# Expressions of male chauvinism among university students in an institution in Southern Brazil

Expressões do machismo entre universitários de uma instituição do Sul do Brasil

Expresiones de Machismo entre Estudiantes Universitario del una Instituicion del Sur de Brasil.

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**Abstract:** This article addresses the theme male chauvinism from the results of descriptive statistical analysis arising from the study "Violence in the University Population". For this, it was used as method the application of the instrument IV-SOPRA (Index of Violence Suffered and Practiced) among students (n=510) of a public university in the south of the country. With this, our general objective is to present partial results of descriptive statistical analyses produced in the scope of this project and to reflect on the subjectivities behind these data. The descriptive statistical analyses about machismo were carried out from the viewpoint of the spectator, the perpetrator, and the victim of machista manifestations, which raised different reflections. Beyond the numbers we seek to understand the concept of machismo. We believe that this paper is a great opportunity to discuss the university context that, besides being a reproducer of social behavior, needs to be a space that constructs new perspectives and new concepts that work towards a more just and egalitarian society.

**Keywords:** machism; violence; difference; university.

**Resumo:** O presente artigo aborda a temática machismo a partir dos resultados das análises estatísticas descritivas oriundas do estudo "A Violência na População Universitária". Para tanto, foi utilizado como método a aplicação do instrumento IV-SOPRA (Index de Violência Sofrida e Praticada) entre estudantes (n=510) de uma universidade pública do sul do país. As análises estatísticas descritivas sobre o machismo foram realizadas a partir do ponto de vista do espectador, do perpetrador e da vítima de manifestações machistas, o que suscitou diferentes reflexões. Para além dos números buscamos compreender o conceito de machismo. Acreditamos neste texto como uma ótima oportunidade de discutir o contexto universitário que, para além de um reprodutor do comportamento social, precisa ser um espaço construtor de novas óticas e novos conceitos que trabalhem em prol de uma sociedade mais justa e igualitária.

**Palavras-chave:** machismo; violência; diferença; universidade.


**Resumen:** Este artículo aborda el tema del machismo a partir de los resultados del análisis estadístico descriptivo derivado del estudio "La violencia en la población universitaria". Para ello, se utilizó como método la aplicación del instrumento IV-SOPRA (Índice de Violencia Sufrida y Practicada) entre estudiantes (n=510) de una universidad pública del sur del país. Con ello, nuestro objetivo general es presentar los resultados parciales de los análisis estadísticos descriptivos elaborados en el ámbito de este proyecto y reflexionar sobre las subjetividades que hay detrás de estos datos. Los análisis estadísticos descriptivos sobre el machismo se realizaron desde el punto de vista del espectador, del victimario y de la víctima de las manifestaciones machistas, que plantean diferentes reflexiones. Más allá de los números buscamos entender lo concepto de machismo. Creemos que este texto es una gran oportunidad para discutir el contexto universitario que, además de ser un reproductor de comportamientos sociales, necesita ser un espacio que construya nuevas perspectivas y nuevos conceptos que trabajen por una sociedad más justa y igualitaria.

**Palabras clave:** machismo; violência; diferencia; universidad.

## 1 Introduction

We commonly think of formal educational institutions as a reflection of society; however, we also build walls (not always symbolic) that separate one space from another. This position can represent a major misconception. While the social fabric weaves our values and attitudes, institutions, as part of society, are also producing and reproducing certain worldviews and practices. It is a two-way street that can be more harmful for some individuals. Souza (2021) observes that:

> In the context of gender-based violence, universities create scenarios in which gender relations are reproduced, potentially meaning disastrous learnings that persist in future generations (17,18). In universities, the same socialization of gender relations present outside their walls occurs; moreover, these spaces maintain a strong hierarchical structure that favors this type of unequal relationship (Souza, 2021 p. 4).

Therefore, understanding the issue of machismo in our higher education institutions is important because, as we argue, they reflect our society. In this regard, D'Oliveira (2019, p. 2) comments that:

> [...] early studies have focused on students and shown high rates, but there are reports of cases committed by undergraduate and postgraduate professors, which are generally more difficult to formalize due to the significant power difference and fear of institutional response. Violence against university staff members and outsourced workers is still largely unseen, but the analogy with other forms of gender-based violence does not allow us to be optimistic about their likely magnitudes. The forms of gender-based violence within the university have specific characteristics, with a significant presence of moral harassment, threats, humiliation, and sexual violence. The settings are diverse and include hazing, parties, sports clubs, classrooms, fieldwork trips, and student housing.

As we have previously stated, the scenario in our higher education institutions reflects the situation in our society, bringing issues related to patriarchy and machismo into the campus - which will be discussed in more detail throughout this text.

