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Initiatives of community universities in the South Region of Brazil in preventing and confronting gender-based violence against women¹

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Community Higher Education Institutions (ICES) carry out important social actions for the regional development of the communities in which they operate, which also impact the quality of their students' academic education. **Objective:** This article aims to highlight the initiatives of the ICES of the Southern Region of Brazil for the prevention and confrontation of gender violence against women. **Methodology:** This is a qualitative, documentary research, whose data were collected through the survey of news on the subject on the portals of community universities in the three states of the Southern Region of Brazil, with the period from 2019 to 2022 as a time frame. For data treatment, Bardin's (2016) content analysis technique was used. **Results:** A total of 235 news items were mapped that recorded actions on the themes of gender and violence, which were categorized into two groups: i) actions open to the university's external public; ii) actions for the academic community. **Conclusion:** It is concluded that the ICES have been committed to carrying out actions to prevent and combat gender violence, which are fundamental for the academic training of students. However, actions aimed at the academic community are still incipient and it is necessary to invest in this direction, since violence also occurs in university spaces.

KEYWORDS

Community universities. College education. Gender violence. Institutional policies.

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Iniciativas das universidades comunitárias da Região Sul do Brasil na prevenção e enfrentamento das violências de gênero contra as mulheres

RESUMO

Introdução: o texto integra pesquisa desenvolvida junto ao Programa de Pós-graduação em Políticas Públicas e Gestão Educacional, da Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM), articulando-se ao Grupo de Pesquisas em Políticas Públicas e Gestão Educacional – Gestar/UFSM, abordando políticas de assistência e permanência de estudantes na Educação Superior, a partir de um estudo de caso do curso de Odontologia da UFSM, em especial o benefício socioeconômico Auxílio à Aquisição de Material Pedagógico. **Objetivo:** assim, objetiva-se analisar as relações e contribuições do benefício Auxílio à Aquisição de Material Pedagógico, atribuído a estudantes de graduação em Odontologia da UFSM, referentes à permanência, ao desenvolvimento acadêmico e à conclusão de curso. **Metodologia:** entre outros aspectos, a metodologia quanti-qualitativa de pesquisa pautou-se na análise documental, sendo a análise de conteúdo adotada enquanto fundamento para a interpretação dos dados junto à estatística descritiva. **Resultados:** os resultados apontam que a maior parte dos estudantes de Odontologia da UFSM, contemplados de 2017 a 2019, obteve notas acima das médias de seus grupos e que o grupo que teve a maior média geral foi daqueles que receberam mais vezes o benefício Auxílio. O quantitativo de vezes que os estudantes foram beneficiados impactou de forma direta no desempenho da média da maior parte dos grupos. **Conclusão:** conclui-se que política de assistência e permanência estudantil, permeada pelo Auxílio à Aquisição de Material Pedagógico, contribui para que estudantes da Educação Superior da UFSM, do curso de graduação em Odontologia, possam realizar e permanecer em seu curso com desenvolvimento acadêmico satisfatório.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Universidades comunitárias. Educação superior. Violência de gênero. Políticas institucionais.

Iniciativas de universidades comunitarias de la Región Sur de Brasil en la prevención y enfrentamiento de la violencia de género contra las mujeres

RESUMEN

Introducción: Las Instituciones Comunitarias de Educación Superior (ICES) realizan importantes acciones sociales para el desarrollo regional de las comunidades en las que se insertan, que impactan en la calidad de la formación académica de sus estudiantes. **Objetivo:** Este artículo tiene como objetivo resaltar las iniciativas de las ICES en la Región Sur de Brasil para la prevención y enfrentamiento de la violencia de género contra las mujeres. **Método:** Se trata de una investigación documental cualitativa, cuyos datos fueron recolectados a través de la encuesta de noticias sobre el tema en los portales de universidades comunitarias de los tres estados de la Región Sur de Brasil, teniendo como marco temporal el período de 2019 a 2022. Para el procesamiento de los datos se utilizó la técnica de análisis de contenido de Bardin (2016). **Resultados:** Se mapearon 235 noticias que registraron acciones en temáticas de género y violencia, las cuales se categorizaron en dos grupos: i) acciones abiertas al público externo de la universidad; ii) acciones para la comunidad académica. **Conclusión:** Se concluye que las ICES se han comprometido a realizar acciones para prevenir y combatir la violencia de género, las cuales son fundamentales para la formación académica de los estudiantes. Sin embargo, las acciones dirigidas a la comunidad académica son aún incipientes y es necesario invertir en esa dirección, ya que la violencia también se presenta en los espacios universitarios.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Universidades comunitarias. Educación universitaria. Violencia de género. Políticas institucionales.

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1 Introduction

Social, racial and gender inequalities have a direct impact on the consolidation of a just and democratic society and the guarantee of human rights, especially for the most vulnerable social groups. Among these inequalities, gender inequalities have also received social and political attention because they cut across social institutions and are the result of an unequal power structure. This phenomenon, accompanied by stigmas and social discrimination against women and the LGBTQIA+ community, is capable of structuring gender relations and dynamics that can lead to processes of violence, the majority of whose victims are women.

