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# Chilean University Teachers' Social Representations and Attitudes about Students' Sexual Diversity

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**Abstract:** This study seeks to explore social representations and attitudes of university teachers in relation to sexual diversity. The study has a qualitative approach through content analysis. The research was collected through 62 critical incidents with university professors, with at least one year of experience in undergraduate teaching, in five universities located in the northern macro zone of Chile. The results highlight that there are teachers who take on three different types of roles when faced with situations of gender diversity. Some are in favour of the inclusion of the sexual minority community, others are more like external observers and a third group, with little interest in inclusion, practice for the students belonging to sexual minorities, within the diversity of the university classrooms. Many teachers tend to contain and compensate for the scarce support that sexually diverse young people have within their families. Teachers demand more training than they currently have in order to be able to carry out adequate interventions in the classroom. Finally, the number of feelings and emotions described by teachers in the face of events and experiences related to sexual diversity in their university institutions is highly significant.

**Keywords:** educational inclusion; sexual minorities; sexual diversity; professors; Chile



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## 1. Introduction

The education system of a country is responsible for attending to the social, cultural, and physical differences of all citizens. For its part, higher education allows greater social mobility, so the process of professional training should include all people without any kind of distinction [1]. Universities are considered essential institutions for building and maintaining human and cultural capital [2]; therefore, they must enable their students to learn and participate in an environment of inclusion, for all members of the community. There is research indicating that sexual and gender minorities perceive college campuses to be more hostile and dangerous for students belonging to that group [3].

All young people have the right to participate in the education process at a university without exposing themselves to social rejection [4]. Thus, inclusion in universities, in general, and in Chilean universities, in particular, is a topic that is gaining traction. According to Nind [5], the intersection of inclusive research and inclusive education can contribute to generating a better learning environment for diverse minorities. Inclusive education can be defined as an educational approach that proposes educational establishments where all students can participate and where all are treated as valuable members within their teaching–learning process, with a common educational context [6].

According to Gairín and Suárez [7], inclusiveness is a hallmark of a quality university; therefore, moving towards institutions that have incorporated practices to welcome and train all types of students is the current challenge. In fact, in the context of higher education, there is still a long way to go before we are able to claim full inclusion, and many challenges must be faced in order to align educational practices with the principles of inclusive education [6]. Victoriano [8] mentions studies referring to barriers to achieving inclusive

education in higher education institutions. However, research about facilitators is scarce. Therefore, there is an important gap relating to the determination of the aspects that allow for the improvement of inclusion in higher education.

Going deeper into the subject of diversity in higher education is a task that requires committed teachers, with social awareness, who respect the differences of all students [9]. The space for inclusivity must be guaranteed to anticipate and prevent any type of discrimination against sexual minorities, such as the lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual and intersex (LGTBI+) community, as well as to prevent—[10]. The manifestation of rejection and prejudice against homosexuality and/or lesbianism affects the physical and emotional safety of youths who are in the midst of manifesting their sexual orientation [4,11]. This could generate gender dysphoria, which is a profound sense of discomfort and distress that can occur when the biological sex does not match the gender identity arising [12]. Young sexual minorities are more likely to suffer from depression [13], resulting from prolonged exposure to stigmatization [14], as well as suicide rates five times higher than heterosexual youths [15].

Studies linked to LGBTBI+ inclusion in Chile have been conducted primarily in the basic and middle school context. There is incipient evidence on the visibility of homosexuality in municipal schools [16]. There are also some studies on LGBTBI+ inclusion in university teaching careers [10]. However, there are still important research gaps that allow us to explore social representations and attitudes towards the LGBTBI+ minority population, who historically have been subjected to a lower social status [17].

The concept of social representation, to identify the conceptions that university teachers have about the LGBTBI+ community, is key. The theory of social representations is of special interest in the study of certain educational objects, particularly those related to the processes involved in the construction of knowledge [18]. Social representation dates back to the end of the 19th century with Durkheim, who gives us the concept of collective representations. Later, Moscovici [19] redefines them as social representations. Social representations are produced by everyday life experiences and common sense. It is possible that social representations are elaborated by situations that affect people, such as diseases, stages of life (youth), etc. This way of conceiving social representations (set of beliefs, images, etc.) seems to be the one that has had the most echo in empirical research in the social sciences [18]. The analysis of this research is carried out under this theory.

To generate an inclusive environment within universities, it is necessary to explore the social representations and attitudes of teachers who practice there. This study seeks to conduct a qualitative analysis of the social representations and behaviour of university teachers. The Latin American reality on exclusion invites us to conduct studies that touch this subject as a contribution to the knowledge of the phenomenon, but also to contribute in improving the conditions of study [20] for members of the LGBTBI+ community. The following research questions arise: What do university teachers know and what are their beliefs about the sexual diversity of students? What attitudes or roles do teachers display about sexual diversity? The approach of the study is qualitative, with the objective of exploring the social representations and attitudes of university teachers. However, it is very likely that emerging categories will appear throughout the study.

The information generated in this study is a contribution to help explore and strengthen teacher training, for the improvement of university institutional policies that tend towards inclusion. Specifically, analysing inclusion in university education for sexual minority students can not only help to reduce discrimination but also to reduce student dropout, improve mental health and enhance academic performance, to build an educational community where everyone receives an inclusive and equitable education.