Furthermore, according to the Brazilian Public Security Forum (2021), 24% of Brazilian women aged 16 and above claim to have suffered some form of violence or

aggression in the past 12 months, during the Covid-19 pandemic. This means that approximately 17 million women experienced physical, psychological, or sexual violence in 2020. The surveyed women emphasized that the main triggering factors for these violence incidents, perpetrated by men they cohabited with, were lack of financial autonomy and increased cohabitation due to social isolation. This research demonstrates that in 2020, compared to years without a pandemic, the number of reported assaults of various types against women was lower; however, cases of lethal violence had their rates increased[1]. This fact may not necessarily imply a decrease in violence against women.  However, given that the majority of assaults are perpetrated by men the victims cohabit with, women may be facing greater difficulty in reporting incidents. After all, in addition to the weakening of support structures, they suffer oppression and threats carried out by men with whom daily interaction has intensified due to social isolation measures.  It can also be suggested that there has indeed been a decrease in violence that occurs on the streets, in public or shared spaces outside the home, due to pandemic-induced isolation, leading to an increase in domestic violence that is not being adequately reported.

On the other hand, Law 13.104, passed in 2015, amended the Brazilian Penal Code, including femicide as a qualifier for the crime of homicide and placing it on the list of heinous crimes, with higher penalties. The law defines femicide as the murder of women committed based on gender, when the victim is killed because she is a woman. In 2020, Brazil recorded 1,350 cases of femicide, representing a 0.7% increase compared to the previous year. These are predominantly cases where women are murdered by their partners with whom they share their homes, lives, children, and

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[1] According to the latest edition of the technical report by the Brazilian Public Security Forum (2020), it was identified that between March and May 2020, there was a 27.2% decrease in reported intentional bodily injuries, a 31.6% decrease in reported rapes, and a 2.2% increase in cases of femicide.

dreams[2]. It is important to move beyond the notion that these deaths are caused only by men with some mental disorder, as these femicides are generally carried out in cases where the woman did not fulfill, or the man believed she did not fulfill, the gender role imposed on her.

Violence against women is a historical phenomenon, a result of gender inequality, combined with systems of oppression based on race, class, and sexuality. Arguably, patriarchy plays a central role in these systems of domination, as we understand it as the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women. According to Saffioti (1987), it is estimated that male dominance over women was established about six millennia ago, exerting a strong influence on human social structuring. Saffioti (1987, p. 11) comments:

> Understanding how the naturalization of sociocultural processes of discrimination against women and other social categories constitutes the easiest and shortest path to legitimize the "superiority" of men, as well as that of whites, heterosexuals, and the wealthy, is of utmost importance.

Saffioti (2001, p. 115) further analyzes this phenomenon adeptly:

> In exercising their patriarchal function, men hold the power to determine the conduct of the named social categories, receiving authorization or, at the very least, tolerance from society to punish what appears to them as a deviation. Even if there is no attempt by potential victims to diverge from the paths prescribed by social norms, the execution of the domination-exploitation project of the male social category demands that their authority be assisted by violence. Indeed, the gender ideology is insufficient to ensure the obedience of potential victims to the patriarch's dictates, with the patriarch having the need to use violence.

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[2] According to the Brazilian Public Security Forum (2019), 90% of femicide victims in Brazil are women killed by husbands, ex-husbands, partners, or ex-partners.

Thus, through these historical movements, a role of male domination in society in general is established; and this is not only seen in personal relationships and various forms of violence against women but extends to a wide array of manifestations against segments of society. We observe that a commonly used discursive tool in perpetuating the patriarchal scheme is machismo, which we will reflect upon in these writings. Therefore, we believe that some of the responses we will see in the analyses on machismo from the research "Violence in the University Population" (CNPQ/UNIVERSAL - Process number: 421496/2018-5 MCTIC/CNPq Call No. 28/2018) conducted through the application of the IV-SOPRA instrument (Index of Suffered and Perpetrated Violence) can be understood as symptoms of this social construction fueled by patriarchy, a system still very much entrenched in our society.

## 2 Methodology

Our overall objective is to present partial results of descriptive statistical analyses conducted within the scope of the research project "Violence in the University Population", conducted through the application of the IV-SOPRA instrument (Index of Suffered and Perpetrated Violence). The aim of this research was to "measure" the levels of violence experienced by the university population. For this purpose, the IV-SOPRA data collection instrument was used with the aforementioned population, comprising a total of 216 questions. These questions were designed to collect information about the respondents' profiles and address the following "types of violence": racism, fatphobia, machismo, transphobia, homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia, religious intolerance, and bullying. Each of the expressions of violence contained questions regarding the perspective of the victim, the perpetrator, and the witness of any act of violence at some point in their university journey during the academic year. The questionnaire was administered from August to December 2019, and after its completion, statistical analyses of the variables studied were generated.

