

## Review Article

# Violence against Women at the University: Sexual Violence Highlighted

Deise Camargo Maito<sup>1</sup>, Maria Paula Panuncio-Pinto<sup>2</sup>, and Elisabeth Meloni Vieira<sup>3\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Social Medicine, Ribeirão Preto Medical School, University of São Paulo (FMRP-USP) Ribeirão Preto, Brazil

<sup>2</sup>Department of Health Sciences, Ribeirão Preto Medical School, University of São Paulo (FMRP-USP) Ribeirão Preto, Brazil

<sup>3</sup>Department Health, Life Cycles and Society in the Public Health School, University of São Paulo, Brazil

**\*Corresponding author**

Elisabeth Meloni Vieira, Department Health, Life Cycles and Society in the Public Health School, University of São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil, Email: bmeloni@fmrp.usp.br

**Submitted:** 10 August 2021

**Accepted:** 27 August 2021

**Published:** 29 August 2021

**ISSN:** 2578-3718

**Copyright**

© 2021 Maito DC, et al.

OPEN ACCESS

**Keywords**

- Sexual violence
- Gender-based violence
- Violence in the university
- Violence against women
- LGBTQI+

**Abstract**

**Background:** Violence at University is a recent subject of study in Brazil.

**Aim:** The objective of this study is to provide evidence of the presence of sexual violence in the university environment and the context of its occurrence by describing its different manifestations.

**Methods:** It is a descriptive exploratory study using a qualitative approach and data collected through the snowball technique from 17 key informants such as teachers, employees, and students, using semi-structured interviews.

**Results:** The findings are organized into three thematic categories: 1) Sexual Harassment, 2) Sexual Assault, and 3) Rape; the three types of sexual crime considered by Brazilian Laws.

**Strengths and limitations:** The gender perspective and the emphasis on the power relationship strengthen the understanding of sexual violence; limits are about data collected on only one campus.

**Conclusions:** It is necessary to inform students that sex without consent is a crime, prepare them for a peaceful reception of the new students, train managers to face violence, and offer specific services.

**INTRODUCTION**

Violence against women, or gender-based violence (GBV), is a highly prevalent global health problem and is recognized as a violation of human rights [1,2], according to international conventions to which Brazil is a signatory. The first article in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women states:

“For the purposes of this Declaration, the term “violence against women” means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” [1].

Sexual violence, one of the most harmful forms of GBV, is defined as any act or attempt at sexual intercourse without the consent of the person involved [3]. The Brazilian Penal Code, Decree No. 2,848, of December 7, 19404, defines crimes “against sexual dignity” as those perpetrated against the person, typified in articles 213 to 234 and, from these, we highlight for this study sexual harassment, sexual assault, and rape.

Sexual harassment refers to acts that aim to “constrain someone to obtain sexual advantage or favor, the agent prevailing in his or her position as hierarchical superior or ascendancy inherent in the exercise of a job, position or function” (art. 216-The Penal Code – PC) [4].

Sexual assault consists of “practicing against someone, and without their consent, a libidinous act to satisfy one’s lust or that of a third party” (art. 215-A of the PC) [4].

Rape is defined as “coercion, through violence or serious threat, to the carnal conjunction or libidinous act” (art. 213 of the PC) [4]. Moreover, the rape of a vulnerable person consists of carnal conjunction or a libidinous act when the violated person is unable to consent to the sexual act, either because s/he is under 14 years old, has a physical or mental disability that makes him or her unable to consent or, for any other reason, s/he cannot resist the practice of the sexual act (art. 217-A of the PC) [4].

Sexual violence typically occurs due to gender, as most victims are women (81.8%), and most aggressors are men (75.9%). Of the crimes of rape, 63.8% are committed against the vulnerable,

that is, people who are unable to consent to sexual intercourse or defend themselves from a sexual attack [3].

Sex crimes are reported less. In Brazil, it is estimated that only 7.5% of victims report the occurrence to competent bodies [5]. In 2018, 53,726 women reported being a victim of rape [3]. It is frightening that, considering the underreporting this figure could be ten times higher.