Given this scenario, it is important that universities commit themselves to women's rights and promote concrete and effective actions, such as research and consulting projects, internal protocols, monitoring and evaluation of data on gender violence, in order to positively influence the university community and the society of which it is a part. Fighting the phenomenon of violence is the responsibility of society as a whole, so universities can also seek links with global actors and government authorities in order to eradicate gender-based violence (Lima; CEIA, 2022).

The phenomenon of gender-based violence is a permanent reality, despite the current achievements made possible by the legal and political frameworks created under the pressure of feminist mobilizations at the international level and with the leading role of the United Nations (UN). The First World Conference on Women, held in 1975, adopted a Plan of Action to guide the international community from 1976 to 1985. Among the guidelines were: full equality of the sexes and the elimination of discrimination based on sex, the full participation of women in development and their greater contribution to world peace (Furlin, 2021). The document called for the elimination of all forms of prejudice and violence against women.

This was followed by the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)², the first international treaty to address women's human rights (Bandeira, 2004), and other world conferences. However, we would like to highlight the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, whose final document, known as the Platform for Action, brought advances in relation to women's rights, reaffirming them as human rights and committing the signatory nations to guarantee these rights through the implementation of specific public policies. One of these policies refers to the "eradication of all forms of violence against women" (UN Women-Brazil, 1995, p. 162).

It is important to note that Brazil has ratified its commitment to international human rights treaties and conventions and to the Organization of American States (OAS), especially the Convention of Belém do Pará (Brazil, 1994). The final document of this convention defines violence against women very broadly and not only in its material dimension, that is, as "any act or conduct based on gender that causes death, injury or physical, sexual or psychological suffering to women, whether in the public or private sphere" (Bandeira, 2019, p. 307).

² More than 185 countries are signatories to this Convention.

As a result of commitments to the UN and pressure from feminist movements, Brazil passed the Maria da Penha Law, n. 11.340, of August 7, 2006, and the Feminicide Law, n. 13.104, of March 9, 2015, which have become important legislative and legal instruments for dealing with cases of violence against women. Meanwhile, we cannot fail to mention that one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN 2030 Agenda is to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". Here we highlight two of its targets: i) "end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere" and ii) "eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other forms of exploitation" (United Nations Brazil, 2015).

We can consider that the international treaties on women's human rights "have brought four guiding principles of women's human rights: the principle of non-discrimination, the right to live a life free from violence, the duty of due diligence, and access to justice" (Maito; Severi, 2017). However, despite the legal progress made internationally and in Brazil, gender equality and the eradication of violence have been very slow in practice. Therefore, it is argued that these commitments must be made by all private and public institutions, and here we want to highlight the importance of the role of universities in strengthening democracy and guaranteeing women's human rights.

Violence against women is one of the recurring themes in public debate, both in the past and in the present. However, the increase in violence is also linked to the social and cultural changes that took place at the end of the 20th century, with the process of modernization and social struggles that led to the increased presence of women in public spaces. These changes have profoundly altered the power relations established in social structures (Bandeira, 2019).

In this new scenario, violence has gone beyond interpersonal relationships and has become a social problem. In other words, violence against women is no longer just about relationship conflicts in the private sphere, but encompasses different aspects of relationships in private and public spaces, including universities (Bandeira; Martins, 2020). Thus, although situations of violence, such as humiliation and harassment at parties or in everyday academic life, recur in the university space, according to Madge Porto (2017), such situations are not always recognized as violence, because in common sense, the university, as an environment where intellectuals who produce knowledge circulate, is still considered a space where women would be safer and more protected.

In this sense, it is possible to consider that universities, which play an important role in teaching, research and extension, should not remain neutral in the face of growing gender-based violence, especially against women. In possible partnerships with governments, they can contribute to the achievement of the UN SDGs by being a space for debate, for carrying out effective campaigns that contribute to research and diagnosis aimed at building public policies to overcome processes that generate violence, such as sexism, machismo and misogyny.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to show how community universities in the South of Brazil, based on their social commitment to citizenship, act to confront and eradicate gender-based violence against women. In other words, we sought to highlight the initiatives of these universities to prevent and combat gender-based violence against women.

The choice of the Community Institutions of Higher Education (ICES) is due to their political and community role in the social development process of the interior regions of the country. In the south, especially in Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul, they have had a strong impact on the development of small towns or urban centers since the 1950s (Lückmann; Cimadon; Bernart, 2015). We believe it is important to emphasize that these non-state public social institutions have evolved from community initiatives and that, since their creation, they have trained professionals to work in the region, in the public or private sector, with a view to regional development. In addition to the training characteristics, community universities in the southern region of Brazil also follow the pillars of training, which include teaching, research and extension, fulfilling and playing an important role in training and supporting the community in which they are inserted, based on a moral and social commitment (Hermany; Juruena, 2016). In this direction, Cristina Fioreze (2022, p. 4) argues that community universities "organized in multi-campus structures have, by their nature and historical constitution, a strong commitment to the social, economic and cultural development of the regional communities to which they belong". And here we believe that social development includes the promotion of actions aimed at building equitable gender relations, as well as the prevention and treatment of violence against women.