Participation invitations were sent via institutional email, informing about the research, and providing a link and QR code that directed participants to the QUALTRICS platform. The total number of participants in this research was 510 (n=510) from various programs offered at a federal public university in the southern region of the country. The sampling was convenience-based, and participation was voluntary and anonymous, following Resolution 510/2016 of the Ministry of Health.

From our analyses, a process of reading and synthesizing the results allowed the development of a report, highlighting the most important factors identified in the manifestation of each of the analyzed forms of violence among undergraduate university students at the university in question. The report emphasizes the statistical correlations between the variables studied. To this end, the report is organized into two main sections: the first presents the participants' profiles, and the second focuses specifically on the machismo experienced, perpetrated, and witnessed. Given the large number of variables, a mind map tool was chosen to display the statistical correlations and the relationship between the data and the information generated by the research. Thus, from the report, we share an analytical excerpt, through the triad of violence, machismo, and education.

We also emphasize that the university where this research was conducted made significant progress in 2021 by sanctioning a Gender Equality Policy, aimed at promoting gender equality through institutional mechanisms, gender equity training, affirmative actions, etc. Additionally, this same university has a multi-professional space that serves as a support center for individuals experiencing violence, involving a coordinated network of work among departments and pedagogical units.

## 2.1 About the research participants

The initial participant profile information indicates a balanced distribution between biological sex (Table 1), with nearly 70% falling within the age groups of 16-19 years (27.68%) and 20-24 years (42%). Regarding ethnicity, the vast majority identify as white (78.54%), while 17.17% identify as black or mixed race.

Table 1 - Participants' profile by biological sex, age, and ethnicity

| Biological Sex | |
|---|---|
| Man | 50.21% |
| Woman | 49.14% |
| **Age** | |
| 16-19 | 27.68% |
| 20-24 | 42.06% |
| 25-29 | 14.38% |
| Above 30 | 15.88% |
| **Ethnicity** | |
| White | 78.54% |
| Black | 4.72% |
| Mixed Race | 12.45% |
| Indigenous | 0.43% |
| Asian | 0.21% |
| Prefer not to disclose | 2.79% |
| Other | 0.86% |

Source: Qualtrics Survey Software (2019).

Regarding the participants' place of birth, statistical analyses showed that 83% are from the State of Rio Grande do Sul, with the majority being from rural areas (73%). For those from other states, the percentage was 15.4%. Concerning the undergraduate program in which they are enrolled, although the survey obtained the participation of students from 55 different programs in total, the majority of respondents are in the following programs: Engineering (17.8%); Medicine (4.9%); Languages and Literature (4.4%); Pedagogy (3.34%).

Regarding gender identity, almost all participants declared identifying with their biological sex (95%), with a majority identifying as heterosexual in terms of sexual orientation (Table 2). Bisexuality comes in second (14.16%), and homosexuality in third (7.51%). The reported percentage of lesbians (2.15%) was close to those who preferred not to disclose their orientation (2.36%).

Table 2 - Participants' profile by gender identity and sexual orientation

| Gender Identity | |
| --- | --- |
| The same as the biological sex | 95.06% |
| Different from biological sex | 3.43% |
| Prefer not to disclose | 1.50% |
| **Sexual Orientation** | |
| Heterosexual | 72.10% |
| Homosexual | 7.51% |
| Bisexual | 14.16% |
| Lesbian | 2.15% |
| Prefer not to disclose | 2.36% |
| Other | 1.72% |

Source: Qualtrics Survey Software (2019).

Concerning participants' occupation (Table 3), just under half were not working at the time of the survey (43.85%), followed by those who had a research scholarship (14.3%), were engaged in some form of internship (11.11%), were employed with a formal contract (9.92%), and were self-employed (7.74%).

In terms of the parents' education level (Table 3), a higher percentage of mothers had completed higher education (37.12%), compared to 29.04% of fathers reaching this level of education. This difference decreases among those who completed high school, but mothers still have a higher percentage (27.25%) than fathers (25.11%). On the other hand, for those who completed only elementary and middle school, the results reverse: 21% for mothers and 29% for fathers.

Table 3 - Participants' profile by employment category, mother's education, and father's education

| Employment Category | % |
|---|---|
| Not currently employed | 43.85% |
| Formal employment (with signed contract) | 9.92% |
| Internship | 11.11% |
| Research Scholarship | 14.29% |
| Self-employed | 7.74% |
| Prefer not to disclose | 2.38% |
| Other | 10.71% |
| **Mother's Education** | |
| Uneducated | 2.36% |
| Elementary and Middle School | 21.46% |
| High School | 27.25% |
| Technical Education | 7.51% |
| Higher Education | 37.12% |
| Do not know or Prefer not to disclose | 2.15% |
| Other | 2.15% |
| **Father's Education** | |
| Uneducated | 2.36% |
| Elementary and Middle School | 29.40% |
| High School | 25.11% |
| Technical Education | 6.01% |
| Higher Education | 29.40% |
| Do not know or Prefer not to disclose | 5.36% |
| Other | 2.36% |

Source: Qualtrics Survey Software (2019).