The following is a review of the literature, the methodology to be used, the detailed results of the qualitative analysis and, finally, the conclusions and references used in the study.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Theory of Social Representations

The first approach to the concept of social representations was given by Durkheim, who differentiated the individual (psychological) dimension from the collective (sociological) dimension. He pointed out that collective representations are influenced by beliefs, myths and religious conceptions, from which collective representations arise. Moscovici [19] then redefined them as social representations to differentiate the orientation of behaviour and communication between individuals and groups. Based on this, the concept and theory of social representations refers to forms or modalities of social knowledge, through which people interpret and think about our daily reality [21].

Moscovici [19] recognizes, as a specific function of social representations, the adaptation of abstract concepts and ideas to society; new behaviours and the orientation of social interactions allow for the adaptation of society, to new sets of categories and information and to articulate the social and the individual. A social representation is constituted and becomes operative when the need arises for a collective to make the strange familiar and integrate it. Representation is associated with the language and social practices of a given social group. One of the fundamental aspects of this theory is that representations are not only subjective but also in the cultural practices and productions of a society in the world [18].

According to Jodelet [22], the formation of social representations has the following two stages: objectification and anchoring. Objectification is the process that allows the construction of a body of knowledge in relation to an object of representation. Through the process of objectification, scientific language and concepts pass into everyday language, integrating scientific or abstract elements into the social group. The second stage, through anchoring, articulates the three following basic functions of representation: the cognitive function of the integration of novelty, the function of the interpretation of reality and the function of the orientation of behaviours and social relations.

In short, social representations are produced by everyday life experience, by common sense. It is possible that social representations are elaborated by situations that affect people, such as diseases, stages of life (youth), etc. This way of conceiving social representations (set of beliefs, images, etc.) seems to be the one that has had the most echo in empirical research in the social sciences [18]. Therefore, the concept of social representation, to identify the conceptions that university teachers have about the LGTBI+ community, is key. The theory of social representations is of special interest in the study of certain educational objects, particularly those related to the processes involved in the construction of knowledge [18]. Therefore, the conceptions, values and beliefs held by teachers have implications for the teaching–learning process.

### 2.2. Educational Inclusion and Legal Regulations

For UNESCO [1], educational inclusion is “a process aimed at responding to the diversity of students by increasing their participation and reducing exclusion in and from education”. The goal of inclusive education proposes to eliminate social exclusion arising from attitudes and responses to diversity of social class, ethnicity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, mother tongue, gender and ability [10]. Inclusion implies the learning and participation of all students who may suffer exclusionary pressures, not only those with disabilities or special educational needs [23]. In this sense, the space for inclusivity must be guaranteed, to anticipate and prevent any type of discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in the educational environment [10].

For Echeita et al. [24], one of the main barriers to learning and inclusion arises from a teaching–learning process that induces isolation in students who feel less valued, marginalized and marked by repeated failure. For their part, Borland and James [25] distinguished physical access barriers (infrastructure and spaces) and curriculum access barriers. Fajardo [26] agreed with the existence of physical and information technology barriers and added the lack of knowledge about inclusion on the part of teachers, who, without the nec-

essary training, can generate psychological and ethical barriers to learning. Lissi et al. [27] also highlighted the barrier that arises from the lack of commitment or collaboration of teachers towards their work; for instance, attitudinal barriers [28].

In Chile, the concept of inclusion in education is defined in Article 4 of the General Education Law [29]. It states that one of the duties of the State is “to ensure equal opportunities and educational inclusion, especially promoting the reduction of inequalities arising from economic, social, ethnic, gender or territorial circumstances, among others”. The General Education Law [29] identifies the principles of equal opportunities, diversity, integration and interculturality as guiding principles for Chile’s education system. Likewise, the diversity of students makes it conducive to have classrooms where students with different cultural, economic and social capital coexist [30]. Law 20.422 [31], enacted in 2010, aims to ensure the right to equal opportunities for people with disabilities, in order to incorporate their complete social inclusion. Ocampo [32] points out that in pedagogical terms, inclusive education aims at improving didactics, management of institutions and evaluation, among others. In other words, educational inclusion is understood as education that promotes an education without exclusions of any kind; that is, an education for all, without arbitrary discrimination [33].

Law 20.845 [34], on school inclusion, ratifies the principle of integration and inclusion by regulating admission, integration and social cohesion within schools, promoting social, economic and cultural diversity; that is, it introduces the obligation to the system as a whole to propitiate heterogeneous educational spaces [30]. Textually, it states, “Likewise, the system will encourage educational establishments to be a meeting place for students from different socioeconomic, cultural, ethnic, gender, nationality or religious backgrounds” [34] (Article 3, letter k).

Law 21.091 [35], on higher education, strengthens inclusion at this stage of the training of young people. The regulation indicates that the system shall ensure the elimination and prohibition of all forms of arbitrary discrimination. Law 21.094 [36], on state universities, reiterates that the State recognizes the right to higher education; it shall “promote special admission mechanisms according to the principles of equity and inclusion”. These policies reorient the traditional view that diversity is linked only to disability and special educational needs, particularly of a cognitive nature [10].

In matters of recognition of the LGBTI+ population, Chile has regulations that safeguard their human rights. Regarding the educational sphere, between 2016 and 2017, two policies were disseminated regarding the inclusion of LGTBI+ children in schools. The first regulation is linked to the trans population [37], and the second is aimed at all teachers and managers, in order to incorporate gender identity and sexual orientation issues into the country’s education [37]. In this way, the State began to respond to the demands of civil society organizations and international agencies, to promote programs and public policies in recognition of sexual orientation and gender diversity [17]. In summary, in Chile, inclusion in education is a pressing issue.