This study is relevant in a context in which the phenomenon of gender-based violence against women has become more widespread in society, also affecting the Southern Region, with high rates of femicide. In this sense, the data collected from the websites of institutional bodies in the states of Santa Catarina, Paraná and Rio Grande do Sul indicate a significant annual number of cases, which are constantly increasing. For example, in Santa Catarina, 226 cases of femicide³ were recorded between 2019 and 2022; in Rio Grande do Sul, 379 cases of femicide⁴ were recorded between 2019 and 2022; and in Paraná, there were 819 cases of femicide⁵ in the same period. In this context, it is important to highlight how community universities contribute to changing this scenario and collaborate with the achievement of the SDGs of the UN 2030 Agenda, as mentioned above.

This article is divided into three parts. First, we describe the methodological procedures used to collect the data. Next, we list some theoretical reflections on the concept of gender-based violence that underpin the analytical arguments of the study in question. Finally, we present the initiatives taken by the Community Institutions of Higher Education (ICES) to prevent and combat gender-based violence against women. In other words, we highlight the data and analyze it with reflective conclusions on gender-based violence and the institutional

³ Data from the Legislative Assembly of the State of Santa Catarina from 2019 to 2022.

⁴ Data from the Rio Grande do Sul Public Security Secretariat for the years 2019 to 2022.

⁵ Data from the Paraná Court of Justice from 2019 to 2022.

role of the university as a promoter of citizenship, democracy and the guarantee of human rights.

2 Methodological procedures

The research is based on a qualitative approach of the documentary type, whose field of study is the Community Institutions of Higher Education present in the three states of the Southern Region of Brazil, which corresponds to a total of 33 universities, 15 of which are in the state of Santa Catarina⁶, 14 in Rio Grande do Sul and four in Paraná⁷.

To search for initiatives carried out by the ICES, such as actions, projects, campaigns, among others, we visited their respective institutional portals⁸, searching for news published by the universities. We selected those published between January 2019 and December 2022 (a period of 4 years), and the search took place between March and December 2022.

To filter the news, we used the terms "gender", "gender violence", "violence against women", "woman". Based on the findings, we filtered and selected the news items that met the study's objectives, i.e. those related to gender-based violence against women. The total number of news items selected is shown in the table below:

Table 1. Number of publications on gender and violence on the websites of the ICES, from 2019 to 2022, by Federative State

State	No. of universities	No. of news items selected
SC	15	101
PR	4	8
RS	14	126
Total	33	235

Source: data prepared by the authors (2022).

To process these findings, we used Laurence Bardin's (2016) content analysis technique, which makes it possible to obtain, by means of systematic and objective procedures for describing the content of messages, indicators that allow the inference of knowledge relating to

⁶ There are currently 14 ICES, but we have also included the news from Unisul, since until the beginning of 2021 it was part of the Catarinense Association of Educational Foundations (Acafe). In January 2021, Unisul was sold to Rede Ânima Educação. We also included the Centro Universitário Municipal de São José, because it was the first public municipal college in the country, and we excluded UDESC, because we included it in another survey of state universities in the South and Southeast.

⁷ In the state of Paraná (PR) we didn't find an association of ICES, as in the case of the state of Rio Grande do Sul (RS), which has the Consortium of Community Universities of Rio Grande do Sul (Comung), and Santa Catarina, which has Acafe. It is worth noting that the Paraná State Higher Education System has seven state institutions, while the states of Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul have only one state university. We have therefore included in this study four institutions considered to be community institutions, which we found in Paraná: Uniamérica University Center, Claretiano University Center, Bom Jesus Educational Group and the Catholic University of Paraná.

⁸ Although the projects and actions carried out by the ICES are not presented in exclusive fields of the institutional portals, almost all the actions that result from the projects end up becoming news published on the portals of the institutions themselves, which justifies the selection of this data source.

the conditions of production/reception of these messages (Bardin, 2016). In other words, according to Romeu Gomes (2016), Bardin's content analysis presents a set of techniques, thus indicating that there are several ways to analyze the content of research materials. For this study, we created categories anchored in thematic analysis, in the light of international treaties and gender studies.

The news items found were divided into two categories: i) actions open to the university's external public; and ii) actions for the academic community, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of news items on actions to combat gender-based violence against women, according to the categories created

State	Actions open to the university's external public	Actions for the academic community	Total
PR	8	-	8
SC	76	25	101
RS	115	11	126
Total	199	36	235

Source: data prepared by the authors (2022).

As can be seen in Table 2, more news stories deal with actions open to the university's external public than those aimed at the academic community. The universities in Santa Catarina published the most news about actions aimed at the academic community. No news was found in this category on the websites of universities in the state of Paraná⁹. With regard to news about actions open to the university's external public, it can be seen that the state of Rio Grande do Sul published almost twice as many actions as the state of Santa Catarina.

It's worth pointing out that these figures don't fully represent reality, since universities certainly carry out other actions to prevent and combat gender-based violence, which aren't published in the news. This is because the study is based on news on the subject found on institutional websites from 2019 to 2022. However, this sample shows that universities are not oblivious to the social phenomenon of gender-based violence against women, and are more concerned about violence that occurs outside university walls. Furthermore, more news was found about extension projects carried out by universities than about initiatives aimed at the academic environment itself. This diagnosis, in a way, has to do with the mission of these universities, which is aimed at developing the regional community.