Finally, regarding religious affiliation (Table 4), 38.63% stated they had no religion, while 26.4% identified as Catholics, followed by an almost equal division between Protestants (10.9%) and non-African Spiritists (9%). Although around 60% of participants stated they follow some form of religion or worship, the percentage of non-practitioners was higher (60.9%) than practitioners (28.1%).

Table 4 - Participants' profile by religion and religious practice

| Religion/Worship | |
|---|---|
| Catholicism | 26.39% |
| Spiritism | 9.01% |
| African Traditional Religion | 2.15% |
| Indigenous Religion | 0.43% |
| Judaism | 0.21% |
| Buddhism | 1.07% |
| Protestant (Churches: Calvinist or Presbyterian, Anglican or Episcopal, Methodist, Baptist, Adventist, Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostal, Evangelical, and Lutheran) | 10.94% |
| None | 38.63% |
| Prefer not to disclose | 4.94% |
| Other | 6.22% |
| **Religion Practice** | |
| Yes, practices the religion | 28.11% |
| No, does not practice the religion | 60.94% |
| Prefer not to disclose | 10.94% |

Source: Qualtrics Survey Software (2019).

## 3 Machism and violence among university students: quantitative analyses

As outlined in the method section of this article, the broader research is subdivided into nine items, each dedicated to a specific type of examined violence (racism, fatphobia, machismo, transphobia, homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia, religious intolerance, and bullying). However, we highlight here the discursive practices expressed by a university population, providing us with clues to better understand machismo within the university environment.

### 3.1 Machism from the perspective of those who experienced it

According to Figure 1, machismo is experienced by 35% of the respondents, most frequently occurring two to six times a year (36.3%), followed by several times a month (24%), and once a year (19%). In 35.8% of cases, the machismo was practiced by a fellow student in the same program, followed by a professor (25.5%), and a student from another program (21%). Among the comments provided for this issue, the following report stands out:

> A case of harassment involving a staff member was reported. The last case of machismo was not exactly directed at me, but it affected me. E.g.: A professor excluding an author(s) from the bibliography of their program, claiming it is "too complex". Some professors make jokes that downplay machista and embarrassing situations that happen to women.

The most prevalent form of machismo occurred through jokes (66%), physical abuse, and/or sexual harassment (22.3%), and caused material harm to 4.13% of the respondents. Due to machismo, 39% of the respondents feel they missed out on opportunities or were not recognized, and in 36% of cases, they felt excluded.