### 2.3. Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity

University students increasingly present diverse characteristics in relation to entry routes, study–work reconciliation and sexual orientation, among others [38]. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) [39] (p. 31), according to the Yogyakarta Principles, defines sexual orientation as “the capacity of each person to feel a deep emotional, affective and sexual attraction to persons of a gender different from his or her own, of the same gender or of more than one gender, as well as to the capacity to maintain intimate and sexual relations with persons”. Based on this, homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality and heterosexuality are possible variants of a person’s sexual orientation.

The other important concept to consider is gender identity, defined by [39] (p. 32), also in accordance with the Yogyakarta Principles, as “The internal and individual experience of gender as each person feels it deeply, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth, including the personal experience of the body”. When a person is born, he or

she is classified according to a gender binary (male or female), based on his or her sexual characteristics. However, as their personality develops, their gender identity may coincide with that assigned sex (cisgender person) or not (transgender person). Transphobia is a form of discrimination against people whose gender identity does not match the sex assigned at birth. Within the acronym LGBTI, the 'I' corresponds to the word intersex, which is used to describe all those situations in which the sexual anatomy of the person does not coincide with the culturally defined standards for the female or male body [39] (p. 35).

Research suggests that the type of violence generated by sexual diversity and identity discrimination is complex and difficult to combat. Young sexual minorities are more likely to suffer depression [13] as a result of prolonged exposure to stigmatization [14], with suicide rates five times higher than those of heterosexual youths [15,40]. The Survey of Social Cohesion in Latin America [41] (MOVILH, 2007) indicated that 27% of respondents would be wary or somewhat bothered if their child had a homosexual friend. The Fifth National Youth Survey [42] indicates that 21.1% of young people consider gays and lesbians as undesirable neighbours, ranking fourth among the most undesirable (neo-Nazis, drug addicts, alcoholics and skinheads), according to Cárdenas and Barrientos [43]. These facts would lead the LGTBI+ community, which represents approximately 7% of the population, to social isolation, higher levels of school dropout, affected academic performance, recrudescing the circle of violence, increasing the suffering of mental disorders, enduring low self-esteem and strengthening attitudes of discrimination towards themselves [44].

### 3. Materials and Methods

The approach of the study is phenomenological based on a qualitative analysis through the critical incident technique. This technique focuses on identifying the phenomenon or event (temporally and spatially delimited) that causes crisis or disturbs the respondent's own identity. In this case, it is the university teacher who is consulted about those experiences related to the sexual diversity of students that have marked his or her teaching work. These stories are analysed through content analysis. This design allows understanding of the phenomenon from the point of view of the protagonist (university teachers) to reveal their beliefs and behaviours regarding sexual orientation and gender diversity of students.

#### 3.1. Participants

The research has, as its scope, the university education institutions of the northern zone of Chile, specifically the following five regions: Arica and Parinacota, Tarapacá, Antofagasta, Atacama and Coquimbo. The analysis includes teachers from the following four institutions: Universidad de Tarapacá (Arica and Parinacota), Universidad Arturo Prat (Tarapacá), Universidad de Atacama (Atacama) and Universidad Católica del Norte (Antofagasta and Coquimbo). The study population was male and female university professors, with at least one year of experience in university teaching, and those who have had direct or indirect experiences with students with sexual diversity in the university environment. The professors were working in their university during the data collection process.

#### 3.2. Instruments

The instrument is the critical incident form [45], whose main characteristic is the collection of reflections on people's attitudes and behaviours when faced with complex situations to solve, allowing us to obtain the social representations of the study subjects. Once the critical incidents form was prepared, it was validated by 3 expert judges, who observed and suggested changes, such as the way in which the questions were asked about the event, the emotions experienced and the attitude towards the event. They also suggested collecting the experiences of those who had not had the opportunity to experience sexual diversity in students and to consider those who had only heard about this topic.



After making the modifications suggested by the experts, the instrument was digitalized and structured as follows: (i) first section: personal information including sociodemographic data, area of training and development, teaching experience and knowledge about sexual diversity and/or inclusion in education; (ii) second section: critical incidents of sexual diversity, in which teachers had two excluding alternatives (in both cases, there were five questions to answer). The first alternative asked them to describe whether they had directly lived an experience relating to sexual diversity in university educational contexts. If the respondent answers no, he/she is directed to another question. This second option asked a question that indicates whether, during their years as a university teacher, they have heard or been told of any experience related to sexual diversity. If the respondent answers no, the teacher was not part of this research.

### 3.3. Collection of Information

Data collection was conducted during the months of December 2020 and June 2021. Teachers from the four universities named above participated. The procedure was that the participants who met the criteria of having at least one year of university teaching experience received the link to the questionnaire through an email from their respective universities. This link took them to Google Forms. The internal validation of the instrument was carried out through the judgment of three experts.

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Universidad Catolica del Norte (CEC 19-2020). All the participants were informed of the objective of the study, participated voluntarily and provided written consent to participate in the study. They were informed that they had the possibility of terminating the questionnaire at any time. To guarantee the anonymity and confidentiality of the responses, the participants were identified by an alphanumeric code.

### 3.4. Production of Information

The analysis of the information was carried out under an inductive strategy (i.e., we began by coding the content of the discourse and then categorized these findings or groups of codes, considering a priori categories and others of an emergent order). The latter refers to the analytical approach of this phase, considering for this purpose the “emic” perspective, that is, from the internal gaze of the research subjects (Emergent) and the “etic” perspective, which is the vision of the researcher who problematizes reality (aprioristic) [46,47].

