Transforming organizations: experiences of leaders and transgender professionals in the workplace

Transformando organizações: experiências de líderes e profissionais transgêneros no local de trabalho

Claudia Stempkowski¹
Patricia Martins Fagundes Cabral²
José Carlos da Silva Freitas Junior³
Bibiana Volkmer Martins⁴
Marcelo Jacques Fonseca⁵

Abstract

Brazil is ranked first among the world's deadliest countries for trans people. If one is to assume work as one form of demarginalizing trans people in the country, this qualitative, exploratory, phenomenological research aims at understanding how trans professionals and leaders perceive the preparedness of organizations and their leadership in dealing with the presence of trans professionals in organizations. Having as theoretical background diversity management, publications about trans people in the workplace, gender and standpoint theory,

¹ Mestre em Gestão e Negócios, Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos, Linha Verde, Ac. à Avenida Gov. José Richa, 10.546, Prado Velho, Curitiba - PR, CEP: 82590-300. E-mail: claudia.stempkowski@gmail.com
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0009-0006-9065-4148

² Doutora em Psicologia, Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos, Linha Verde, Ac. à Avenida Gov. José Richa, 10.546, Prado Velho, Curitiba - PR, CEP: 82590-300. E-mail: patriciamf@unisinos.br
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2936-568X

³ Doutor em Administração, Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos, Linha Verde, Ac. à Avenida Gov. José Richa, 10.546, Prado Velho, Curitiba - PR, CEP: 82590-300. E-mail: josecf@unisinos.br
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9050-1460

⁴ Doutora em Administração, Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos, Linha Verde, Ac. à Avenida Gov. José Richa, 10.546, Prado Velho, Curitiba - PR, CEP: 82590-300. E-mail: bibivolkmer@unisinos.br
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4259-1366

⁵ Doutor em Administração, Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos, Linha Verde, Ac. à Avenida Gov. José Richa, 10.546, Prado Velho, Curitiba - PR, CEP: 82590-300. E-mail: mfonseca@unisinos.br
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8858-0174
15 semi-structured interviews were conducted, nine of them with trans professionals and six of them with leaders and people management professionals. Results highlight the lack of preparedness in leaders and organizations when dealing with the presence of trans professionals in organizations and also that trans professionals play the part of the often sole gender educator in organizational contexts. Ways of improving such reality include, but are not restricted to, enabling speaking and listening spaces for employees in organizations and workgroups, easing the burden on trans professionals of being the sole gender educators in their workplaces and legitimizing the trans existence in the organizational culture through diversity, equality and inclusion values.

**Keywords:** Trans. Diversity. Leaders. Work. Management. Gender.

**Resumo**

O Brasil está em primeiro lugar entre os países mais mortais do mundo para pessoas trans. Se é para assumir o trabalho como uma forma de demarginalizar as pessoas trans no país, esta pesquisa qualitativa, exploratória e fenomenológica visa entender como profissionais e líderes trans percebem a preparação das organizações e sua liderança em lidar com a presença de profissionais trans nas organizações. Tendo como base teórica a gestão da diversidade, publicações sobre pessoas trans no local de trabalho, gênero e teoria do ponto de vista, foram realizadas 15 entrevistas semiestruturadas, nove delas com profissionais trans e seis delas com líderes e profissionais de gestão de pessoas. Os resultados destacam a falta de preparação em líderes e organizações ao lidar com a presença de profissionais trans em organizações e também que os profissionais trans desempenham o papel do educador de gênero, muitas vezes único em contextos organizacionais. As formas de melhorar essa realidade incluem, mas não se limitam a, espaços de fala e de escuta para os funcionários em organizações e grupos de trabalho, aliviando o fardo para os profissionais trans de serem os únicos educadores de gênero em seus locais de trabalho e legitimar a existência trans na cultura organizacional através de valores de diversidade, igualdade e inclusão.


**Introduction**

The Trans Murder Monitoring report (TMM, 2023), points to Brazil, for the 13th consecutive year, as the country that most kills trans people worldwide - whose life expectancy...
is only 35 years of age, with about 39.84% of deaths between the monitored countries. Such an alarming fact alone could justify every research conducted and every paper written concerning the trans population. Although there has been an increase in studies on LGBTQIAP+ people in the area of Administration, both in the national and international context, Paniza and Moresco (2021) and Jeane and Janes (2021) point out that studies on transgenders in the world of work are still scarce, being the least represented public in existing research. Consequently, understanding how transgender people's practices occur in the workplace, in a context of constant change, is also limited (Jeane & Janes, 2021).