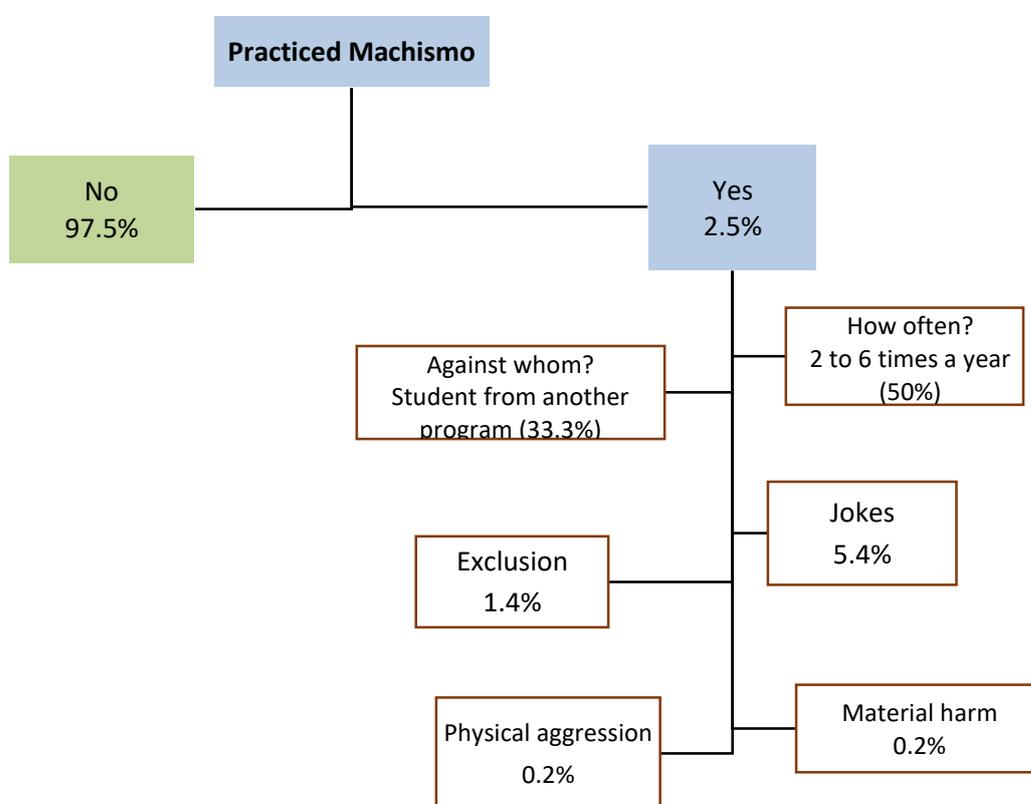Figure 1 – Machismo from the perspective of those who experienced it
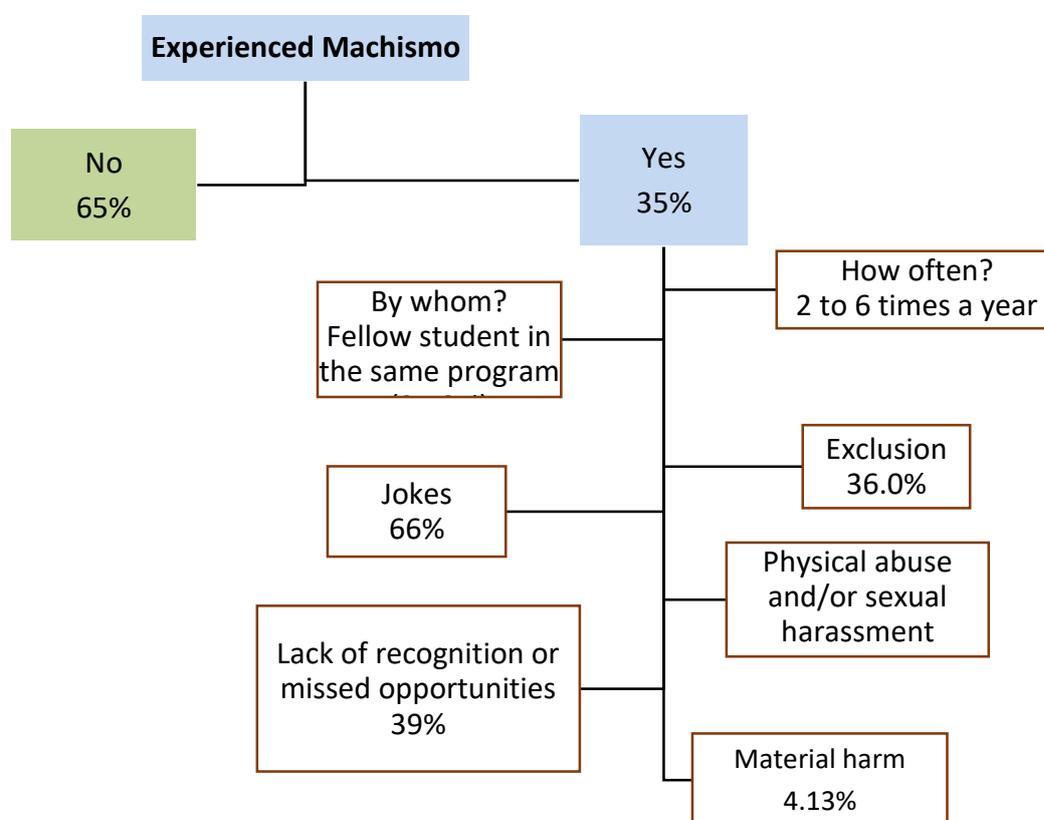


Source: Adapted by the author from Qualtrics Survey Software (2019).

3.2 Machismo from the perspective of those who practiced it

According to Figure 2, only 2.5% of the participants responded that they had been machista. The manifestation of machismo most frequently occurred with a student from another program (33.3%), followed by a student from the same program (26.6%), an inversion of findings when compared to the results of other forms of violence. Machismo manifested most often two to six times a year (50%), followed by

an equal distribution between at least once a month (16.6%) and multiple times a month (16.6%). The use of jokes (5.4%) was the most common way machismo was perpetrated, followed by a low incidence of material harm (0.2%) and physical aggression (0.2%). Exclusion due to machismo was mentioned by only 1.4% of the respondents.