Young women are a group that is often exposed to sexual violence: 42.6% of Brazilian women, aged between 16 and 24 years, reported having suffered some type of violence [6]. Data from 2018 shows that 32.9% of all rapes occurred in this age group [7]. Considering the age group of university students, and the incidence of sexual violence among young women, this form of GBV is emphasized in the university environment all over the world [8-10]. It is interesting to highlight that in countries in which the fight against sexual violence at universities has been on the agenda for a long time, such as the United States, for example (Title IX of the Legislation on Education-1972) [11], higher education institutions (HEIs) must comply with a series of legal requirements. These must demonstrate actions to diagnose and address the situation: universities must investigate and resolve allegations of sexual violence, even when they occur outside campus boundaries. To comply with this legislation, universities must establish procedures to deal with complaints of sexual violence, and, in the absence of effective measures, it is thus understood that the university practices sexual discrimination [11]. Records in this country show that 26.4% of university students suffer some type of sexual assault during their time at the university through physical force, violence, or incapacitation. Organizations inside and outside universities warn that university students are at high risk for sexual violence [12].

A survey conducted between December 2017 and February 2018 with 13,337 students at the largest public university in Brazil, the University of São Paulo (USP), identified that 7% of respondents suffered sexual violence. Following a gender profile, 2% of men, 11% of women, and 18% of non-binary people reported having suffered this type of violence [13].

Although sexual violence is not the most prevalent type of GBV among university students, it is undoubtedly the most vicious form, with important consequences for the victims' lives and health. Sexual violence impacts the global development of these students, on a personal, academic, and professional level, often resulting in the abandonment of higher education [14].

The consequences of sexual violence and its impacts can continue for a long time. Pioneering studies have already pointed to the duration of these repercussions on the lives and health of victims. Heise [15] showed that 25% of rape victims had dysfunctional symptoms up to six years after the event. Exposure to sexually transmitted infections, an unwanted pregnancy, a possible miscarriage, and post-traumatic stress are consequences associated with depression, among other affective disorders, which can even lead to suicide [15-17].

Gender expectations and stereotypes create an environment in which consent can be understood unevenly, for men and women. In addition, some risk factors present in the university environment increase the probability for students to become victims of sexual assault: many are away from their parents for

the first time; freedom is newly discovered, and there is the idea that this is the time to experience what you haven't lived yet. Due to their age and, in some cases, the education they received, students have little knowledge and experience about sex and are exposed to party culture, environments in which the consumption of alcohol and other drugs is encouraged and valued. The result is the increased exposure of these women to the risk of suffering sexual aggression because they are not in a position to defend themselves [11].

Denunciations made to the Legislative Assembly of the State of São Paulo, in 2014, about various types of violence, including sexual violence, in hazing rituals and parties in São Paulo universities, highlighted violence against women in the university context in Brazil. A Commission of Parliamentary Inquiry (CPI) was instituted to investigate human rights violations and other illegalities that occurred within the scope of São Paulo State Universities, which were held responsible, a fact with national repercussions [18]. As a result, on September 15, 2015, Law No. 15,892 was approved, which prohibits hazing in the state public education system [19].

After the release of the CPI [18] report, and as a result of pressure from movements in the academic community, some institutional responses were made in the context of the University of São Paulo (USP), to face gender-based violence. The "Don't Stay Silent Network" was created, formed by professors and researchers from USP, to give visibility to the cases and fight for affirmative policies to confront this type of violence [20]. In 2016, as a result of USP joining the UN-Women's "HeForShe Program", the USP-Women Office was created, linked to the Rectory, to define policies to fight violence against women at the University [21].

The mobilization of women from the academic community played an important role in the creation of commissions to deal with GBV situations in different USP Units, including the Ribeirão Preto campus, where we carried out this study.

To highlight the presence of these types of violence, the context of its occurrence, and its consequences in a university environment, this paper describes the different forms of manifestation of sexual violence on the USP campus in Ribeirão Preto/SP, according to the perception of key informants. It is part of a larger investigation into violence against women at the University. The results presented and discussed here refer to a section of its qualitative stage.

## METHODS

This is an exploratory and descriptive study with a qualitative approach. This approach is used to understand people in their daily lives from their point of view [22]. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, a strategy that allowed access to the topic in detail as it facilitates broadens, and deepens communication [23,24]. The use of a pre-established script aimed to delimit the object of analysis [23].