Furthermore, in addition to the LGBTQIAP+ group showing great heterogeneity, within itself justifies specific studies on each subgroup, individuals identified as trans do not perfectly match their birth sex, so they cannot be placed in a corresponding sex category and held accountable to corresponding gender norms (doing masculinity or doing femininity) (Muhr, Sullivan & Rich, 2016). So, transgender people tend to carry the greatest social stigma, given the existence of a visual representation of their identities in physical appearance and behavior (Menezes, Nascimento & Oliveira, 2018) which can sometimes be veiled in subgroups such as gays, lesbians, and bisexuals.

In view of the above problem and taking advantage of the emerging discussions about diversity in organizations and society as a whole, this study shed light on the current situation of trans employees and how – and if – the organizations where they work as well as their leaders are equipped to deal with their presences in such places.

To meet the proposed objective, we conduct qualitative research. Data collection took place through 15 semistructured interviews, 9 with trans women and 6 with trans men. Data were analyzed through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis, considering Fairclough’s (2002) three-dimensional model. Results highlight the lack of preparedness in leaders and organizations when dealing with the presence of trans professionals in organizations and that trans professionals play the part of the often-sole gender educator in organizational contexts. Ways of improving such reality include enabling speaking and listening spaces for employees in organizations and workgroups, easing the burden on trans professionals of being the sole gender educators in their workplaces, and legitimizing the trans existence in the organizational culture through diversity, equality, and inclusion values.

The present introduction is the first of five sections in this paper, the following ones being a brief theoretical background, followed by sections on research methods, results, and final considerations.
Theoretical Background

The main theoretical points that guided this research were diversity management fundamentals, both mainstream and critical approaches, as well as a review of what has been published on trans professionals in the workplace, both in Brazil and abroad.

Before deepening theoretical discussions, it is imperative to highlight that this paper follows the assumption that gender is a social construct. As proposed by Connel, R. (2009), the conception of gender is constructed within social relations whereby groups, as well as individuals, act; it is also multidimensional, not being restricted to identity, work, power or sexuality, it is rather all of those aspects simultaneously. Moreover, it is relevant to clarify the meaning of passability in this context: the extent to which a trans person could be understood – or pass – as a cis person. Although relevant to previous studies (Baggio, 2017), this paper proposes a critical stance to the concept of passability, since it may be safe to assume that there is not only one way to be a cis woman or a cis man, to the same extent there can be different ways to be a trans woman or a trans man. It could be nonetheless naïve to ignore that passability can – and possibly does – play a consistent role in the work experiences of trans professionals in the workplace. Albeit not being its focus, this paper does not overlook the importance of passability.

The standpoint of speech could be defined as a theoretical and methodological tool that underlines the different standpoints through which the same object could be analyzed (Amaral, 2005). In line with Ribeiro (2017), the speech should not be detached from the social space in which the speaker is located. On that account it is critical to understand the author’s standpoint being a white cis woman, highlighting the author and the interviewees do not share the same standpoint of speech. As a consequence of the author’s standpoint, it is required to elucidate that this paper does not aim at giving a voice to trans professionals, as they already have voices of their own, instead, it aims at giving them a microphone which they can use to speak for themselves and their community.

2.1 Diversity Management

Thomas’ (1990) “From Affirmative Action to Affirming Diversity”, published by the

---

6 A person who identifies themself as the same gender as the the biological sex assigned at birth.
Harvard Business Review, is considered among scholars to be the seminal publication on organizational diversity management. Thomas (1990), who addresses the 1980’s USA setting, argues that the focus should shift from merely hiring women, people of color, immigrants and other minorities to actually managing those groups within organizations. Considering the context in which Thomas (1990) writes his work (post The Civil Rights Act of 1964), it is understandable why he believes that minorities no longer need a “boarding pass” to access workplaces and employment opportunities, but rather an “upgrade”, replacing affirmative actions with affirming diversity through proper diversity management.