Figure 2 - Machismo from the Perspective of Those Who Practiced It
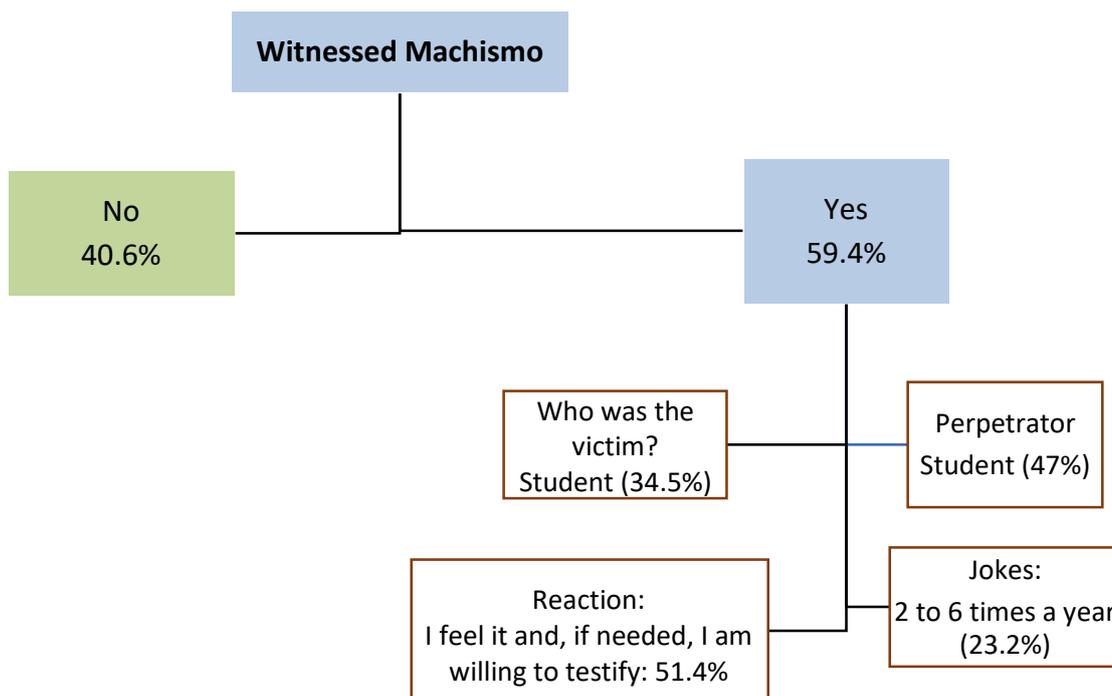


Source: Adapted by the author from Qualtrics Survey Software (2019).

3.3 Machismo from the perspective of those who witnessed it

From the perspective of those who witnessed (Figure 3), machismo is observed by 59.4% of the respondents who saw a fellow student (34.5%) experience this type of violence, followed by a female professor (12.1%). The perpetrator was, in 47% of cases, a fellow student, and in 31%, a professor. The frequency of machismo incidents ranged from two to six times a year (23.2%), followed by multiple times a month (18.8%) and

once a year (16.6%). When witnessing machismo, 51.4% of the respondents said they felt it and were willing to testify, followed by feeling it and talking to the person to try to help (31.2%), and feeling it but doing nothing (14.6%).

Figure 3 – Machismo from the Perspective of Those Who Witnessed It



Source: Adapted by the author from Qualtrics Survey Software (2019).

## 4 Discussion

Above, we highlighted some of the data regarding machismo from the perspective of those who experienced it, witnessed it, or practiced it, providing us with a partial overview - given that the sample was based on convenience - of the phenomenon of machismo in a public university in southern Brazil. As shown, the subscale for machismo demonstrates a high proportion (66%) for the item on misogynistic jokes. From Greek, misogyny originates from two words: miseó, meaning 'hatred', and gyné for 'woman'. Misogyny and machismo run parallel, with misogyny being the prejudice against women because of their gender, which can occur through unnoticed aggressive attitudes, perpetuating symbolic violence in society (Araruna,

2016). In other words, "humor controversies can simultaneously reveal, divert, and obscure power relations, as well as the rhetorical/political nature of jokes" (Pérez; Greene, 2016, p. 265) (free translation). Furthermore, we observed that misogynistic jokes are often related to women's lack of intelligence or general capability (Araruna, 2016), thus qualifying them as inferior members of the patriarchal society.

In this sense, Possenti (2001, p. 73, apud Pinheiro; Furtado, 2018, p. 6) observes that, for instance, "a prejudiced humorous statement":

> [...] only makes sense in the context of a discursive device that legitimizes this prejudice, even if it does not explicitly refer to it, assuming that this device is already known to the interlocutor. This means that a machista joke, for example, only makes sense in the context of systematic oppression of women by men, and even if it does not openly mention this oppression, it serves as a way to remind the interlocutor of its existence (Pinheiro; Furtado, 2018, p. 6).

Furthermore, Pérez and Greene (2016, p. 267) point out that "Sexist jokes reflect and reinforce a binary gender system where men and women are inherently different, and men are given more value' (Bemiller; Schneider, 2010, p. 462)" (free translation). And when this happens, two situations emerge:

> Women are left with two options - to laugh at the joke or express dismay at the content of the joke ... If she laughs, she is an accomplice to the humiliation of her own group. If she does not laugh, then she is a "spoilsport", someone without a sense of humor ... In both cases, she is hurt in the social encounter... ... she experiences subordination (Bemiller; Schneider, 2010, p. 463).