During the information production process, particularly with the coding and categorization process, each researcher carried out this task individually, and then shared and discussed the visions and approaches to the problem, in phenomenological terms, as an intersubjective act that allows the sharing of the essential experience of the human being for the construction of the notion of the world [48]. This triangulation of information allowed giving precision to the codes and families of codes or categories within the study. Obtaining consensus and internal validity, in other terms, as pointed out by Plaza et al. [49], referred to the confidence used by the researcher in the decision of veracity on the information delivered and not falling into a tautological terrain. Within this process, issues of objective and subjective order are interrelated in order to raise a particular reality.

The ATLAS.ti 8.0 software was used for the above, by means of open coding. Finally, the network or axial networks were created.

## 4. Results and Discussion

The results presented below detail the findings of the qualitative analysis carried out.

### 4.1. Characterization of the Sample

The total sample was made up of 62 teachers, comprising 53% women and 47% men. As mentioned above, teachers from the entire northern zone of Chile participated, from universities with a total of 34,315 young university students, which represents 26% of the entirety of students in this macro-zone of the country. The majority of the teachers surveyed

have extensive experience in university teaching. Forty-five percent of the respondents have more than 16 years of experience. Seventy-five percent are over 40 years of age, with the highest proportion in the 41–51 age range (40%). Sixty-three percent of the university teachers participating in the study stated that they had no experience in research related to issues of sexual diversity and/or inclusion in education. Almost all of the teachers surveyed work full time in their institutions (55/88.7%) and also have postgraduate qualifications (61% had a master's degree and 31% doctorate).

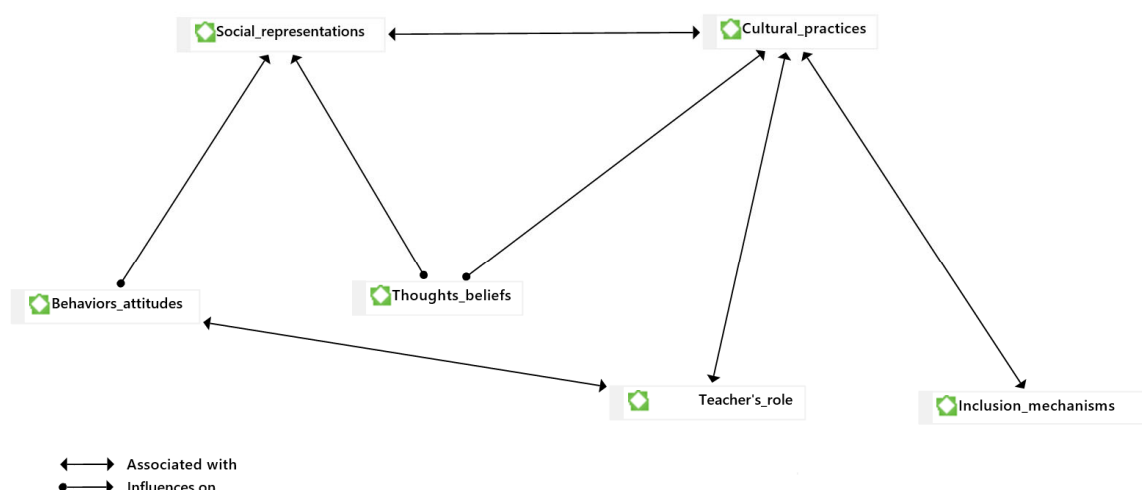
#### 4.2. Analysis and Production of Information

Those referring to the narratives were grouped into four groups of codes. The first one was social representations, which was made up of the following two groups of codes: (i) thoughts and beliefs and (ii) behaviours and attitudes. Two other groups of emerging codes were called cultural practices, comprising the following: (i) teacher's role and (ii) inclusion mechanisms, following the line of Lizana [50]. The definitions of each of the categories and groups of codes are detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Grouping of codes.

Code Group or Categories	Subgroup of Codes or Sub-Categories	Type of Categories and Sub-Categories	Definition
Social Representations	_____	Aprioristic	Set of ideas that allow understanding the world through the exercise of objectification and anchoring.
	Thoughts and beliefs	Aprioristic	Set of ideas and/or representations about reality. A belief supposes the disposition to act as if that in which it is believed were true and existing in a real way, Diez [51]. That is, the ability to produce ideas that are socially and culturally anchored, as if what is believed in were an absolute truth.
	Behaviors and attitudes	Aprioristic	Integration of a set of thoughts and feelings, which enhance a certain action, which, at the same time, achieves a certain balance between values, such as attitudes. Laca [52]
Cultural Practices	_____	Aprioristic	Activities or actions that are developed repeatedly that respond to a way of doing things and that have the identity of a social group to which one belongs.
	Inclusion mechanisms	Emergent	Practices that ensure that the activities and/or actions developed ensure the participation of all, showing consistency between the culture to which they belong and the guiding policy they have, Booth and Ainscow [23]. That is, situations that drive and activate participation, at the same time, ensuring it to allow equality and equity.
	Teacher 's Roles	Emerging	Teaching interventions to incorporate or not students with different problems or situations, Botero, S and Gabalán [53].

Figure 1 shows the relationships of the groups of codes (categories) linked to social representations, emerging themes and the links between them. It is worth mentioning that the usual context in which teachers detail their experiences is fundamentally in the classroom, even in the virtual classroom modality. Included in the representations were the behaviours and attitudes described by university teachers in situations experienced, heard or seen, in relation to sexual diversity. The other group of codes is linked to the cognitive theme and referred to the thoughts and beliefs that university teachers have, from which they would develop their behaviours and attitudes towards sexual diversity.