3 Gender-based violence against women: some theoretical considerations

The concept of gender violence is part of the context of gender studies, which considers that the construction of masculinity and femininity is always historical, temporal, cultural and

⁹ These figures also have to do with the number of community universities. It is important to note that while the states of Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul have developed around community universities, Paraná has prioritized public universities, so that in our search we found only 4 community universities. In this state, some universities have recently taken on the character of ICES, with Uniamérica being the first center to become community in Paraná in 2019 (UniAmérica, 2019).

fluctuating. In this study, we understand gender based on the theoretical propositions of Joan Scott (2019), that is, as a constitutive element of social relations based on the perceived differences between the sexes and as a primary way of structuring power relations. For this author, one of the elements that constitute gender is the dimension of politics related to institutions and social organization, where it is possible to uncover the nature of discourses or repressions that produce the permanence of a binary representation of gender. This allows us to think that gender binarisms, which hierarchize relations between women and men and overvalue male power, contribute to inequalities and, consequently, to gender violence.

For Heleieth Saffiotti (2015, p. 57), gender violence is linked to patriarchy, a system whose "power structure contaminates the whole of society, in which patriarchal law permeates not only civil society but also the state." It is a system that is harmful to people's lives because it affects them from within, because it establishes social relations that always ensure the advantageous superiority of white, heterosexual men. According to the author, patriarchal culture gives men sexual rights over women and "configures a hierarchical type of relationship that invades all areas of society. It has a material basis, is embodied in and represents a power structure based on both ideology and violence" (Saffiotti, 2015, p. 60).

In the same vein, bell hooks¹⁰ (2020) mentions that patriarchy is a cultural system that perpetuates sexist, racist, and homophobic relations, so that it ultimately perpetuates all forms of violence. However, in her view, feminist education is necessary for all people as a viable alternative for transforming these power relations. This author helps us to reflect on the importance of universities, as a place for training future professionals and citizens, to build possible ways of producing a culture that helps men and women to overcome sexist and hierarchical processes that throughout history have ended up producing violent and/or inferior and submissive subjectivities.

Gender-based violence, which is the result of a system based on social hierarchies and unequal power relations, has a negative impact on people because it destroys the integrity of the victim and violates human rights. Cecilia Sardenberg and Márcia Tavares (2016) define gender-based violence as any "type of violence (physical, social or symbolic) based on the social organization of the sexes and perpetrated against individuals because of their gender, gender identity or sexual orientation". This is violence that affects both men and women, as is often the case with violence against members of the LGBTQIA+ community, who have also been victims. However, it is recognized that male violence against women has been a more prominent phenomenon throughout history, as it "manifests itself not only as a phenomenon structured by the social organization of gender in contemporary societies, but also as a structuring factor of these societies" (Sardenberg; Tavares, 2016, p. 8). Thus, when we use the concept of gender-based violence against women to refer to violence against women's bodies, we start from the idea that it is always the result of unequal power relations.

¹⁰ We have chosen to record the author's name in lower case, because this was a choice made by bell hooks herself, in order to highlight more the content of her works and less her person. The author's name is Gloria Jean Watkins and she adopts the pseudonym "bell hooks", referring to her maternal great-grandmother, who was called Bell Blair Hooks (Hooks, 2020).

According to Lourdes Maria Bandeira (2019), manifestations of violence are ways of establishing and maintaining a relationship of submission or power. Therefore, the social phenomenon of gender-based violence against women requires the attention of the State and must involve all social institutions in prevention and eradication actions. This is because it is the right of women¹¹ to live in a safe society, and it is the duty of this society to create policies, environments, and spaces for discussing and guaranteeing this right. For this, it is necessary that women participate not only in concrete spaces of power, but also in symbolic ones, so that actions can be taken to guarantee women's rights.

Gender violence against women has become the main agenda of the Brazilian feminist movement, which has made it possible to expand this dialogue beyond the spaces of activism and academia, especially with research groups and civil society, through non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In this sense, the feminist movement has played a key role in the fight against gender-based violence, putting pressure on the state to implement public policies aimed at combating it. These struggles were necessary to make visible the violence of which women were the "preferred victims", removing it from the focus of the sphere of private and family life to be treated as a social, structural, political and public health problem that affects the guarantee of women's human rights (Bandeira, 2019).

Given that expectations of gender roles change over time, feminist achievements in recent decades have been important in the process of cultural change and women's resistance to normalized norms based on a culture centered on the male social order, which hierarchizes social roles and places of power for each sex. Along with this scenario of cultural change, which is also accompanied by the construction of a legal framework for the protection of women's rights, the processes of gender-based violence, machismo, and the relationship of domination and power over women's bodies have not only become more evident, but have also increased significantly. According to Bandeira (2019), historically, the concentration of gender violence has been imposed on women's bodies, and violent relationships occur because asymmetrical power relations surround people's daily lives.