Thus, our study suggests, due to the high proportion (66%) for the item on misogynistic jokes, that there is a prevalence of the view and/or perception that women are less intelligent and capable of academic life among the undergraduate students of the institution under study. This seems to demonstrate an insertion of societal patriarchy into the university campus, leading us to believe in the need for affirmative and proactive actions that deconstruct this stigma against women. In fact, Barreto (2014, p. 9) notes that:

In the Brazilian case, the implementation of public policies focusing on the inclusion and appreciation of women began in the 1980s. (Farah, 2004) However, the theme of equity between women and men continues on the agenda of public and social policies, both from the State and international organizations, such as the United Nations (through UN Women), UNESCO, and ILO. It is important to emphasize that promoting gender equality is one of the millennium goals established by the UN, ranking third among its eight goals.

Furthermore, our findings also demonstrate that there is a discrepancy among those who have suffered, perpetrated, and witnessed this misogynistic type of violence – jokes. This is because 66% of the respondents indicated having suffered from misogynistic jokes, while only 5.4% indicated having perpetrated this type of violence, suggesting that many men in the university environment lack understanding regarding the issue and the inappropriateness of misogynistic jokes. Regarding witnessing misogynistic jokes from the respondents, 23.2% reported having witnessed this type of violence against women on the university campus; again, since this item is answered by both male and female participants, the discrepancy may be explained by the possible lack of understanding on the part of male respondents in the sample.  In other words, since machismo hides and reveals itself according to its intentionality, users of a machista discourse may not recognize it as such. It is not appropriate to discuss the various feminist movements and their complexities here, but we cannot overlook one of the many benefits of these movements, which is to bring discussions and reflections that seek to raise awareness in society about recognizing machismo and its diverse forms of manifestation.

It is worth noting that we consider our results to provide a partial overview since the systems of oppression are not always recognized by the victims, nor by the perpetrators or their audiences, due to the normalization process of practices and discourses Phenomena such as 'gaslighting' (psychological manipulation that makes the woman and those around her think she is going crazy or is incapable) and 'mansplaining' (when a woman is interrupted by a man who "explains" her words as if she could not express herself or who is seeking to validate his own work or thoughts),

for instance, have only recently been recognized as variations of psychological violence against women (Stocker; Dalmaso, 2016). Therefore, it is important to remember that the research presents the systems recognized by respondents, which may be just the tip of the iceberg of a patriarchal system that oppresses women and adversely affects relationships on a daily basis, particularly within the university campus in our case.

We also observe that the alleged female fragility is used to limit them in play, games, formal learning, access to information, and countless other things and situations that reinforce the alleged male superiority and female inferiority. These limitations are established by social conventions and socialization processes that define our roles in societal structures – no less in schools and universities. In this sense, it is worth noting Stockard (1999, p. 215) who, commenting on gender socialization, states that:

> As children grow, they form a general sense of themselves and the ability to relate to others and play a role in society. In this process, they also develop beliefs about the roles and expectations associated with each sex group (gender roles) and self-identity as a member of one or the other sex group (gender identity)... The centrality of gender socialization also reflects the fact that our society, and all societies known to social scientists, are gendered. People worldwide recognize that there are different sex groups and attribute different roles and responsibilities to members of these groups, as well as different rewards and values (free translation).

On the other hand, in the complex scheme of constructing these gender roles, men have fewer limitations, much more stimuli, and access to concrete and symbolic tools to construct their role in society. The difference in access to these tools of social construction reinforces the discourse of male superiority and brings social privileges, primarily the power to dominate women, thus explaining the possible lack of understanding or sensitivity on the part of male respondents. We assert, then, that one is not born a misogynist, but becomes one. In a playful manner, we paraphrase Simone de Beauvoir (1980) when she states that the representation of the female gender as we know it is socially constructed and not a predetermined role at birth. We use this

comparison to reflect on how the misogynistic discourse operates in determining the social roles of the male and female genders. It is a discourse constructed from birth, when the first distinct roles are assigned to individuals and their bodies, according to the expected gender for each. Hirigoyen (2006, p. 75) comments:

> Historically, men have always been considered the sole holders of power, and women have always found themselves excluded from it. This conditioned the way both genders think, from the cradle: it is like this because it has always been like this! This social representation, shared by everyone, still maintains stereotypes, despite the evolution of customs.