Cox and Blake (1991) furthered the discussion on diversity management by adding a correlation between competitive advantages and diversity in five different fronts: cost, resource acquisition, marketing, creativity, problem-solving and system flexibility – namely organizations that perform good diversity management would have advantages to those who do not manage diversity properly. For the authors, organizations will gain competitive advantages in costs from those organizations which perform better in diversity management for the reason that workplaces are becoming more and more diverse as a reflection of a society that is becoming also more and more diverse. Resource-acquisition was also highlighted by the authors as one of the fronts for competitive advantage, considering that organizations that have good performances in diversity management benefit from a better market reputation, thus attracting talented staff – who could be found among minorities. Marketing is also featured by the authors, as immigrants’ and other groups’ insights and cultural sensibility (mainly for multinational companies) benefit the organization. Furthermore, the authors also present creativity as one of the fronts that benefit from good diversity management, as diversity in perspectives influences creative potential. Problem-solving, too, benefits from the same aspect: heterogeneity can potentially trigger better decision-making processes. Lastly, good diversity management, according to the authors, could yield less standardized and deterministic organizational systems, such fluidity could benefit organizations in reacting with changes in the competitive environment.

One of the first publications on diversity management in Brazil is one by Fleury (2000), who analyzed diversity management experiences of Brazilian subsidiaries of North American companies. Despite being a pioneer study in Brazil, it focuses mainly on observing practices of companies with headquarters overseas.

The world has changed since Thomas (1990), Cox and Blake (1991) and Fleury (2000) published their papers, in the time span from the early 1990s until today discussions on diversity management have evolved. According to Holck, Muhr, and Villesèche (2016), there are
currently two approaches to diversity management: the mainstream one, as proposed by Thomas (1990), and the new critical approach (Schwabenland & Tomlinson, 2015). The critical approach to diversity management considers diversity attributes (race, gender, etc.) to be social constructs, hence fluids, multiples, contradictories, and ambiguous, as opposed to the mainstream approach which considers such attributes more statically. As a consequence, the critical approach understands diversity management as problematic and multifaceted due to context and power relations.

Both approaches have a different understanding of what is well-performed diversity management: to the mainstream approach, the fronts presented by Cox and Blake (1991) are the measurements according to which good diversity management should be analyzed; to the critical approach the measurement should be made taking into account the actual inclusion of marginalized groups in the organization. This paper considers both perspectives, however, it emphasizes the critical perspective, as the author believes it to be more adequate in addressing current diversity management dilemmas. Promoting more diversity in organizational spaces as well as managing such diversity are challenging tasks, there is no single answer or solution alone that checks all the boxes on how to tackle that. Nonetheless, different approaches could help both organizations and leaders to better handle diversity-related situations in the workplace.

Dass and Parker (1999) discuss that there is no one way of orchestrating diversity management in organizations. Implementing diversity management is linked to different variables, such as as the pressure for organizational diversity (shareholders or stakeholders pressure, for example, or even government regulations), the kind of diversity that is being discussed (in this article we discuss the trans professionals, but other examples could include BIPOC professionals, women, mothers, among others) and the actions performed by leaders. Strategic responses to diversity management are consequently linked to the aforementioned variables. Dass and Parker (1999) argue that leaders hold a significant role in implementing diversity management since they are the ones that will transform the strategy defined by the organization into operational and tactical actions – and that may be charged with leaders’ own perspectives and priorities.

The critical approach to diversity management considers the layers of complexity that already exist in leaders who manage diversity and adds those to the theoretical discussion on the topic. Contextual and power relations, for example, can play a significant part in

7 The acronym BIPOC stands for Black and Indigenous people of color and has gained notoriety in the wake of Black Lives Matter demonstrations in the United States in June 2020.
organizational diversity management, considering that the management of diversity stems from singularities from both leaders and the professionals that they lead.

2.2 Trans Professionals in The Workplace

Bibliographic research made using the Business Source Complete database in the EBSCO platform unveils that studies dedicated to analyzing the scenery for trans professionals in the workplace are incipient and studies that focus on the management of such professionals are scarce. McFadden (2015) does an extensive systematic review of publications referring to the careers of LGBT professionals. The author reviews publications in the broad areas of business, management, and social sciences from 1985 to 2015, having analyzed over 140 papers. One of the author’s recommendations is that further publications should focus on sub represented communities, such as trans and bisexual professionals.

More recently, Mendonça, Gemelli, and Rocha-de-Oliveira (2019) review Brazilian publications that focus on the overlap of gender and career studies. Despite including “transgender” in the list of elected terms, there is no indication of papers that target such professionals. The authors signal a lack of studies of gender and career in Brazil.