**Figure 1.** Category Social Representations.

There is another group of codes that was unified under the denomination of cultural practices. The inclusion mechanisms consider different areas that have, as a central focus, those aspects that teachers describe as existing alternatives in their institutions or that could be installed in universities, in order to enhance the inclusion of students belonging to the group linked to sexual diversity (LGTBI+). Likewise, a categorization of the role that each teacher takes in relation to the experience described is included; for instance, if he/she takes a rather active role (intervenor) or if he/she takes a passive role (observer).

In analytical terms, behaviours and thoughts are part of the social representations of the group of teachers and, at the same time, cultural practices are directly associated with these meanings. To understand the above in depth, the analysis of the different groups of codes or categories is presented below.

#### 4.2.1. Social Representations

##### Sub-group of codes or category: Behaviours and attitudes

The first group of codes that make up the social representations we analysed is related to sub-categories of attitudes and behaviours. This subgroup of codes or subcategories was made up of the following four codes: (i) feelings and emotions; (ii) acceptance; (iii) experiences and (iv) behaviours. The code labelled “feelings and emotions” stands out here. Figure 2 shows a series of quotes that have been selected to detail the diversity of feelings and emotions aroused by the direct and indirect experiences of university teachers in situations of sexual diversity. The expression of anger, empathy, respect, sadness and indignation of younger female professors in the face of situations that undermine the dignity of the person in students were the most recurrent. Their older male colleagues typically had more rejecting appraisals, even though in both cases there were exceptions of young female professors who did not know how to act and professors with a longer academic career who were more understanding and open. These emotions/feelings were reflected in the attitudes of colleagues who excluded or made fun of students belonging to sexual minorities. In relation to these, according to the results of Amodeo et al. [39], it seems to be crucial that institutions and faculty consider how to work on promoting and fostering a feeling of support and respect towards all students. These actions tend to improve the well-being of heterosexual and sexual minority students on college campuses.



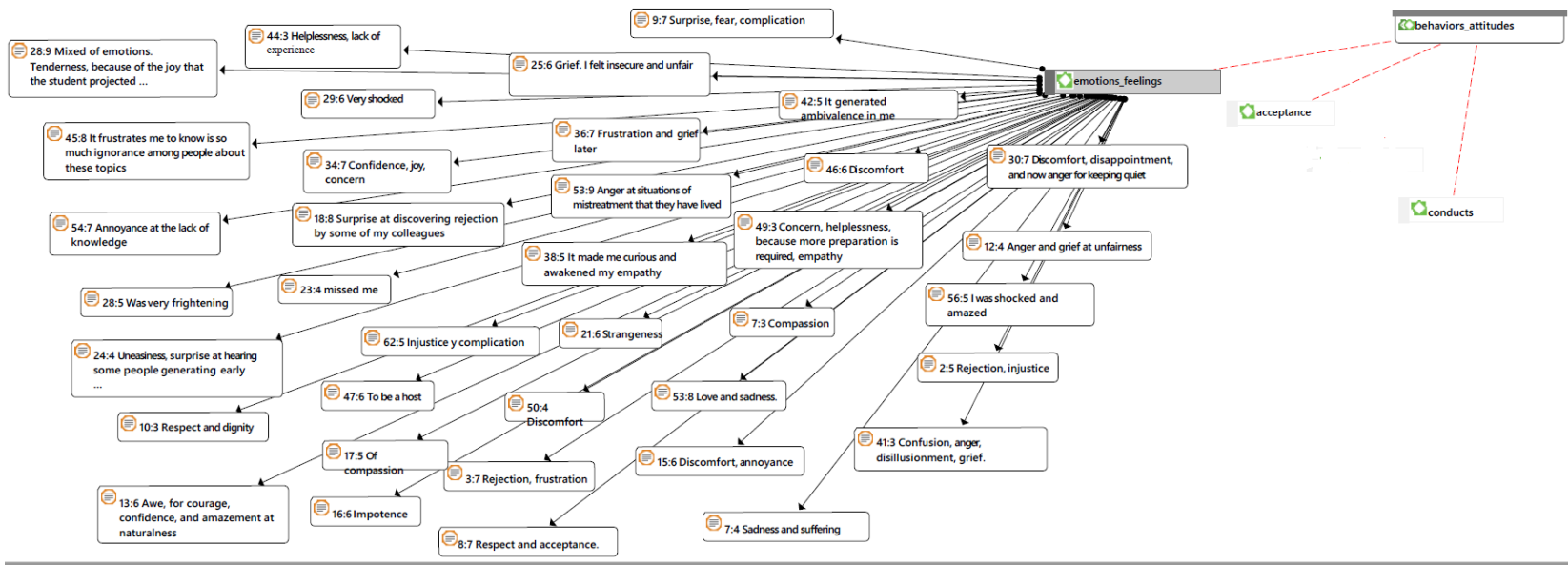


Figure 2. Behavioural and Attitude code group network with Emotions and Feelings details.