Studies show that Brazil is a very violent country because "in 2016, when the ranking of violence against women and gender was established, of the fifty most violent cities in the world, twenty-one were Brazilian" (Bandeira; Martins, 2020, p. 198). In such a scenario, it is necessary that universities also develop initiatives to overcome this social phenomenon and have a positive impact on processes of cultural change, as one of the main strategies to combat gender violence. These initiatives, actions and/or policies are fundamental to changing gender representations and, according to Teresa de Lauretis (1994), the construction of gender also happens through its deconstruction. The author points out that gender representations are the product of different social technologies, such as cinema, discourses that include epistemological theories and institutional practices, as well as everyday practices situated in political micro-relations. From this perspective, we believe that actions and initiatives aimed at

¹¹ Human rights are also women's rights, an agenda that has been forcefully raised in international conventions on gender.

preventing violence can be considered as technologies that contribute to the creation of a more egalitarian and less violent culture.

4. ICES initiatives to prevent and combat gender-based violence against women

At this point we are trying to highlight the actions carried out by universities to prevent and combat gender-based violence against women, found in the news published between 2019 and 2022, which were grouped into two categories for analysis purposes: actions open to the external public and actions aimed at the academic community. The first category comprises 199 news items, grouped into 12 subcategories according to the units of meaning, which in this case are the types of actions developed by the ICES, as shown in Chart 3.

Table 3. News about ICES actions aimed at the external community (2019-2022) to prevent gender-based violence according to subcategories¹²

N	Actions taken by ICES	SC	RS	PR	Total
1	Promotion of lectures and seminars on gender-based violence against women	30	42	1	73
2	University extension project activities for the community	5	30	1	36
3	Research and data collection on violence against women	4	11	-	15
4	Ongoing actions (legal and psychological assistance, committees)	6	7	-	13
5	Participation in lectures and debates against violence against women	8	1	1	10
6	Campaigns against violence against women	4	6	1	11
7	Other specific actions and events on gender, gender-based violence and gender equality	5	3	1	9
8	Training projects for public sector professionals	3	4	1	8
9	Production of external posters, banners, podcasts and folders (audiovisual production)	3	5	-	8
10	Exhibitions on gender and violence	4	1	2	7
11	Palestras e eventos promovidos pela universidade em empresas e indústrias	2	3	-	5
12	Parceiras entre a universidade e órgãos internacionais	2	2	-	4
	Total	76	115	8	199

Source: prepared by the authors based on survey data (2022).

In the table above, it is noteworthy that the most significant number of ICES news items belong to the subcategory that deals with the promotion of lectures and seminars on gender violence against women, which are one-off actions, but gain relevance because they are strategies for prevention and deconstruction of the macho culture that produces power hierarchies and gender inequalities. In this subcategory, there were news produced by universities that dealt with debates promoted by the fields of psychology and law on violence against women, events on the Maria da Penha Law, with the participation of specialists in the field, such as representatives of the Maria da Penha Institute (IMP), representatives of the Observatory of Women against Violence, linked to the Federal Senate, among other authorities.

¹² The figures shown by state are for display purposes only. This is not a comparison, because that would require considering the number of ICES in each state and, in this study, that would be possible if the cut-off was between the states of Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul, which have a significant number of ICES.

In addition to the events already mentioned, others discussed gender, sexuality and the promotion of rights, the fight against violence against the LGBTQIA+ population, debates on masculinities and violence, intersectionalities, among others¹³.

A second, more significant set of news items are those that deal with actions resulting from extension projects carried out by ICES for the surrounding community, especially in the state of RS, compared to SC, which also has a significant number of community universities. A third set of more significant news is the research and data collection on violence against women in the municipalities and the state, carried out by research groups, gender studies centers and postgraduate programs. In this way, these universities produce relevant data for the construction of public policies, confirming their importance in the social space in which they operate, and here again, the actions of ICES in the State of RS stand out.

Figure 3 also shows the ongoing actions of the Community Universities, such as legal, social and psychological assistance to women who are victims of gender-based violence, as well as participation in committees that discuss and deliberate decisions for the region related to the issue in question. Some of these decisions relate to specific actions, such as commemorative dates, like International Women's Day, which is an important training space for the external community.

In terms of prevention and awareness-raising strategies, we have seen various activities such as campaigns, podcasts, audiovisual productions and brochures, many of which were carried out during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially due to the increase in violence and aggression against women during that period. Meanwhile, it is also important to highlight the involvement of universities in training projects for public sector professionals, especially those related to health and education.

We conclude that the actions of ICES for the external community, although still insufficient, are very important for social development and for contributing to the eradication and overcoming of gender-based violence against women, as set out in the SDGs of the UN 2030 Agenda. Many of these actions, even if they are one-off, function as gender technologies, in the sense pointed out by Teresa de Lauretis (1994), by contributing to the production of new gender representations, deconstructing hierarchical meanings that produce inequalities and violence.

In an unequal society that generates processes of violence, Bandeira and Martins (2020) warn that it is necessary to identify the types of violence against women, not least because they don't occur every day, in the same way and in all places. In other words, it is necessary to consider the variations in patriarchal culture that make it easier to reproduce in some places. As such, different actions and expanded spaces for debate are needed. Therefore, we understand that universities are an important space for debate, for building projects in partnership with the

¹³ Unoesc Psychology Clinic starts the Basta Psychotherapeutic Group. University of Western Santa Catarina (Unoesc) (University of Western Santa Catarina, 2019).

public sector, for creating and strengthening public policies to build a less violent and more egalitarian culture in gender relations.