### Environment

The USP campus in Ribeirão Preto is composed of eight teaching units, with 919 teaching staff, 1,642 non-teaching staff, 6,703 undergraduate students, distributed among 43 courses, and

4,442 graduate students, distributed into 62 master's programs and 49 Ph.D. programs [25]. The municipality of Ribeirão Preto is located in the northeast of the state of São Paulo, about 300 km from the state capital; it has 703,293 inhabitants and a human development index of 0.826.

## Participants

Community members participated in this stage of the study, including teaching staff, non-teaching staff, and students, who were considered key informants, because they occupy positions or functions that led them to deal with situations of violence at the university, and are representative of their functional category, in positions, special committees, collegiate or student bodies.

From the first interviews with key informants, the snowball technique was used, that is, these first participants indicated other people they considered to have the same condition. There were two refusals to the invitation to participate in the study. To arrive at an ideal number of participants, we used the sample closure criterion of the power of information [26,27]. This takes into account the purpose of the study; the specificity of the set of participants; the use of established theory; the quality of dialogue obtained in data collection and strategic analysis. After seventeen interviews, due to the quality of the dialogues, the representativeness concerning the studied groups, and the relevance of the information obtained, no new participants were included.

## Procedures

After approval of the research project by the Ethics Committee for Research with Human Beings (process No. 06925118.4.0000.5440), the interviews were conducted face-to-face, from 05/10/2019 to 11/13/2019, by the first author that presented herself as a Ph.D. student, explained the study aims, read and asked for the signature of the research informed consent paper. The guideline of interviews was pre-tested before its final version and the interviews were carried out in places of choice of the interviewees (home, work, public places) respecting privacy and confidentially, taking between 50 to 120 minutes. Two of them were repeated. The researcher took some notes of the interviews in a fieldwork diary but all of them were recorded in audio, transcribed in full and their content analyzed. The transcription and analysis process took place concurrently with the collection. They were not shown to the respondents.

The content analysis allowed for the identification of thematic categories, through the manifested content, using a deductive approach. The manifested content was identified by the use of codes for the reading, carried out by the three authors and predetermined by the research objective, and also by the inclusion of new perspectives (codes) from the analyzed material [28,29]. The software Word was used in this process.

In general, the analysis followed three steps: data reduction, spatial display of data, and interpretation, carried out from a transversal reading of the transcripts, with subsequent dividing of each interview into units of meaning, classified according to thematic criteria, generating categories or major themes, which are described from participant's quotation, according to the study objectives.

## RESULTS

Students, teaching and non-teaching staff (employees), with varied ages, gender identity, and sexual orientation participated in this stage of the study, according to the socio-demographic characteristics summarized in Table 1.

Although some studies classify unwanted sexual contact or touching, sexual coercion, attempted rape, and rape as sexual aggression [9], for our description of the results on sexual violence in a university environment, we adopted to group the situations that emerged from the statements according to the types found in Brazilian criminal law [4], due to its clarity and applicability.

Thus, the results of this step are grouped into three thematic categories to describe sexual violence in a university environment: (1) Sexual Harassment (2) Sexual Assault, and (3) Rape. In this way, we will not present subcategories, but the major themes and their description from the participants' speeches.

### Sexual harassment

Situations involving sexual harassment were present in the statements of key informants, and relate to situations experienced, witnessed, or reported to them due to their place in the community.

An element that differentiates this type of violence from others is its occurrence in the work or study environment, where there is a difference in power between aggressor and victim, which configures it as a crime. In the scope of labor law, there is the so-called "horizontal sexual harassment" [30], which is sexual harassment between people in the workplace, without the presence of a hierarchy. In the labor field, even without this hierarchy, harassment can be considered illegal, which can even end in dismissal for the aggressor and compensation for the victim [30].

The reports include situations in which there is a real hierarchy between aggressor and victim, such as teacher and student, and situations in which aggressor and victim are co-workers. We also identified situations in which the aggressor's power over the victim is imaginary, a socially constructed power, such as hierarchies based on gender, social class, race, sexual orientation, and identity, which are foreseen by the concept of intersectionality [31]. Gender discrimination, in these cases, intersects with these other personal characteristics that historically rank social relations.

