the adolescents studied, during their classes.

The SST schedule includes a total of 10 weekly sessions, with the duration of 50 minutes each session, in the school afternoon shift – the same time when students attended their classes. This periodicity and duration of the meetings was established because it resembles the structures described in the literature, in social skills training programs that have already been carried out and with empirically proven effectiveness (Rodrigues et al., 2021; Vieira et al., 2021). The meetings were conducted and previously planned based on a psychoeducational and cognitive-behavioral approach with strategically designed techniques aimed at achieving the established objectives, that is, to cause a positive impact by increasing the adolescents’ repertoire of social skills, with regard to living with people who do not fit the heterosexual norm, thus producing a reduction in prejudice against these individuals.

Each session had its own purpose and technique according to the general and specific objectives of the intervention. A field diary was used where the adolescents’ responses to the proposed activities were entered, such as, for example, the discomfort of some participant with the theme addressed, the jokes with colleagues whose behaviors do not match the socially expected behavior for their gender, the behavior of those young people in the activities and even data on non-verbal expressions in reaction to discussions and activities. In addition, the adolescents’ feedback was also recorded, data related to their opinions about the progress and dynamics of the group, the activities carried out, suggestions for themes and, also, criticisms about the program. Such observations were recorded because we believe this is the best way to conduct a 10-session intervention. This is because, throughout the process, some subject of interest to young people could arise or there could be the need, for example, to change the pre-established approach and from such records, these nuances would be perceived more easily.

The procedures are reported in detail in Table 1, which presents the activities carried out, objectives and skills worked on in each session.

Table 1
Social Skills Training Program with emphasis on sexual and gender diversity

Session	Activity	Objective	Skill Reviewed
1	Presentation of the program	Discuss concepts of social skills, gender identity, homosexuality and transsexuality	-
2	Dynamics on violence against homosexuals and putting oneself in the other guy's shoes	Work on feelings experienced in situations of injustice, comparing them with real situations of violence resulting from discrimination	Empathy, assertiveness and problem-solving strategy
3	Dynamics to encourage praise, discussion about bullying and documentary "Girls in blue, boys in pink"	Training to identify qualities in the other party; Evoke examples of everyday violence and bullying; Present situations of bullying suffered by non-heterosexual people	Civility, empathy and social resourcefulness
4	Program evaluation	Identification of the generalization of learned behaviors	-
5	Role Playing and functional analysis of the situation	Analyze the situation as it actually occurs and as it could be; Work on alternative behaviors	Assertiveness, alternative behaviors/social resourcefulness and resilience
6	Film "Today I don't want to go back alone"	Present in a real way the possibilities of discovering sexuality	Empathy, affective approach
7	Film "Today I don't want to go back alone"	Present in a real way the possibilities of discovering sexuality	Empathy, affective approach
8	Discussion about the film and game of "myth or truth"?	Discuss myths involving the different forms of expression of sexuality	Work beliefs and social resourcefulness
9	Unfinished Story Game	Give alternative endings to real stories of people who have experienced violence because of their gender expression	
10	Closing	-	

Data Analysis

The statistical program IBM®SPSS®, version 22, was used to perform comparative analyses of the data obtained in the measurements related to the pre-test and post-test.

From the database composed with the measurement information performed at the two time points, comparative analyses were performed before and after the intervention. In this way, indicators of prejudice against sexual and gender diversity corresponding to the measurements in the pre-test and post-test, as well as social skills, were produced using the value average of the scale items in the first case, and using the social skills scores already provided directly by the SSIA in the second. Specifically with regard to the Social Skills Inventory, indicators of general social skills and skills related to empathy, self-control, civility, assertiveness, affective approach and social resourcefulness were extracted. Hence, the analysis variables included: indicator of prejudice against sexual and gender diversity in the pre-test and post-test; frequency indicators of total social skills in the pre-test and post-test; frequency indicators of empathy, self-control, civility, assertiveness, affective approach and social resourcefulness in the pre-test and post-test.

Then, Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were performed separately with the two indicators of prejudice against sexual and gender diversity obtained in the pre-test and in the post-test and, with the indicators of social skills obtained in the pre-test and post-test. Regarding the latter, the analyses were performed separately for each of the potential subclasses to be analyzed from the SSIA. For this study, frequency measures of total social skills and their subclasses were used.