The data presented in Figure 3, identified in the news reports¹⁴, show that 36 of the actions carried out by universities are derived from 30 consultancy projects. The following table shows these projects, their links, and a brief description of each.

Table 4. ICES extension projects in the Southern Region of Brazil aimed at tackling and preventing gender-based violence (2019 to 2022)

University	Name	Description
Feevale/RS	Women's Rights Support Center (Nadim)	Guidance and assistance for women victims of domestic violence.
Unijuí/RS	Dialogues: weaving lives without gender violence	Continuous training for teachers in Ijuí's municipal education system.
URI/RS	Erechim without Violence	Participation in the drafting of a municipal law.
PUC/RS	Masculinities: self-care and gender equity impacts and effects on mental health	Extension course focusing on debate and discussions on the subject
PUC/RS	Laboratory: Sexuality, Gender and Psychoanalysis	Care for people with psychological distress arising from LGBTQI+ sexuality (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and others).
UCPEL/RS	Intersectional dialogues: Racism, gender and vulnerabilities in contemporary Brazil	Online extension course offers debate on racism, gender and vulnerability.
UCPEL/RS	Extension Program in Training for Active Citizenship and Social Transformation	Extension course. Discussion of topics such as structural violence, support networks for women victims of violence, types of violence, feminist emancipation movements.
UFN/RS	(Unnamed project)	Promotion of a Halloween party with elementary school students. The aim is to discuss issues involving gender-based violence in a playful way.
Unilasalle/RS	Immigration and Gender: new perspectives on a practical approach	Course on gender in politics in general and how we can break with normative and hegemonic language.
Unilasalle/RS	Project NASVID	Project to welcome male perpetrators of violence.
Univates/RS	Letters to Juliet	Project on writing letters to women victims of violence.
Univates/RS	Maria da Penha	Project to combat violence against women and support families.
UNISC/RS	Multi-professional Outpatient Clinic for the Health Care of the LGBTQIA+ Population (Ambitrans).	Outpatient clinic and support group for the LGBTQIA+ population. The Integrated Health Service (SIS) carries out actions aimed at health and well-being.
UNISC/RS	Tele Maria da Penha	It offers a support channel and legal assistance to victims.
UNISCR/RS	Rights of battered women	Project developed within police stations to assist battered women. Legal assistance for battered women.
UNISC/RS	"Tackling Domestic and Family Violence - Women's Rights and Legal Guarantees"	Project to combat domestic violence against women has expanded to other municipalities in the region.
UPF/RS	"Diversities: visibility and guarantee of rights"	A space for welcoming and respecting diversity. Actions in schools, companies and psychosocial care. Linked to the Psychology and Speech

¹⁴ It is possible that these projects carried out other actions that were not reported in the news.

		Therapy clinics.
UPF/RS	Projur and Projur Women and Diversity	Prevention of violence through actions, projects and activities with the community. It develops activities for the LGBTQIA+ population, girls and women in situations of violence, as well as their children.
UPF/RS	"Territorial care networks", "Individuals and Families in transformation: weaving care networks", "One Health is learned at school" (interconnected projects)	It liaises with town halls, public bodies and society itself, with the aim of providing information and enabling women in situations of violence to feel safe to seek help.
UPF/RS	"Let's go together: overcoming bullying and violence".	Course with the aim of proposing reflections on violence in different parameters.
UPF/RS	Gender Equality and Combating Violence	Action project to combat and prevent gender-based violence and violence against women.
UCS/RS	UCS Roses Project	Offers free training on legal, social and psychological issues related to domestic and family violence.
Unesc/SC	Center for Violence Prevention and Health Promotion (Nuprevips)	Psychological care for women victims of violence
Unesc/SC	Amora: Training People in Women's Human Rights	Aims to raise awareness and bring content to women facing some kind of violence.
Univali/SC	Education for Transformation: Environment, health and gender	Training project on women's challenges in the face of gender inequality
Univali/SC	Empowering Women	Provides training for women in situations of unemployment and vulnerability.
Unochapecó/SC	Resignify Mary Project	Focus on transforming gender relations and reframing masculinities
Unoesc/SC	Basta Program	Reflective groups with male perpetrators of violence against women.
Unoesc/SC	Law in Debate	Discussion of femicide.
PUC/PR	Lilac Bus	Guidance for women victims of violence; and recreation for children, with a painting room, games and toys.

Source: prepared by the authors based on survey data (2022).

As can be seen in Table 4, in the news published on the ICES portal between 2019 and 2020, 22 outreach projects were identified as being carried out by the ICES in Rio Grande do Sul, 7 in Santa Catarina and 1 in Paraná, for a total of 30 outreach projects. This shows that ICES has committed itself to actions to prevent, welcome and confront gender-based violence against women and against the sexual diversity of people who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community. These actions, although still limited, are strategies that contribute to social development, as set out in the SDGs of the UN 2030 Agenda.