The most frequent reports are a situation involving the teacher-student relationship; in this case, there is an obvious difference in power between the parties. The statements are marked by references to the lack of limits of the teachers, who touch the students' bodies:

"Students in the laboratory... when the teacher arrives and touches the student's body, makes insinuating comments about how beautiful you look, how you smell... And at the time she was alone with the teacher [...] especially when there's some connection to the scholarship involved. Which has a more personal approach, let's put it that way" (Participant 7).

Other similar situations of harassment were reported:

**Table 1:** Participants socio-demographic characteristics.

Participant	Category	Age	Gender	Race/color	Sexual orientation	Social class/salary range
1	Student	25	Female	Asian	Bisexual	C
2	Teacher	44	Female	Caucasian	heterosexual	A
3	Teacher	50	Female	Caucasian	homosexual	B
4	Student	23	Female	Caucasian	heterosexual	D
5	Teacher	39	Female	Black	heterosexual	D
6	Employee	67	Female	Black	heterosexual	D
7	Employee	43	Female	mixed-race	heterosexual	B
8	Employee	49	Female	mixed-race	heterosexual	D
9	Teacher	73	Male	Caucasian	heterosexual	B
10	Teacher	65	Male	Asian	heterosexual	B
11	Teacher	39	Male	Caucasian	homosexual	A
12	Employee	55	Female	Caucasian	heterosexual	D
13	Teacher	40	Female	Caucasian	heterosexual	A
14	Student	21	Female	Caucasian	Bisexual	D
15	Student	27	Male	Black	heterosexual	D
16	Student	22	Female	Caucasian	Bisexual	C
17	Student	28	Male	Caucasian	homosexual	D

“Many of the girls report the issue of their relationship with the teacher, in the sense: ‘Look, so you do some things I want, you know, we’ll see if you can get a scholarship... So let’s have a cup of coffee together...’ something like that. Unfortunately, this happens also on the part of a teacher, you know? (Participant 12).

“When I was students’ representative in the course coordination, a representative kept harassing me. He called me, like, let’s have a coffee outside USP, let’s, I don’t know what. [...] And this teacher had a position of power. He was the course coordinator; I was the student representative, so it was a very complicated situation” (Participant 4)

There were reports of situations of sexual harassment among teachers, which in the workplace are considered “horizontal sexual harassment” [30]:

“But I’ve already suffered sexual harassment, right, when I got here [...]. Two colleagues, specifically... the way to approach you, to get close to you, to put a hand on your waist, to pull you close and to talk about your cleavage, when you say: ‘Oh, what’s up? Are you going to the meeting?’ and then he says: ‘Wow, but you’re beautiful today, huh? ‘Wow, what a cleavage’, I don’t know what, things like that” (Participant 3)

Other reports referred to sexual harassment of students by teachers on social networks, behaviors that generate discomfort as they are not appropriate in the academic or work environment.

### Sexual Assault

We identified several situations of sexual assault that happened, mainly, at university parties. Although many participants called these situations “harassment”, they constitute sexual assault.

Reports refer to unwanted touching to private parts, bodily

approximation such as grabbing, kissing, and even biting without consent. The student’s perception of a lack of understanding about consent is noteworthy. Female students reported that aggressors, victims, and people around them seem to be unable to discern abusive situations in which the main feature is the lack of consent, and that is why it is considered violence, which differs from situations of flirting, as the environment would be suitable for this type of relationship:

“A boy in the same class insisted a lot on kissing a girl. He insisted, insisted, insisted. [...] It was at a party. It was inconvenient, he ended up kissing the girl by force, the girl felt very bad with that, it was a rupture for her, it was a very invasive thing at that moment, and she had to see the person around, I don’t know, for the rest of the graduation [...] and had to participate in the same things [...] and the person was not very comfortable with it” (Participant 1, female student, 25 years old).

“We were at a party, the boy in question was a friend of some of my friends [...] and he asked a friend of mine who was with me at the party if I was available, and then my friend said: Oh come on, like, try to talk to her. But then the guy understood ok he could be with me, and I didn’t want to at the time. So it was context [...] that my friends didn’t see, and he kissed me hard. And I didn’t want to. And no one saw that I needed help. So, I don’t know, the boy didn’t understand that what he did was abuse” (Participant 1).