In Figure 2, we can observe the set of emotions and feelings aroused by the situations described above, as follows:

“It generated in me compassion and desire to help him, because it was evident the sadness and suffering of the student due to the lack of acceptance on the part of his mother”. (D7:17)

“Of compassion for the difficulties they must face at early ages and what this implies for their possibility of being happy”. (D17:16)

Among the experiences detailed by the teachers, we can highlight the emotion they experience around the events in which transgender students comment on their situation of non-acceptance, as follows:

“... I get excited when they conclude their studies, that is admirable, because they manage to destroy many barriers”. (D22:25)

In the previous quotes, we can read how the teachers explain their compassion in relation to a student belonging to sexual minorities, because of the problems of non-acceptance from an early age and that they must live constantly. At the same time, they express a feeling of surprise when conversing with disciplinary colleagues who discriminate or reject this difference.

On the other hand, within the code of acceptance, we can cite the following expressions of the teaching staff:

“I never differentiate in terms of sex or if they are slow or fast to grasp a content”. (D22:22)

“... everything was very simple to carry the idea was not to make him uncomfortable”. (D23:15)

The accounts also included a non-acceptance experience. This situation offers a deep reflection on our teaching performance and those discriminatory experiences still persist on the part of those who hold the job of training young people and future professionals who will contribute to the country in its development and growth. The above can be read in the following quote:

“In the hallways in my early days as a teacher, it was a serious and painful situation from my point of view, in which a student was crying in the hallways, and when I approached him and asked him what was wrong with him, my surprise was to hear what the student said, he was crying because the teacher had expelled him from class because of the way he was”. (D51:10)

In relation to the behaviours, we can appreciate different reactions. On the one hand, teachers express behaviours related to an interest in supporting students, which is persistent in the population studied. The teacher's role is to welcome students in crisis situations, which, according to Astudillo et al. [54], is what refers to the distinction between the judgment that is given on the private sexual situation of a student and the other, which refers to public behaviour, as a political manifestation of his life. However, there are also some cases in which teachers are taken by surprise and do not know how to react. They even detail that some preparation is required in this area and that, currently, the policies and internal regulations in their institutions have improved significantly, from the moment in which they had to live some experience of sexual diversity in the past until now, when they feel they are better prepared.

A teacher expresses an inclusive behaviour of openness and understanding towards a gay student who lives with his mother's rejection of this condition, as can be read in the following quote:

“I tried to help him understand the difference in paradigms, and encourage him that he is a whole person, so his sexual orientation does not make him a better or worse person, it is an aspect of his life”. (D7:23)

On the other hand, a teacher expresses that there is a type of inclusive compensation and containment with the student, in the face of a situation of discrimination observed by a colleague. The following is a quote that expresses this analysis:

“... I talked to the student, I calmed him down and explained to him that empathy is not always in everyone”. (D51:15)

In the opinion of the teachers, these experiences, about ignorance of their teaching actions, should be extinguished, given that the national and institutional regulations are already incorporating the theme of inclusion for sexual and gender diversity.

These quotes show the diverse views teachers have in relation to their experiences with students from sexual minorities. According to the analysis, there are issues around social representations (the behaviours and attitudes of teachers) regarding sexual diversity in the classroom, which still present mistreatment, such as insults and others. These teachers consider it a cultural and naturalistic practice in them (i.e., it is part of their daily life). On the contrary, it can also be seen that some of the teachers reflect more carefully on the issue and show a behaviour of acceptance and support towards the affected student. In this sense, it seems that there is still a differentiation of acceptance between the private and the public, in such a way that it manifests itself as a pseudo-acceptance. Social representations in this sense have a strong ambivalent component, which is manifested by García et al. [55], who determined that teachers' attitudes were influenced by their general philosophy about inclusion and the way they perceived that inclusion should be carried out.

Subgroup of codes or sub-categories: Thoughts and beliefs.

Teachers' thoughts and beliefs also intersect with the information they receive from students about their close environment and families. Many times, teachers take on a role of containment, support and orientation to fill the space that students' close ones cannot give them, given the negative anchorage they already have installed on sexual diversity. The following quotes are examples:

“A student dares to confide in me that he is gay and knows about the rejection of this condition by his mother; he also indicates to me that his father does not know”. (D7:21)

“In my case, I try to listen, contain and guide, and despite the years, I am still shocked by the loneliness in which these boys and girls live their sexuality”. (45:30)

On the other hand, a teacher expresses the following thought on gender diversity that must have been elaborated based on his diverse lived experiences:

“... and in gender issues, each one for various organic and/or mental reasons have decided something in their lives, voluntarily or involuntarily, and I am not the one to judge, but I am the one to guide them along the line of developing competencies, experiences, which will be an engine that will allow them labour insertion and growth”. (D22:23)

In this regard, the acceptance and reasoned thinking was to become aware of two transgender students who entered the program where a teacher develops her classes. This reads as follows:

“I accepted it in a better way since I had read and seen reports of these people, their feelings, fears, etc. Now, I must say that I accept the condition of each one of them, but I have my own thoughts about them”. (D29:17)

Teachers' beliefs about students' crisis situations are influenced by the main acceptance of their expression, such as the family. Then it would be provided by the rejection of teachers who do not know the subject, for instance, due to ignorance and lack of preparation for its full understanding, and also in the teachers who believe that their teaching role is to welcome. In this sense, as announced by Parra [56], the central role of the teacher is the

reception, conceived as the favourable dynamics among others in a given place and time, giving guidance and understanding the contexts of action to help the affected students in their successful progression in learning. It is in this sense that there is still a lack of certain gears or anchors in the group, which makes modifying such beliefs more challenging. The family and its parental role present a strong impact on the development and growth of students, since it is known that the family is the first generator of loving bonds, as stated by Ceballos [57].