Studies such as the ones of Thanem and Wallenberg (2016), Connel, C. (2010), and Baggio (2017) focus on analyzing the trans population and trans professionals in the workplace, yet none of them sheds light to leadership nor diversity management.

Method

The research that this paper bases itself on is a qualitative, phenomenological study with data collected via semistructured interviews. Between 2019 and 2020 15 professionals were interviewed, nine on them being trans professionals of several different fields and six of them were leaders and/or people managers in organizations of different segments and sizes – all of them based in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and its metro area. Data collected through the interviews were transcribed and subsequently analyzed using Fairclough’s (2002) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).
3.1 Interviews

The criteria used to select the group of trans professionals (henceforth group 1) was to interview people who identified themselves as trans – trans women and trans men – professionals who either worked at the moment or had worked in the past in an organization, regardless of the size, sector or industry. Using the snowball method (in which one interviewee refers the interviewer to another and so forth), overall 15 interviews were conducted, 9 with trans women and 6 with trans men. All but one (Clara) of the interviewees from group 1 had attended and completed university degrees, which, according to Benevides and Nogueira (2020), frames them as exceptions. The only one who had not attended nor completed university worked in the beauty industry, as a hairdresser and makeup artist – a common professional especially for trans women, due to being a more welcoming field to the trans population.

The second group (henceforth group 2) consisted of leaders and/or people managers who currently work or had already worked managing trans professionals or who worked in organizations known for their diversity and inclusion initiatives who either had or had not worked with trans professionals.

Based on the theoretical background, a rough script of questions was drafted. As the intention was to conduct semistructured interviews, the questions were open and could lead to follow-up questions that were not necessarily planned. Two pilot interviews were conducted, each one with a subject of group 1 and group 2, those interviews helped to improve the script as well as to build an interviewer out of the author. It is meaningful to note, however, that learning how to better conduct an interview – especially about a topic that can often be sensitive – was a process throughout the whole research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arthur</td>
<td>Marketing professional; fitness studio manager; student of public policies for the LGBTQI+ community</td>
<td>Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monalisa</td>
<td>Software engineer</td>
<td>Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>Software developer</td>
<td>Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clara</td>
<td>Hairdresser, make-up artist, self-employed</td>
<td>Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlos</td>
<td>Teacher, graduate student</td>
<td>Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eva</td>
<td>Journalist, political activity</td>
<td>Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cecilia</td>
<td>Political activity; NGO manager; law student</td>
<td>Woman</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Revista Gestão e Secretariado (GeSec), São Paulo, SP, v. 14, n. 11, 2023, p. 20345-20362.
3.2 Critical Discourse Analysis

The critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) was elected as the data analysis method in this paper, as the discipline is a breeding ground to investigate social phenomena. Fairclough (2002) explains that discourse can be understood in three dimensions: 1) the text; 2) the discourse practice; 3) the social practice – those were the ones used to analyze data collected through interviews.

CDA aims at analyzing power and domination dynamics through the three levels of discourse. In present-day contexts, it may also open a window to understanding diversity and
empowerment in social contexts, such as the workplace. Another non-negotiable stance to CDA bears upon the conscience that the researcher is not invisible, being the researcher themself a social figure (Van Dijk, 2001). In addition to that, the choice for CDA is also productive for the context of an applied research such as the present one, for the reason that it addresses ultimately the transformation of realities through scientific knowledge.

The transcriptions of the fifteen interviews and the theoretical background were juxtaposed in order to elect three analysis categories as exposed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis category</th>
<th>Theoretical background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work environment: how leaders and trans professionals perceive and are perceived in the workplace.</td>
<td>Dass and Parker (1999); Martinelli et al. (2018); Thanem and Wallenberg (2016); Schwabenland and Tomlinson (2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity management experiences</td>
<td>Dass and Parker (1999); Hock, Muhr and Villesèche (2016); Schwabenland and Tomlinson (2015).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Analysis category
Source: Prepared by the authors

It is important to note that ethical procedures were taken into account while developing this paper and conducting the research. Firstly, a research project was submitted for approval to the university’s Ethics in Research Committee. After the approval, the interviewing process began. All of the interviewees were asked to sign an Informed Consent Form and to them was guaranteed the right to confidentiality, hence none of no information that may identify them was or ever will be made public.