Another salient point in the research concerns the issue of the exclusion of female individuals by men. Prejudice against women permeates the constructed stereotype that women are not strong, intelligent, or assertive and that they lack some skills and competencies that exclude them from certain professions and areas of knowledge (Do Rêgo Barros; Oliveira, 2020). In our survey, 36% of the respondents stated they had suffered from the violence of exclusion, while only 1.4% of men claimed to have practiced this type of violence. Also, and we believe it is connected to the exclusion item, 39% of the respondents claimed to have suffered from a lack of recognition in the academic environment. In Brazil, women earn 30% less than men (IBGE, 2019), and jobs that are predominantly female have lower salaries and less prestige when compared to their counterparts (Pereira; Lima, 2017). These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Instituto Avon and Data Popular (2015) and Bongers *et al* (2003) that explore different forms of violence against women in universities.  Meza *et al* (2020) demonstrated in their study that women, in the university context, are more vulnerable than men to all types of violence, including patrimonial. In fact, Meza *et al* (2020, p. 6) states:

> This study reveals that when gender is taken into account, it can be said that female students are more exposed to all forms of violence and their respective levels than male students. Based on the level of violence, it was found that severe violence was represented by physical, sexual, and psychological violence, while moderate violence encompassed social, sexual, and physical, and finally, mild violence pertained to psychological, patrimonial, and gender. (free translation).

Our findings suggest that there is a certain naturalization or normalization of certain processes of violence against women, through jokes, exclusion, and lack of recognition. Therefore, following the writings of Minayo (2005), certain gender roles are Western constructions of a long period, and being a historical construction, they generate a certain perception of naturalization. Minayo (2005, p. 23) comments:

> The conception of the masculine as the subject of sexuality and the feminine as its object is a long-lasting value in Western culture. In the deeply ingrained patriarchal view, the masculine is ritualized as the place of action, decision-making, and leadership in the family network, and fatherhood is synonymous with material provision: it is the "unthought" and the "naturalized" of traditional gender values.

It is understood that such naturalization constructs a system of inequalities, whether in a family, formal educational, or media context, crystallizing certain gender relations and perpetuating what some bodies can or cannot do in society - in other words, the masculine becomes the measure of all things.  Still, delving more broadly into the issue of the masculine being the measure of all things, the author Auad (2012, p. 19), when discussing how gender relations are organized in society, highlights that:

> [...] when we begin to consider socially constructed gender relations, we realize that a series of characteristics considered "naturally" feminine or masculine correspond to power relations. These relationships take on the appearance of being "natural" as they are practiced, narrated, repeated, and retold repeatedly (Auad, 2012, p. 19).

In the same vein, Saffioti (1987, p. 24) emphasizes that:

> [...] the active presence of machismo negatively compromises the outcome of struggles for democracy, as at best, a half democracy is achieved. In this incomplete democracy, even though the negative balance is greater for women, men too will continue to have their personalities truncated. And it is worth paying attention to this phenomenon.

Moreover, according to Auad (2012, p. 14) "[...] educating men and women for a democratic and egalitarian society requires collective, dynamic, and ongoing reflection." Certainly, this reflective and analytical work is not a privilege reserved only for universities, but they do play an important role in such action. As a supposed place of knowledge and research, academic activity also needs to engage in the denaturalization of gender roles, treating them not as inherent aspects of nature but as subject to questioning.

Given the above, education itself constitutes a territory of disputes in confronting violence; in this case of violence against women, it is a commitment that can be undertaken through research, public policies, and pedagogical practices. It is important to recognize, however, that machismo, as a discourse and a practice of reproducing and maintaining patriarchy, is present throughout the social fabric. The machista discourse is also perpetuated institutionally and can be observed in the media, legislation, and educational institutions; it is a structural and structuring practice in our society. In other words, it not only pervades social structures but also directs new initiatives to maintain male gender privileges to the detriment of the female gender.

In this sense, Higher Education Institutions need to engage with informative and critical studies such as the one presented here, developing policies and coping strategies and, finally, implementing effective actions that deal with violence directed at their respective female populations. Turgoose (2019, p. 119), commenting on the Anglo-Saxon context, states that:

universities are working on better policies, protocols, and services aimed at addressing the so-called "man culture" and gender-based violence. Although policies provide a formal framework to deal with this and, therefore, represent an important step in this process, they should not be seen as a panacea; otherwise, they will have an illusory effect, prevailing only in having a policy. (free translation)

**6 Conclusion**

Our Project "Violence in the University Population" encompasses quantitative and qualitative results regarding machismo, from the perspective of the spectator, the perpetrator, and the victim of machista manifestations, shaping an analysis of the university context and the subjectivities constructed in this space. It is evident that the realm of higher education, like any other, produces new ways of being and existing in the world, constituting a field of struggle and alliance for new concepts and knowledge. Our research aims to create possibilities for reflection, perhaps to denaturalize violence that takes on many facets in a subtle manner, whether in higher education or basic education.  As Van Dijk (2006, p.116) reflects "sometimes, ideologies become so widely shared that they seem to be part of the generally accepted attitudes of an entire community, like obvious beliefs or opinions, or common sense"; as such, we need to identify, reflect upon, and act critically, denaturalizing and denormalizing any type of violence.

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