Results

The sample consisted of 22 adolescents, in which part of them, 68.2% ($n = 15$), claimed to have a family income between one and five minimum wages, 4.5% claimed to have a family income between 5 and 8 minimum wages ($n = 1$), while 27.3% ($n = 6$) were unable or unwilling to answer this question. About following any religion 59.1% ($n = 13$) gave a positive answer. Out of these, 31.8% ($n = 7$) declared themselves to be Catholics and 27.3% ($n = 6$) Evangelicals. With regard to proximity with family members, friends or close acquaintances who are gay, lesbian, transvestite or transsexual, 90.9% ($n = 20$) declared they had such proximity and only 9.1% ($n = 2$) claimed that they did not.

However, because it is an intervention investigation and, consequently, it has a longitudinal character, we had an experimental mortality of three participants. This occurred because 3 adolescents did not respond to the post-test, which prevented the comparison before and after the intervention. Therefore, the final sample included a total of 19 participants.

The ANOVA indicated a significant difference in levels of prejudice against sexual and gender diversity from pre-test to post-test [$F(1,19) = 8.53, p = 0.01$]. The index of prejudice against sexual diversity among adolescents, who in the initial analysis (pre-test) was $M_1 = 2.79$ ($SD = 1.03$), suffered a reduction after the social skills program focused on issues related to sexual diversity, yielding an average of $M_2 = 2.34$ ($SD = 0.85$).

The indicators of the young people's total social skills and also the subclasses related to empathy, assertiveness, affective approach, social resourcefulness, self-control and civility were compared before (pre-test) and after (post-test) the intervention program, through ANOVA, performed separately for each pair of indicators. The results indicate that there was an increase in the frequency of classes related to assertiveness skills, affective approach and social resourcefulness. This aspect was confirmed by performing the ANOVA, where it was found that, with regard to assertiveness [$F(1,19) = 5.86, p = 0.02$] there was an increase in the mean frequency of emission from $M_1 = 1.47$ ($SD = 1.26$) to $M_2 = 1.93$ ($SD = 1.31$); affective approach [$F(1,19) = 6.79, p = 0.01$] from $M_1 = 1.36$ ($SD = 1.01$) to $M_2 = 2.06$ ($SD = 1.54$); and frequency of social resourcefulness [$F(1,19) = 3.97, p = 0.06$] from $M_1 = 1.10$ ($SD = 0.45$) to $M_2 = 1.56$ ($SD = 1.05$).

However, with regard to the ANOVA of the frequencies of classes related to general skills [$F(1,19) = 1.60, p = 0.22$] [$M_1 = 1.52$ ($SD = 1.30$); $M_2 = 1.81$ ($SD = 1.46$)], empathy 2.48, $p = 0.13$] [$M_1 = 1.47$ ($SD = 1.26$); $M_2 = 1.81$ ($SD = 1.46$)], self-control [$F(1,19) = 0.48, p = 0.82$] [$M_1 = 1.73$ ($SD = 1.40$); $M_2 = 1.81$ ($SD = 1.46$)] and civility [$F(1,19) = 1.08, p = 0.31$] [$M_1 = 1.57$ ($SD = 1.30$); $M_2 = 1.87$ ($SD = 1.28$)], despite an increase in the averages of emission frequencies, the differences between the first (pre-test) and the second evaluation (post-test) were not significant ($p > 0.1$).

Discussion

The social skills training program focused on reducing prejudice showed positive results in different aspects. The level of prejudice against sexual and gender diversity had a significant reduction when compared to the initial assessment, and a significant increase in the frequency of emission in three of the six subclasses of social skills was also confirmed: assertiveness, affective approach and social resourcefulness.

With regard to the reduction of prejudice, considering the data found in the specialized literature and also the society in which adolescents live – with the predominant norm of heterosexuality – it is possible to think about the benefits that young people can reap when faced

with a space of discussion about norms, values and expression of sexuality within the school, as several studies (Natarelli et al., 2015; Taquette & Rodrigues, 2015) point to prejudice against sexual diversity (Herek, 2000) as one of the main characteristics of bullying in school and violence in the community in general. In addition, this type of prejudice in schools manifests itself mainly in a subtle way, from the reproduction of information from teaching materials or through insults or silencing regarding sexual diversity (Santos & Cerqueira-Santos, 2020). Bullying based on sexual orientation is considered a predictor of psychological distress and is related to psychological risk, making those who exhibit behaviors that deviate from the heterosexual norm vulnerable (Jomar et al., 2021).