Situations involving sexual assaults outside the context of parties were also reported by the participants, having in common the absence of consent (attributing the characteristic of “unwanted” to the assault). Such situations are an employee who showed his genitals to a female student when they were on public transport within the campus and a female student grabbed against her will by a male visitor in the student housing:

"This student, who is also a resident, brought a friend (from another unit) to USP to spend the weekend here. He presented him to her, etc, etc, etc... And this being, he felt entitled to enter her room... opened the door... knocked on the door, she saw that it was him, but she thought it was normal because she had just met him... it was her boyfriend's friend... she even found it was annoying...[...] so, out of consideration for him... sometimes he may want to talk... 'I came here to talk', he told her... she accepted this and opened the room... he sat down and started talking... sat next to her... then, suddenly, the subject changed... he put his hand on her leg and started saying... 'No, calm down, calm down.' She said: 'Get out! Then, everything happened, just to sum up, she went... even called the guard, not right away, but the next day she called the guard... he took her... [...] they all went to the police station" (Participant 12).

## Rape

Rape is the most serious form of sexual violence and our key informants reported its presence in the university environment, in its most perverse modality: rape of the vulnerable.

Discursive references about women unable to give consent because they are under the influence of alcohol and other drugs, or if they perceive themselves as victims of rape the morning after university parties, appeared in different ways, from situations that came to the knowledge of the participants and that they had heard about, to reports of situations experienced by the participant:

"We had a habit, like, of having sex, at least once a week, when we went to a party and we were at the same party, we always had sex, we left together to have sex [...] and then we went to his house and when we got back he said, let's have a drink here because you still haven't had enough, and then there were two bottles of vodka, he took one and said like, no, it's not this one, and then he took another one and then he gave me the vodka, then I drank the vodka and we went to his room. The last thing I remember after I walked into his room was that I knocked over a can of beer [...] then I woke up, like, the next day... I had already missed class and so on, and then what happened, and then I left for my house and then... after that, another day, the other day I went to the referral center to take the PEP [1], because I wasn't sure if I had had sex with him with a condom or not, what had happened, I didn't know anything and then I went there, I did everything I had to do and stuff and then, anyway, I didn't want to talk about it anymore" (Participant 14).

The same student (participant 14) reports another situation that she became aware of by participating in the student organization of her course:

"We heard a report of a boy who was carrying a 'gun', a plastic small pistol, like that, with water and drugs... to the boys he said: oh, there is some drug here, which was 'ecstasy', but he didn't say this to the girls, he just gave it, said, oh, do you want to? And then he invented that it was a *drink*, that it was anything and didn't say that there were drugs to the girls" (Participant 14).

A teacher and employee who received the victims' complaints, two female students, reported similar situations:

"That case was a long time ago. It was like this: a student who

was a victim of sexual violence, as a child and her mother did not report it. And she came marked by this failure to denounce. She was at a party, she drank and when she woke up, she had a naked student taking her clothes off. I think he didn't penetrate her, but in any case, it was rape because he touched her genitals, her genitals, I don't know if it was with his penis" (Participant 2).

"There were some reports at the parties, right, that the girls had drunk a little more and...parties in fraternities, right? So, they ended up drinking and went to the bedroom to sleep [...] once a girl woke up and the boy was there with his penis in the middle of her" (Participant 12).

Discursive references also contain other rape stories outside of the party context, such as a student raped by her boyfriend shortly after she broke up with him and a female student who hitchhiked on campus and was raped by her driver.

## DISCUSSION

Situations involving sexual violence were reported by the participants of this investigation as present in the university routine.

In the three forms of sexual violence typified in the Brazilian Penal Code analyzed in this study, the main point to be highlighted is the absence of consent, whether for an assault or a sexual relationship. The non-consent of these situations is what characterizes them as a crime.

Sexual consent, which at first sight can be considered as a simple yes or no, is shrouded in myths and misconceptions, produced in a macho culture that historically places women as non-subjects. It is even possible to assume that sexual offenders, and often women themselves, do not understand that women have autonomy and sovereignty over their bodies [32,33]. This reality is supported by historical constructions of gender with the female body as a "protected body", which inside a patriarchal society belonged to the father, who gives this body to another man, her husband, and who will later become her children's.

Sexuality as a historical and social device for the control of bodies deals with the exercise of sexuality with differentiating legitimacy depending on whether the subject is a man, woman, child or is situated in other expressions of sexuality, considered peripheral [34].