It is noteworthy that of all the actions developed by these projects, a significant number are not aimed at prevention, but at providing support after the materialization of violence against women. This is because 17 of the expansion projects work directly with women who have been victims of violence, either by providing shelter after some type of violence, counseling and prevention, or by providing care and support to the victim's family members. These projects usually involve courses such as law, psychology, social work, medicine and nursing. In other words, ICES works by involving academics, teachers and other staff of the institution in actions that have a social impact. In this way, ICES demonstrates both its commitment to the promotion of citizenship and regional development, and to the integral and

ethical human development of its students. This is important because it has a positive impact on the humanized training of future professionals who will be able to contribute to the promotion of a culture of peace based on gender equality and the defense of human rights.

We observed that two ICES¹⁵ are working on extension projects with reflection groups for men who are perpetrators of violence. These projects consider the amendment to Law No. 13,948, the Maria da Penha Law, of April 13, 2020, which "makes it compulsory for the aggressor to attend educational and rehabilitation centers and to undergo psychosocial monitoring" (Casa Civil, 2022). Here we mention the Basta program, which organized a reflection group for men who have committed violence against women in cities in the Far West region of Santa Catarina, in partnership with UNESCO, public security agencies, the judiciary and public policies in the municipalities (São Miguel do Oeste, Pinhalzinho and Maravilha). According to one of the professors participating in the project, "the development of these reflective and therapeutic groups has promoted a space of shared listening through the exchange of experiences, stimulating the breaking of the cycle of violence and helping perpetrators to recognize the effects of violence in the contexts in which they are inserted" (Universidade do Oeste de Santa Catarina, 2019).

The second project aimed at male perpetrators of violence, identified through the survey of ICES news portals, is the Unilasalle Gender Reflective Group, created by the Domestic Violence Assistance Center Project (NASVID). This is a partnership between the Domestic Violence Court, the District Court in the city of Canoas, RS and La Salle University, which aims to "change the macho logic of male and female roles, as well as prevent the recurrence of violence. These groups are facilitated by psychology interns" (La Salle University, 2022). We can consider that these initiatives constitute a gender technology in the sense proposed by Lauretis (1994), since it is an educational program that can have an impact on the construction of new conceptions of masculinity and femininity and, consequently, on a more egalitarian culture, which is so necessary to eradicate gender violence.

It's worth pointing out that actions like this, in which universities work in partnership with the public sector, are fundamental to changing the culture of patriarchy and moving away from a punitive approach that only addresses the consequences and not the cultural root that generates gender violence. This is because, according to Bandeira and Martins (2020), gender-based violence against women is perpetuated by several generations and manifests itself in different ways over time. In this regard, it should be noted that the colonization of the southern region of Brazil was marked by structural relations of power, subjugation and sexism, unique characteristics that generate violence against women. In such a context, it is necessary to take action to deconstruct patriarchal culture, which affects the socio-cultural imaginary of meanings that construct masculinity and the structures of gender relations that are reproduced

¹⁵ Although we didn't find any news on the ICES websites in the time frame established for the research, we know that Uniplac, in Lages, is also taking part in the project to structure the Network for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women, in the municipality of Lages, which has promoted Reflective Groups for men who have committed domestic violence and has the participation of the local judiciary.

from generation to generation. In this sense, the policy of men's reflection groups can be an indispensable tool that also requires the commitment of university institutions.

We can consider that the services offered by universities can be understood as a way of responding to social demands that the public sector finds difficult to meet due to the excessive number of cases of violence. With the exception of urban centers, which are much better served by public services¹⁶, most of the Community Universities in the Southern Region are located in small or medium-sized municipalities, where public policies to prevent and combat violence against women, created and maintained by the public sector, are few and far between. In this sense, the actions developed by the Community Universities to combat gender-based violence are important, even if they are still in their infancy, in order to fulfill their political and community role in the social development of the inland regions (Lückmann; Cimadon; Bernart, 2015). On the other hand, by implementing the initiatives described in this article, community universities are also committed to achieving the SDGs of the UN 2030 Agenda.

Finally, based on the findings in the news published on the ICES portals, we observed that some community universities carry out actions aimed at breaking down sexist, homophobic and transphobic cultural barriers. In other words, they invest in extension projects that deal with these issues, proposing the construction of more equitable and egalitarian relationships, as strategies to prevent and combat gender violence in their social environment, especially when the public sector is unable to meet these demands. However, we believe that these actions are insufficient and that few universities have created initiatives for this purpose, which shows that the problem of gender violence has not been prioritized when it comes to regional development.

With regard to the second category - actions taken at ICES to prevent gender-based violence within the academic community - 36 news items published on the websites of these universities between 2019 and 2022 were included. The news items were grouped into seven subcategories according to the type of initiative they addressed, as shown in the table below.

¹⁶ It is worth remembering that not all municipalities have access to police stations for women, children and the elderly, nor do they have shelters, support homes and specialized services for women victims of violence.

Table 5. News about ICES actions aimed at the academic community to prevent gender-based violence (2019-2022), according to subcategories¹⁷

N	Actions for the internal community	Total
1	Actions promoted by the Law course for students and other members of the university.	7
2	Lectures and internal events on gender, violence	7
3	Master classes between courses on gender relations, combating violence against women	6
4	Actions promoted by academic centers, academic leagues, students and student movements, collectives	5
5	Studies/research on women, violence and vulnerabilities	4
6	Production of posters, banners and internal folders	3
7	Courses, workshops, specializations	2
8	Law course lecture on violence against women	1
9	Book launches	1
	Total	36

Source: prepared by the authors based on survey data (2022).