This finding also validates the idea that educational interventions in the school setting can change psychological environments towards allowing young people to enhance their skills and acquire new ones, promoting an inclusive school climate and favoring the well-being of students (Burk et al., 2018). Prejudice and social skills are constructs based on social learning, which strongly occurs at school, so in order to have an increase in individuals' skills and, as a result, a reduction in their beliefs based on prejudice, skills can be taught deliberately, changing the youngsters' psychological environment, as was the case with the program described here. Two surveys carried out with Serbian (Madžarević & Soto-Sanfiel, 2019) and Canadian (Burk et al., 2018) students showed that simple exposure to a film was considered sufficient to reduce levels of homophobia (Burk et al., 2018; Madžarević & Soto-Sanfiel, 2019), reduce intimidation behaviors and less occurrence of suicidal ideation (Burk et al., 2018).

Simple interventions can be effective strategies towards a reduction of prejudice and discrimination. This result indicates that training in social skills is an effective strategy to combat prejudice against sexual diversity, since we can attribute the reduction of dysfunctional behaviors – such as those discriminatory – to the teaching of skills such as assertiveness, affective approach and relevant social resourcefulness to interpersonal relationships with individuals who deviate from the heterosexual norm. This type of change, in behaviors and attitudes, has already been attributed to the acquisition and improvement of social skills in other studies correlated with problems of coexistence at school (Maia & Lobo, 2013; Roh et al., 2018) and bullying (Peculea & Bocos, 2013; Polan & McMorris, 2010; Silva et al., 2018).

The positive difference found in the comparison between the pre and post-test regarding prejudice may suggest the possibility of reducing the verbal and psychological violence expressed by the adolescents themselves. This type of violence is often practiced by peers who attack, curse and offend those who do not fit the expected behavior standards for their gender (Espelage et al., 2019). So, based on the data assessed, we assume that the reduction of prejudice that occurred in the present study may be reflected in the reduction of school bullying and homophobic behavior. Still, we can point out the protective factor of training based on two aspects. First, because bullying concerning sexual orientation is associated with a more severe level of psychological distress than bullying for other reasons, as the former is commonly discredited (Jomar et al., 2021). Second, because young people who suffer this type of violence can trigger various disorders, such as alcohol abuse (Fish & Exten, 2020; Mereish & Miranda, 2019).

However, the same evidence portrayed as positive in the results found in this research, can lead to the reflection that there was indeed a change in the prejudiced behavior of adolescents – verified from the statistical data of the pre- and post-test comparison. However, there is no evidence that the beliefs which support prejudice against non-heterosexual people were changed concomitantly. There is a possibility that blatant bias has been minimized, yet erroneous beliefs still remain. Nevertheless, data regarding the impact of the social skills program on the

manifestation of prejudice among these young people do not become less important. The reduction in the manifestation of blatant prejudice, that is, openly expressed discrimination, is sufficient and relevant to influence the reduction of bullying against people who do not behave according to what is socially expected for their gender and, above all, in the mitigation of violence, either psychological or physical, that these individuals suffer. Similar data were found in a social skills intervention carried out with justice-involved youth (van der Stouwe et al., 2018), which showed that social skills training decreased the hostile intent of the behavior, but not the cognitive distortion.

The reduction in prejudice verified can also be attributed to exposure to different social norms and values, including the restructuring of some of these, based on awareness of the existence of lifestyles beyond those experienced by adolescents, as sociocultural influences lead to the reproduction of attitudes and behaviors that reflect social and cultural patterns (Jomar et al., 2021). By giving them the opportunity to put themselves in the other guy's shoes, learn to deal with people with behaviors different from those socially expected and thus deconstruct stereotyped beliefs, young people were able to reflect on having alternative attitudes and behaviors to the negatively differentiated treatment, reducing the reproduction of hostility, humiliation and physical or verbal violence, and favoring the acceptance of different forms of sexuality expression. This aspect is relevant, as adolescents may tend to maintain inequalities based on social and individual convenience (Wachelke et al., 2019).

Regarding social skills, it was verified in the pre-test that adolescents perform poorly both in the frequency of general skills and in all subscales: empathy, self-control, civility, assertiveness, affective approach and social resourcefulness, an aspect indicative of the need for SST (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2009). After the intervention, significant results were verified in relation to the increase in the frequency of emission of assertiveness skills, affective approach and social resourcefulness. Such classes of behavior can have a direct influence on the interpersonal relationships of young people and also on the different types of social relationships with people who differ from heteronormativity.