In their socialization process, men and women receive different stimuli about sexual development and the exercise of sexuality. Consequently, there are unequal gender expectations for men and women. Women are always warned about risks, diseases, and immorality, which lead to female sexual passivity, while men are pressured to actively express their sexuality and readiness for sexual practice, so as not to have their masculinity questioned. Women are encouraged to refuse sex, even when they want it, creating the idea that the refusal is apparent, or that "no means yes", that is, even if they refuse, there is a great chance that they are interested in sex [11].

This entire context presents important ambiguities when we move in the space of this imaginary power, in the relationships between men and women. It is important to consider, for example, in the case of sexual harassment, that the victims for

fear of suffering reprisal or losing their position in the social group may reciprocate unwanted sexual advances. Due to this power given to the aggressor, it is not possible to understand that the sexual reaction is not fully consented, since there is an external pressure for it to happen: it does not happen through the woman's free will, but because there is an expectation of not being fired from her job, not being removed from her position, or from receiving some promotion or advantage, such as getting a better grade or receiving a scholarship. Although there may be an agreement to engage in a sexual situation, there is no desire [11]. Even if the woman has not clearly stated her disagreement with an unwanted sexual advance, such as being touched, kissed, hugged, in the case of sexual harassment, this aggression cannot be attributed to a misunderstanding, because even in the face of the woman's refusal, the other part remains in the act. In this sense, gender differences are essential for recognizing aggression, as there is a difference in power, including physical supremacy [11]. In the university context, given the culture of parties with abusive alcohol consumption, this whole scenario is aggravated.

The three forms of sexual violence are present in the reports of the women participating in this study, but its most serious form, the rape of the vulnerable, deserves to be highlighted.

Both rape and the rape of the vulnerable are heinous crimes [4,35] and are considered very serious, with a differentiated period for confinement, temporary imprisonment, with amnesty, grace, pardon, and bail being prohibited. Its physical and psychological consequences, which are often long-term, are widely reported in the literature.

Due to the myths and misconceptions surrounding the understanding of sexuality, when women drink alcohol, they are seen as sexually available and permissive. To aggravate this scenario, men, when drunk, are more likely to interpret women's behavior as permissive to sex. Added to this is the lack of knowledge about sex in these young people, gender expectations and the culture of the parties, and the perfect storm of risk factors that result in sexual violence against women is created [11].

The situation reported by the student, participant 14, reminds us again of consent, and the perverse nature of vulnerable rape, a situation in which there is no way to obtain consent since the woman is incapacitated.

What stands out in the aforementioned report is that, on previous occasions, the victim had already consented to have sex with the aggressor: so why make her incapable of consenting by drugging her? Deliberately he did not want her consent to have a sexual relationship. In Oliveira's words [36], sexual violence does not result from sexual desire, but from an extreme demonstration of power with the subjugation of this other body, taken as an object. Saffioti [29] observes that in the case of gender-based violence, women are treated as objects, made into things. In this case, the act of rape is an exercise of power by the aggressor over the victim, with planning, intentionality, and calculation. There was a usurpation of women's autonomy, taken as an inert object, lifeless and unwilling.

Sexual consent can be understood as an act or it can also be understood as a process, that is, a succession of behaviors that,

taken together, configure consent. Agreeing to go to someone's house or having had previous sexual relations are events that cannot be taken as consent by themselves [11].

In the case reported here, the victim cannot manifest consent because she was drugged without knowing that she was ingesting a substance that would make her incapable, even to consent. And sex without consent is rape. Even though she agreed to go to the house of her abuser, her friend, she did not consent to be drugged and raped.

These situations show that there is a culture that turns a blind eye to violence, and this favors its repetition and naturalization. The victim's discredit or disqualification creates guilt and shame as if the victims were responsible for the aggression. Those who accept the accusations can reinforce this feeling, doubting, mistreating, or creating barriers to the recognition that there was a violation of human rights, which would make the aggressor the target of sanctions. The main characteristics of this culture are the networks of power relations, which form a thick fabric that covers apparatus and institutions, without being located exactly in it, but spreading out among its participants and, with this, making resistance to it much more difficult [34].