#### 4.2.2. Cultural Practices Category

Within the category of cultural practices, the following two subgroups of codes or subcategories were raised: (i) inclusion mechanisms and (ii) teacher's role.

In this regard, one of the few events that occurred outside the classroom referred to demonstrations by sexual minority groups. In some cases, teachers have faced these situations and have their own appreciations of them, as the following quote shows:

"On one occasion, I was approached at the university by a collective of pro-sexual diversity students, among them, men, women and transsexuals. I had shared with some of them in a focus group on institutional accreditation. They asked me for my opinion about a leaflet they wanted to disseminate about their ideas, rights, demands, sexuality, among others."; "... interesting exercise of public formative work, that is, broad, plural, secular, diverse, intercultural". (D26:19)

In this teaching expression, we observe the strong component of the teacher's role in experiences beyond classroom teaching; that is, his or her formative action goes beyond disciplinary content.

Subgroup of codes or sub-category: Mechanisms of inclusion

In relation to inclusion mechanisms, a finding reiterated in the group of teachers investigated has to do with the requirements that teachers have in order to generate greater inclusion. They mentioned the urgency of preparing teachers on sexual diversity issues and gender orientation. Wailing and Roffee [58] stated that universities should be aware of the need for formalized diversity and inclusion programs to address contemporary experiences of exclusion. Likewise, Moriña [6] concluded that higher education should support faculty training, not only in the discipline they teach and research, but also in how to teach inclusively. For example, some comment how in class sessions they consult others about LGBTBI+ nomenclature, a situation that makes them think about the need to be more aware of new forms of expression about these types of manifestations, as seen below:

"... I would be more prepared and instructed of the new nomenclatures and definitions". (D40:11)

"I would offer some audio visual material and/or explain the relevance all the people involved in a human group". (24:6)

"... fostering a classroom environment conducive to learning, a space of trust and welcome". (D34:17)

Continuing along the same line, about those instances outside the classroom that help the full inclusion of students and that the teachers studied have manifested as concrete actions, they point out:

"... they held conferences where diversity and inclusion in university life were addressed. It is necessary to repeat instances that were positive". (D46:14)

"It would have to generate training (again) on sexual diversities and the management of good egalitarian treatment that we want to instil in the entire university community". (D54:16)

The teachers state another way of achieving inclusion in universities and express it explicitly. For example, they appeal to the ethics of respect that every human subject should have for the dignity of which he or she is the possessor, as the following quote reads:

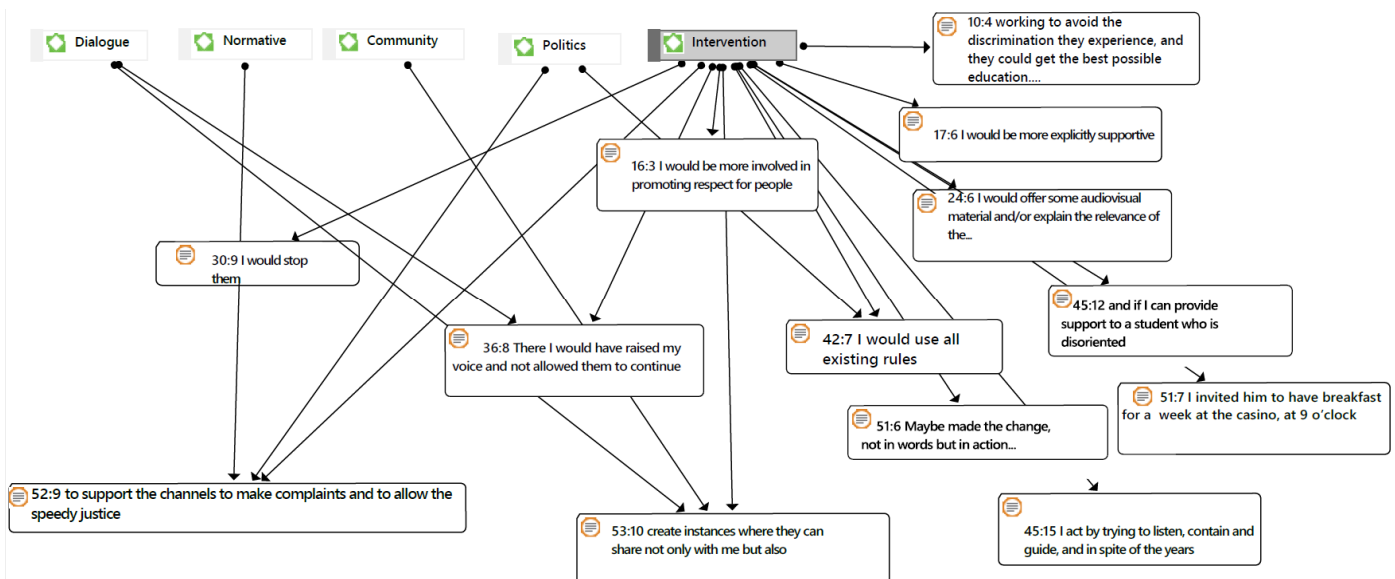
“... working to avoid the discrimination they experience, and they could obtain the respect and treatment they deserve from classmates, teachers and authorities”. (D10:17)

For the teachers, it is important that these issues be addressed collectively, by the whole community, and through regulations; that is, it is very important for them that each case or experience be addressed jointly by the team in charge of the students' education. This can be read as follows:

“I would face the situation with a work team, with the gender coordinator of the faculty and not alone. I would request a school council and a meeting with the dean”. (D49:10)