The significant results of increasing the frequency of these specific skills can be translated into the acquisition of alternative behaviors to those that are discriminatory. Regarding assertiveness, we can mention the decrease in teasing, the expression of negative feelings in non-violent ways nor through offenses, respectfully disagreeing with opinions, and also resisting peer pressure in situations of homophobic bullying. Regarding the affective approach and social resourcefulness, the relationship with the reduction of prejudice is based on a greater willingness to engage in social relationships with non-heterosexual individuals, such as the simple fact of initiating conversations with these people, carrying out social activities (such as, for example, in the workplace setting) and asking for favors. Lack of social skills can lead, in everyday social life, to mar relationships or to cause a poor performance in situations considered difficult or atypical, an aspect that can lead to the development of a depressive condition, difficulty in interacting and accepting peers, difficulties in school behavior and promotion of violent behavior (Campos et al., 2018; Leme et al., 2015; van der Stouwe et al., 2018). There is evidence of a lower incidence of problems between aggressors and victims at school based on the training of positive relationships with peers through the promotion of prosocial behaviors that, in our investigation, we can call the affective approach and social resourcefulness.

Throughout the training, the teenagers were led to think collectively, looking for solutions to joint problems, deconstructing each other's beliefs, sharing information, opinions and feelings. This led to greater social interaction between them and, consequently, facilitated the acquisition of more appropriate social and emotional skills instead of dysfunctional behaviors in social performance

(Jomar et al., 2021) and favored the strengthening of interpersonal and socio-affective skills (Leme et al., 2016). Adaptive behaviors related to social skills can also be characterized by the development of tolerance for what differs from the common, from interpersonal gender relationships based on interpersonal rights and on the use of healthy strategies related to problems of affective and sexual relationships (Murta et al., 2010).

In addition, social competence (an evaluative attribute of social skills) (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2017) has as a criterion the quality of interpersonal relationships, good coexistence and respect for basic human rights, thus encompassing a good resourcefulness and good social performance with LGBT individuals, based on the reduction of beliefs that, for example, non-heterosexual groups deserve to be extinct from society, that they deserve physical aggression or even murder. It is also possible to consider that prejudiced behavior and discrimination are presented, in a way, as a deficit of social competence, with social skills training being an effective tool to reduce such behaviors and attitudes, and to improve social interaction between different groups based on learned social skills, promoting pro-social skills and reducing violence and delinquent behavior (van der Stouwe et al., 2021). Such aspects enhance the idea of positive youth development by promoting social skills in the context of the adolescents' coexistence, favoring the development of individuals who are more prepared to deal with adversities in their environment and interpersonal relationships, with less emotional overload (Leme et al., 2015).

Social skills also emerge as a contributing tool to the establishment of basic human rights (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2009, 2011), to expand such rights in interpersonal relationships involving the benefit of the community with the reduction of prejudice and, thus, respect for sexual diversity can be ensured through new skills related to collective well-being, the right to express an opinion, to be respected in one's physical and moral dignity (Del Prette & Del Prette, 2017); in short, the freedom individuals have to express their sexuality without being judged or stigmatized.

Conclusion

This study showed the effectiveness and benefits of an SST program to reduce prejudice against sexual and gender diversity. In addition, all the stages elaborated were concluded and the participation of the adolescents, a crucial aspect for the program to be successful, was quite satisfactory, since they revealed a good program acceptance, mainly because it was a space where they could talk on subjects considered taboo.

The reduction in the level of prejudice and the increase in the frequency of social skills associated with assertiveness, affective approach and social resourcefulness, indicate the effectiveness of this experience as a tool for greater acceptance of sexual and gender diversity, that is, of living with people who relate with other people of the same sex, with different gender identities, or even with those individuals who simply do not behave in a socially expected manner corresponding to their gender. These are aspects that translate into a reduction of violence against these people, as in the case of discriminatory behavior involving crimes and even murders.

Some limitations must be considered. The program carried out failed to have a significant impact on all subclasses of adolescents' poor social skills. It is possible that a longer intervention could produce more significant effects in the subclasses of behaviors where this impact was not observed.

The experience report of the skills training program described herein serves as a replication model for other studies that address the combat against prejudice, against sexual and gender diversity discrimination or any other type of prejudice and discrimination, such as racial that require

due adjustments. In addition, it is believed that this structure can also serve as an aid to teachers and educators as an instrument aimed at promoting social skills and improving interpersonal relationships among adolescents, also considering ethical aspects and respect for others in situations that are different of what is most common in our society, in this case, heterosexuality.

A similar program can also be set up with teachers, so that they can make continuous use of the learning obtained from this experience in the daily life of the classroom. Still, new research can also develop a training focused on a specific skill, such as empathy, since the proposal presented here is based on the conception of the emotional aspects of prejudice, where affectivity has been a perspective that is currently widely studied in the context of interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, the effectiveness of similar programs can also be tested to combat racial prejudice or sexism.

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Contributors

K. O. SOUSA was responsible for the research design, data collection, intervention implementation and manuscript writing. D. X. FRANÇA was responsible for the research guidance, design, data collection and manuscript writing.