Results

This section is dedicated to presenting the results that emerged from the CDA analysis of the transcripts of the 15 conducted interviews, it is divided into four subsections: each of the first three ones corresponding to one of the aforementioned analysis categories; the last one being a summary of the results.

4.1 Work Environment

This category was sought to understand the impressions of leaders, managers, and trans professionals regarding their work environments when it comes to acceptance and management
of trans professionals in such spaces. Discourses of both leaders and trans professionals were overlapped in order to understand where lies the differences and the tensions in those discourses.

Following a timeline, it may be useful to start this discussion by noting that when it comes to employment opportunities search Group 1 interviewee reported difficulties that emerged from appearing different and how it directly impacts the places that they can occupy within organizations. Looks of curiosity and strangeness were considered to be barriers that hamper the access of work placement for trans employees. Both Emma and Clara, although speaking from different standpoints – Emma being extremely well recognized in her field and Clara seeking job opportunities that do not necessarily require formal education – report that the struggles faced when searching for opportunities are real and relevant from them in different contexts. To this extent, Victor additionally points out that having – or not – the name updated in their documents may also limit and cause discomfort or embarrassment in work relations.

Thomas, who is a business owner and has directly worked with trans professionals, reports that his company received a negligible amount of applications from trans professionals whenever he has an open opportunity. The way he sees it, trans professionals tend to not apply to as many opportunities as cis professionals and that could be out of fear of being discriminated against. When discourses from Emma and Clara, who are trans professionals themselves, and Thomas are overlapped there is a discrepancy. Even though they all speak about the same topic, they build different realities. The social practice dimension of the discourse (Fairclough, 2002) is not the same for Emma and Clara as it is for Thomas. It is thus clear why the critical approach to diversity management (Schwabenland & Tomlison, 2015) considers the discipline to be so complex and ambiguous, as no two people will have the same experience and the same opinion on any given matter.

Throughout this research, some professionals that undertook their transition processes while in the workplace were interviewed. Eva was one of those and she reports that while undergoing and was in the early stages of her transition two of her leaders suggested that she went back and resumed “dressing like a man” to have more success and achieve more sales. As explained by Martinelli et al. (2018), when trans bodies do not pass as cisgender bodies, they are not allowed to occupy some spaces.

It is unanimity between the interviewed subjects, even to those trans professionals who had good work environment experiences as well as to the leaders and managers, there is a lack of preparedness from leaders and managers as far as welcoming and managing trans professionals in organizations. The lack of preparedness derives from the absence of
information regarding what it means to be a trans person and from the absence of information regarding the best management practices to implement when dealing with those professionals.

4.2 Career

This section is dedicated to understanding the space that trans professionals find in the organizations in which they work to perform their jobs as well as the space that organizations and leaders allow them to occupy. Connel, C. (2010) states that the decision to declare oneself as trans in the workplace is one individually negotiated, considering aspects oftentimes complex when it comes to financial and psychological matters in the individual level and political matters in the organizational level, such as organizational values, culture and maturity level.

Both Monalisa and Emma describe occasions in which they felt discomfort and even prejudice in organizations in the information technology field that openly present themselves as welcoming workspaces for LGBTQ+ professionals. Emma got to the point in which she got fired from her position due to intolerance, however, as intolerance was not compatible with the organizational values, a prejudiced and intolerant discourse could not be mentioned. The discourse practice that preaches inclusion was different than the social practice, the one that has a trans employee fired due to her gender identity.

Carlos reports a situation in which he has to go to the restroom, and, at that point in his transition, he felt more comfortable going to the women’s restroom. Someone tried to explain to him that he should be going to the men’s restroom instead. According to Schwabenland and Tomlison (2015), when trying to neutralize differences, some specific needs may be erased. That seems to be what happened in Carlos’ situation.

A common ground for all of the interviewees, regardless of the group, as the understanding that trans professionals are often attributed to the role of gender educators in the workplace. Leaders and organizations as a whole tend to rely on this extra work that is burdened upon trans professionals. Organizations tend to value trans professionals’ discourses as authorities concerning gender topics. Many of the trans professionals nonetheless understand that their own experience may not be representative of the whole LGBTQ population. Some of those professionals make their own the role of educating their surroundings, not necessarily an option, but out of need, due to lack of action or interest from leaders and organizations. Some others, although they do play the role of educators just the same way, they approach this activity in a more critical stance, understanding that the responsibility should not fall exclusively upon them, but it should be shared. Leaders and organizations agree
that a more proactive stance should be adopted from their end.