Universities need to create effective policies to fight sexual violence, and the characteristics of the phenomenon make this a complex challenge. The threat present in the daily lives of university students of becoming victims of sexual violence needs to be eliminated, through institutional policies that educate, raise awareness and build administrative mechanisms that allow them to fully receive and assist victims (reparation), and investigate and punish perpetrators (sanction), if applicable.

For this to be possible, it is an urgent priority that Brazilian HEIs recognize that sexual violence is present in their environment, as well as in the entire Brazilian society, and familiarize themselves with its particularities and challenges.

Unfortunately, there are still very few higher education institutions that act positively in this regard, creating services and procedures to face sexual violence, as is the recent case of Unicamp [37].

Despite being restricted to the reality of a particular university campus, which may emerge as a limit in this study, our findings corroborate data presented in other studies on the topic of sexual violence in the university context. The gender perspective and the emphasis on the power relationship between the protagonists of situations of sexual violence at the university are important points raised.

## CONCLUSION

Silence breeds impunity and impunity strengthens the macho culture that perpetuates aggression against women, weakening the resistance that we could have about this culture. In its role of educating, the university fails when it ignores or complies with this type of aggression. It is necessary to inform students that sex without consent is a crime, prepare them for a peaceful reception of the new students, train managers to face violence, and offer specific services. It is necessary to stop turning a blind eye to the problem and finally make a policy of confrontation. Thus, it is necessary to admit that we live in a culture that naturalizes

violence against women and other genders. This culture makes women more vulnerable.