The selected news items reported that these actions were generally initiatives of courses such as Law, Physiotherapy, Physical Education, Psychology, Nursing, etc. These are initiatives aimed at debating gender relations and gender-based violence against women. Some reported initiatives promoted by collectives, academic centers, student movements, in other words, actions carried out more by organized student initiatives than by ICES.

In addition to these initiatives, debates on the topic of gender relations and/or gender violence were held in disciplines, academic forums, working groups, or more specifically, in study and research groups. These are actions that are configured as gender technologies (Lauretis, 1994) because of their power to act on culture in order to build new gender relations, but they are also important because of their potential to propose the development of consistent public policies, as is the specific case of studies and research on women, violence and vulnerability.

On the other hand, considering that the period from 2019 to 2022, when we carried out the study, lived in a conservative political scenario, in which the gender debate in schools and universities suffered continuous attacks, finding news that ICES held lectures and courses on the subject of gender can be interpreted as a strategy of resistance. We reiterate that the debate on gender and violence continues to be a matter of urgency, since Brazil is living with increasing rates of gender violence and femicide, a phenomenon that has also occurred in the university space. As an example, we can refer to the crime of femicide and rape of an undergraduate student, committed in a cruel way by a Master student, in February 2023, at the Federal University of Piauí (G1, 2023). Therefore, it is increasingly necessary for universities to develop policies to prevent and combat gender-based violence that occurs within the university space.

¹⁷ Due to the smaller number of news items, we did not separate this category by federal state.

Final considerations

The results of this study, whose data were collected through news published on the institutional websites of community universities in southern Brazil, show that these institutions have carried out various actions to prevent and combat gender-based violence against women. These actions are directed much more to the external community than to the academic community. On the one hand, this reflects the social function of community universities as public, non-governmental institutions that are committed to promoting citizenship, development and regional empowerment, as well as directly supporting and collaborating with the public sector. On the other hand, it is important to emphasize the need for ICES to also pay attention to the university environment, since gender-based violence is also recurrent in these spaces, as shown by the Avon Institute and Data Popular study on violence against women in the university environment (Avon Institute; Data Popular, 2015) and recent studies such as Tania M. Campos de Almeida (2017) and Madge Porto (2017), among others.

Regarding the actions carried out by the 30 extension projects mentioned in this article, we found that most of them do not focus on prevention, but on post-materialization support for violence against women, which points to the need to intensify prevention actions and also those aimed at changing the patriarchal culture that generates processes of gender violence. On the other hand, we believe that the study may not represent the entire reality of the actions carried out by the Community Universities, considering that not all of them are published in news format, since there is always a process of selecting what is important and what is not. On the other hand, the data collected is a significant sample, precisely because it is news published between 2019 and 2022, against the backdrop of a far-right government that has attacked the gender debate in education.

Based on the data discussed in the article, we reiterate the importance of the role of community universities, as educational institutions, in fulfilling commitments to international treaties to which Brazil is a signatory, and especially to the UN SDGs of Agenda 2030, and in leading processes of cultural change. Higher education institutions, as spaces of knowledge production and human, civic, critical and professional formation, have a responsibility to strengthen democracy and the sustainable development of a society. By this nature, they must address contemporary problems, such as the issue of gender inequalities and the prevention and treatment of violence against women, which, as we have already mentioned, is on the rise in Southern Brazil.

In this sense, considering the role of community universities in regional development, they need to generate non-academic impacts by building or strengthening other forms of dialogue and relationships with society (Fioreze, 2022). In this sense, we argue that the community university is an important social actor in the discussion of public policies that guide local and regional development. And within this set of policies, priority should be given to those that seek to deconstruct the hierarchical and sexist structures of patriarchal culture that

generate processes of gender violence, promoting actions that have an impact on changing gender relations and, consequently, reducing violence against women.

In short, as Pires and Araújo (2010) point out, it is important to rethink not only the educational role that community universities play in the context in which they operate and are inserted, but also the integrative role that they play. These authors offer important reflections on the role of community colleges, suggesting that they can meet the needs that the state does not. However, we believe that it is not the role of CUs to solve the problems that the state cannot solve, but that, as non-governmental public institutions, they should work together with the public sector to strengthen state action. A concrete example of this joint work are the extension projects, which contribute both to the training of academics and to the services provided to the community. As such, community universities should and must collaborate with public, private and philanthropic entities to ensure the effectiveness of campaigns, actions and policies aimed at eradicating gender-based violence against women in its various forms, as also established by the Pará Convention of 1994.

There is no doubt that the practical actions of the ICES, aimed at preventing and combating gender violence against women, with the participation of students, are essential for the education of these citizens. In this sense, we agree with Bandeira (2019) that overcoming gender-based violence also involves training, sensitizing and empowering public agents who are committed to feminist interests and who are committed to building new knowledge and new practices. In this way, the actions carried out by ICES, even if they are not yet sufficient, are fundamental for the academic training of students involved in such initiatives, because they prepare citizens who will act on different fronts in society and who, once sensitized to this phenomenon, can lead other actions based on gender equality and the defense of human rights.

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