At the same time that trans professionals are empowered to educate their surroundings with gender-related information due only to the fact that they are trans, they sometimes have their abilities questions due to their gender identities. Monalisa points out that, before her transition (when her leaders and coworkers still recognized her as a man), she was taken much more seriously in meetings and workgroups. After transitioning, her expertise and skills were in constant question among colleagues. The trans identity should not be a relevant factor to establish if a person is able or not to perform a job. To this extent, it is relevant to point out that throughout this research trans women had their abilities questioned more often than trans men.

4.3 Diversity Management Experiences

As previously explained, diversity management as a discipline is ambiguous within itself. People who implement diversity management practices do so by abiding by their own beliefs and prejudices about different subjects, power and context relations are often aggravating factors when determining diversity management practices. As a result of the social conditions of trans people in Brazil, they are often sided with the lower power, and that is reflected in their discourses. There seems to be a division in the discourses of the organizations and the discourses of trans professionals, because trans employees do not always have good experiences when working within organizations that preach diversity values.

Cox and Blake (1991) and the mainstream diversity management scholarship propose that hiring and maintaining a diverse (that represents a minority) professional would be enough to reap the rewards of having diversity within the organization. Monalisa and Ian explain that only hiring is not enough, there is a need to actually manage the diverse talents to claim those rewards.

4.4 Results Summary

A summary of the results can be found below.
Results

| There is a lack of preparedness to hire and accommodate trans professionals in organizations |
| Leaders and managers feel that there is a lack of information and support to manage trans professionals. |
| Understanding the trans professional as only the “other” or as unusual hampers accesses and continuity in work environments. |
| Leaders and organizations attribute to trans professionals the responsibility of being the sole gender educator in the workplace. |
| Leaders and organizations promote little to none safe spaces to hearing and speaking. |
| Trans professionals have their abilities and skills questioned due to their gender identities. |
| There is a need to promote hearing and speaking spaces to trans professionals within organizations and workgroups. |
| There is a need to review structures and procedures that may cause discomfort to trans professionals in the workplace. |
| There is a need to exempt trans professionals from being the sole gender educators within organizations. |
| There is a need to educate leaders and managers to better understand trans identities and see those professionals beyond their gender identities, seeing them as professionals that they really are, with abilities and skills. |
| There is a need to legitimize trans existence within the organizational culture. |

Table 3: results summary
Source: Prepared by the authors

The above results show that there is a long and not completely sealed road ahead before reaching more inclusive and welcoming organizations to trans professionals. This research takes aims at pointing a flashlight to what needs to be done to reach the result. Understanding the topic’s relevance is the first step to enable and legitimize trans existence in work environments.

The results presented in this paper are relevant to organizations, leaders, managers, and trans professionals in the sense that they shed light on the current situation of trans professionals and their leaders. Moreover, the results have a managerial contribution, as they help raise organizational awareness to the issues presented, as well as give tools to leaders so they can qualify and improve the diversity management in organizations.

Closing Remarks

This research does not intend to exhaust the discussion about trans professionals in the workplace and how leaders should be equipped to manage them, the results presented do not intend to be definitive or representative of the trans population as a whole. In the context of this research, the experience of trans professionals indicate that their trans identities affected and still affect their careers in three fronts: 1) a barrier to access employment opportunities, mainly
related to passing or not as a cisgender person; 2) the fading of their singular identities and abilities as skilled professionals; 3) the gender educator role. Leaders acknowledge that the lack of preparedness is a real issue and that the information needed to have themselves educated on the topic is not easily accessible or readily available.

Results show, however, that there are ways to balance discourses from both trans professionals and leaders to improve work relations. In this sense, organizations that intend to be more inclusive and welcoming to trans professionals should be willing to redesign organizational structures and processes, as well as people management practices.

As research in this topic is still in its early stages, further research is much needed and welcomed. New research could include a more diverse cohort of interviewees and also a trans researcher point of view on the topic.

References


KVALE, S.. *InterViews*: learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing. Sage, 1996.


Submetido em: 23.10.2023
Aceito em: 21.11.2023