“I would use all existing rules”. (D42:7)

Figure 3 shows some examples of the mechanisms of inclusion. Specifically, the intervention strategies in favour of inclusion are the one selected in this network. For example, we have the following quote: “create instances where they can share not only with me ... ” (D53:10) or:



**Figure 3.** Mechanisms of inclusion code group network with intervention strategies details.

On the findings in the statements of the faculty, it can be understood that the regulations are recent and that it is a necessary milestone in order not to incur in discriminatory acts. In this sense, we cannot forget Article 19, Number 2, of the Political Constitution of the Chilean Republic, which bases its norm on the principle and fundamental right of equality before the law. Arciga [59] indicated that transformations occur according to the historical and contextual processes of life. This is why the critical and practical dimensions must be rooted together, since, if the critical corpus of teachers does not come into action, practices will be perpetuated. Along similar lines, Nind [60] also mentions that inclusive education implies deep transformations, within which are the teaching practices.

Subgroup of codes or sub-category: Teacher's role.

Finally, within the type of role taken by teachers, there are those who are rather passive or observational and others who play an active or intervening role. Among the quotations that show a role of observer, or one who is passive, in the face of situations of sexual diversity, as well as some cases of being passive accomplices in the face of arbitrary discrimination by colleagues and staying out of situations, are the following:



“... as male professors claiming or ‘peeling’ homosexual students, or looking out the window saying, ‘They shouldn’t even be allowed to hold hands inside the university ... how disgusting, why do they have to do that here?’, instead of shutting them up, I laughed”. (D30:11)

“My role was mainly as an observer; I did not want to get involved because I did not know the student’s reaction, and a few months later, he graduated and lost contact”. (D48:10)

Regarding those teachers who have expressed their more active teaching role in these situations, they indicate that they commit themselves outside the classroom to communicating and having a closer relationship with students of sexual minorities, in order to demystify behaviours related to homosexuality and others, not only in the students but also with their colleagues who have more rigid and not very open positions on the subject. The above can be read in the following textual portions:

“I invited him to have breakfast for a week in the casino, at 9:00 just for the academic to see that he was not contagious, as he had commented”. (D51:14)

Consequently, those teachers who have been more prepared to face these issues have gone beyond classroom activity with students and colleagues, that is, with a more active role. They have tried to demystify the prejudices of the community around sexual diversity. As mentioned by Salas and Salas [10], the evidence and need to carry out forceful actions for knowledge and, at the same time, teaching about sexual diversity is imperative. For González [61], the entire community, including teachers, must understand that sexuality is not only a personal matter but also a social and political one. In this sense, we should not continue to think that sexuality is innate; rather, he argues that it is “learned” (i.e., it is shaped and constructed throughout life for everyone). These elements of discussion are substantial to be able to train and create conversation circles, retaking these human dimensions, especially in those teachers who manifest a passive or observer role and are, sometimes, an accomplice to homophobic comments, by their lack of intervention. In the words of Moriña [6], it becomes necessary for universities to review their policies and practices to make education inclusive, ensure that all students can fully participate and that everyone can benefit from a quality teaching and learning process.

## 5. Conclusions

After the analysis carried out on expressions about beliefs, thoughts and behaviours of teachers in the classroom facing the sexual diversity of their students, it is possible to highlight the findings that emerge from the analysis, as follows:

- (a) There are three main groups of university teachers. The first group have practices of containing, listening to and supporting students from the LGBTBI+ community, who often do not have family support. This behaviour is directly related to preparation on the subject with young female teachers.
- (b) There is another group of teachers who described rather passive behaviours and attitudes, functioning as observers in situations related to sexual diversity. This is related to a lack of knowledge, fear and negative emotions towards the subject, because it is directly related to education and/or training.
- (c) Finally, there are teachers who do not accept sexual diversity; their social representation is already anchored and does not accept any modification to it, which results in a treatment that could be called homophobic and discriminatory.
- (d) The teachers perceive that the institutions have advanced in relation to generating mechanisms that favour inclusion for students belonging to this community. In their reports, they even make proposals for improvements in favour of the inclusion of the LGBTBI+ community.

### 5.1. Implications

The theoretical implications of the present study refer to the obligatory reflection on teaching behaviours in the university classroom on sexual diversity, for all those who work in the formative processes at this level. In this sense, the set of social representations analysed, and that which precedes the teaching performance, are not so obviously related to the new national political and theoretical efforts on inclusion issues, as there is still discrimination and omission. The difference, or that different other, is still not welcomed in its most complete and integral form. The impact this has on the formation of young people is controversial if we think about their preparation for the world of work, their insertion into citizenship and for the construction of a better world.

In another aspect, the practical implications of the study reveal the urgency of training and updating diversity issues, especially in sexual minorities. The approach to these issues in the classroom requires a sensitive and respectful approach, with permanent updating, in order to eradicate actions that do not work for the good of the role of the host teacher. Universities should help increase the visibility of a sexual diversity presence on campus to help prevent experiences of exclusion [50].

### 5.2. Limitations

Among the limitations of the study, we cite the methodological one. The analysis presented was global. This did not take into account the crossover between the demographic information and its relationship with the contents of the discourse of the research subjects, a situation that may be pending for another publication, due to the richness of the information. This scope could be subordinated to a rather mixed study. Social representations are determined by culture, lived experiences and religion, among other aspects. Because of this, as well as the qualitative nature of the research, the results of this study cannot be generalized.

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