## REFERENCES

- United Nations. Resolution 48/104: Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. Forty-eighth session of the General Assembly, 20 December 1993. New York (NY); 1993.
- World Health Organization. Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates. 2018.
- Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública. Anuário Brasileiro de Segurança Pública. 2019.
- Brazilian Congress. Decreto-Lei nº 2.848, de 7 de dezembro de 1940. Código Penal.
- Brazilian Government. Secretaria Nacional de Segurança Pública. Pesquisa Nacional de Vitimização. Datafolha. 2013.
- Brazilian Public Security Forum. Visible and invisible: the victimization of women in Brazil. 2nd Edition. 2019.
- Bueno S, Pereira C, Neme C. A Invisibilidade da Violência Sexual no Brasil. In: Anuário Brasileiro de Segurança Pública. Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública. 2019. 116-121.
- Valls-Carol R. Violencia de género en las universidades españolas. Memoria Final. 2006-2008. Exp. 50/05. España. Ministerio de Igualdad. Secretaria General de Políticas de Igualdad. Instituto de la mujer. 2009.
- Hernandez-Romero H, Rincón P, Castro-Alzate ES. Prevalence of Victimization and Perpetration of Sexual Aggression in Undergraduate Students: A Systematic Review 2008-2018. *Revista Ciencia de la Salud*. 2019; 17: 85-107.
- Fedina L, Holmes J, Backes BL. Campus Sexual Assault: A Systematic Review of Prevalence Research. *Trauma Violence Abuse*. 2018; 19: 76-93.
- Muehlenhard CL, Humphreys TP, Jozkowski KN, Peterson ZD. The Complexities of Sexual Consent Among College Students: A Conceptual and Empirical Review. *J Sex Res*. 2016; 53: 457-487.
- Cantor D, Fisher B, Chibnall S, Townsend R, Lee H, Bruce WC, Thomas G. Report on the AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct. The Association of American Universities. 2017.
- Blay EA, Venturi G, Santos PK, Pasinato W, Alves LP, Capocchi E. Pesquisa interações na USP: Primeiros resultados da pesquisa. 2018. [Interactions at USP: First results of the research 2018].
- Almeida TMC. Violência contra mulheres nos espaços universitários. In: Stevens C, Oliveira S, Silva E, Portela C. Mulheres e violência: interseccionalidades. Brasília: Technopolitik. 2017. 384-399 [Violence against women in university spaces. In: Stevens C, Oliveira S, Silva E, Portela C. Women and violence: intersectionalities].
- Heise L. Violence Against Women: The Hidden Health Burden. In: World Bank Discussion Papers 255, Washington, DC. World Bank, 1994.
- Campbell J. Health consequences of intimate partner violence. *Lancet*. 2002; 359: 1331-6.
- Campbell L, Keegan A, Cybulska B, Forster G. Prevalence of mental health problems and deliberate self-harm in complainants of sexual violence. *J Forensic Leg Med*. 2007; 14: 75-8.
- São Paulo (Brazilian State). Legislative Assembly. Violações dos Direitos Humanos nas Faculdades Paulistas [Human Rights Violations at Universities of São Paulo State Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (PCI)]. 67. 125. São Paulo]
- São Paulo (Brazilian State). Lei nº 15.892, de 15 de setembro de 2015. Proíbe o trote nas escolas da rede pública em qualquer nível de ensino. [Law nº 15.892, 2015 September 15. Prohibits hazing in public schools at any level of education].
- Cruz F, Almeida HB, Lucas D'Oliveira AFP, Lima EFA, Lago C, Machado AM. Don't Stay Silent: Network of Female Professors against Gender Violence at University of São Paulo (USP). Special Issue 'Sex and Power in the University'. *Annual Review of Critical Psychology* 2018; 15: 223-245.
- University of São Paulo – USP. Portaria GR nº 6766, de 10 de agosto de 2016. Dispõe sobre o Escritório USP Mulheres. Portaria da Reitoria n. 6766, de 10.08.2016. 2016. [Ordinance GR nº 6766: Provides for USP Women Office].
- Silvermann DA. Qualitative research: theory, method and practice. London: Sage Publications; 1997.
- Pope C, Mays N. Qualitative research in health care: assessing quality in qualitative research. *BMJ*. 2000; 320: 50-2.
- Minayo MCS. O desafio do conhecimento: pesquisa qualitativa em saúde. 8ª Edição. Rio de Janeiro: Hucitec, Abrasco; 2004 [The challenge of knowledge: qualitative health research. 8th Edition. Rio de Janeiro: Hucitec, Abrasco; 2004].
- University of São Paulo – USP. Anuário estatístico. São Paulo: Universidade de São Paulo; 2019 [Yearbook of statistics. University of São Paulo, 2019].
- Brazilian Government. Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE). IBGE Cidades – Ribeirão Preto [Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). IBGE Cities – Ribeirão Preto].
- Malterud K, Siersma,VD, Guassora AD. Sample Size in Qualitative Interview Studies: Guided by Information Power. In: *Qualitative Health Research*. 2016; 26: 1753–1760.
- Berg B. Content Analysis. In: Berg B. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Boston, Mass: Allyn & Bacon. 1998; 233-252.
- Shepherd SK, Achterberg CL. Qualitative research methodology: data collection, analysis, interpretation, and verification. In: Monsen ER, *Research: Successful Approaches*. Chicago, Ill: American Dietetic Association. 1992; 82-88.
- Sexual harassment: what is it, what are your rights and how to prevent it? Special article explains the various aspects of the practice, which involves embarrassment in the workplace. 2020.
- Crenshaw K. Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex; a black feminist critique discrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*. 1989; 139-167.
- Saffioti H. Gender Violence: the place of praxis in the construction of subjectivity. In: Hollanda HB. *Brazilian Feminist Thought: formation and contexto*. Rio de Janeiro: Bazar do Tempo. 2019; 139-161.
- Luz MT. Home and Motherhood: political institutions. In: Cruz AGV, Luz, MT. *The Place of Women: studies on the status of women in today's Society*. Rio de Janeiro: Graal. 1982; 9-31.
- Foucault M. *The History of Sexuality, An Introduction*. Rio de Janeiro: Graal. 1980.
- Brazilian Congress. Lei nº 8.072, de 25 de julho de 1990. Dispõe sobre os crimes hediondos, nos termos do art. 5º, inciso XLIII, da Constituição Federal, e determina outras providências [Law nº 8.072, 1990 July 25. Treats heinous crimes, under the terms of Article 5, subsection XLIII, of the Federal Constitution, and determines other provisions].
- Oliveira EM. Fórum: violência sexual e saúde. Introdução. *Cadernos de Saúde Pública*. 2007; 23: 455-458.
- São Paulo (Brazilian State). Dean's Office Resolution 017/2019, of March, 4th, 2019. Provides for the creation of the Advisory Committee on the Policy to Combat Discrimination Based on Gender and/or Sexuality and Sexual Violence and the Sexual Violence Service at the State University of Campinas.