Mapping and Visibility of transgender people with a doctorate degree in Brazil

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ABSTRACT

In this research I propose a mapping of transgender people who hold doctoral degrees in Brazil in the most diverse areas of knowledge, with the aim of making their achievements visible, recorded and publicized, breaking with social stigmas on the part of cisgender researchers who see transgender people only as the object of their studies, as respondents to questionnaires or participants in interviews about trans bodies, trajectories, experiences and stories. To do this, the websites of Brazil's 69 Federal Universities and 43 State Universities will be accessed, with the aim of filtering and identifying trans people who have become PhDs in their fields of knowledge. In parallel, a questionnaire will be developed and disseminated on social media with the support of Brazilian social movements and collectives such as: the Brazilian Institute of Transmasculinities (IBRAT), the National Association of Travestis and Transsexuals (ANTRA), among others. The research will be carried out within the framework of the University of São Paulo (USP) and will contribute to promoting the visibility of trans people and transvestites who have historically been excluded from many different areas of society, including universities.

Keywords: Trans visibility. Mapping. Doctorate. Brazil.

Introduction

The research proposal began with a social project I developed on Instagram called PhD Trans Brazil, to make transgender people with doctorates in Brazil visible and to publicize their scientific work. After creating the project, which now has more than 1,300 followers, I received hundreds of messages from transgender and cisgender people praising the initiative and recognizing its impact on Brazilian society, considering the Brazilian scenario that excludes and makes transgender people invisible in the most diverse social spaces, be it in schools, companies, or universities.

Studies estimate that in Brazil only 0.02% of transgender people have accessed Higher Education (Benevides & Nogueira, 2021), and a large part of the transgender population in the country faces several challenges in accessing basic rights such as health, school, quality food and the job market (Benevides, 2025).

In the Brazilian university context, Pfeil & Pfeil (2022) emphasize that transgender people are made invisible, from undergraduate and graduate studies to university teaching. Research produced by cisgender people is legitimized by universities, while research produced by transgender people is invalidated and considered unimportant.

Universities reproduce violence and silencing against transgender people (Matos, 2022).

Cisnormativity, which is reflected in practices that impose cisgenderism as a social norm, is also present in the context of universities. In this sense, the inclusion, permanence, and rise of transgender people results in the breaking of stigmas and structural barriers that have been built throughout history against these bodies.

Given the demand for visibility and recognition of the academic trajectories and scientific productions of transgender people in Brazil, aiming to break with social stereotypes practiced by cisgender researchers when viewing transgender people only as objects of study, questionnaire respondents and research participants, my research has the following question: How to map and give visibility to transgender people who have a doctorate degree in Brazil?

My research connects with Wikimedia projects by presenting the trajectories of people from minority groups who have historically been and continue to be excluded from opportunities in society. These are people who have been cast to the margins. The social impact of my research is associated with presenting to cisgender society that yes, transgender people also exist in universities, are researchers, doctors, and subjects of knowledge, giving visibility to those who need it.

The proposed work can begin as early as July 1, 2025 and must be completed by the grant end date, which will be June 30, 2026. The mapping will result in a large database for Wikimedia, containing information about each transgender person in Brazil who holds a doctorate degree, in the most diverse areas of knowledge, contributing to the visibility of each person, being able to connect them with the job market, being seen as a possibility, a possible body, recognizing their potential.

Related work

The research is supported by the literature on the invisibility of transgender people in the most diverse spaces of Brazilian society (Silva, 2022; Benevides, 2025), including universities (Pfeil & Pfeil, 2022). In view of the above, I propose in this research the development of a mapping in order to identify transgender people who have a doctorate degree, creating a database with the support of Wikimedia, so that their trajectories can be recorded, disseminated, and made visible to society, breaking with social stereotypes of cisgender people who only see transgender people on the margins of society (Benevides, 2025).

Wikimedia's financial support will help to place transgender PhD holders at the center of discussions, breaking down cisnormative barriers. The research will also have an impact on transgender people who are pursuing master's and doctoral degrees, so that they can get to know transgender people who are pioneers in their fields and develop networks of scientific collaboration between these people.

This is an unprecedented, innovative and inclusive study that aims to make visible, record and publicize the achievements of transgender people who have a doctorate in Brazil. I have noticed that the media mostly shares negative information about trans people, in addition to their suffering. My research follows the opposite direction, sharing academic trajectories and achievements in a positive sense, recognizing the potential of transgender people for the development of quality Science.

Methods

I will use a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the trajectories of transgender people with doctoral degrees in Brazil. The strategy for data collection will be through documentary and exploratory research. I have over 15,000 followers on Instagram and over 4,000 followers on Threads. On these networks, I will share a post asking transgender people with doctoral degrees to participate in the comments, explaining the purpose and impacts of the research on their academic trajectories. The posts will also be shared by non-profit organizations focused on the inclusion of trans people in society, including the National Association of Travestis and Transsexuals (ANTRA) and the Brazilian Institute of Transmasculinities (IBRAT), which together have over 200,000 followers on their Instagram profiles. The comments will be collected for analysis to identify transgender people who have doctoral degrees. In parallel, I will search all websites of the 69 federal universities and 43 state universities in Brazil, aiming to identify articles that highlight transgender people who have graduated from doctorates. I will triangulate the data between social media, institutional websites and the literature on transgender invisibility and visibility in the context of Brazilian universities and science.

The research will result in two products. The first is a scientific article on mapping and the importance of transgender visibility in the university context, which will be submitted to a journal with a high scientific impact factor. The second product will be a new, innovative and inclusive database for Wikimedia, containing a list of transgender people who have a doctorate in Brazil, highlighting their academic trajectories and their careers in Brazilian science, highlighting their areas of training and professional activity.

To develop the mapping research and create the database, I will need support from a doctoral student at the University of São Paulo, Brazil, who will receive a monthly grant over a 12-month period to carry out the research and deliver the two products.

Expected output

The research will result in two main products, one referring to the submission of a scientific article to a reference journal, with a high impact factor, high H Index and Q1. The second product refers to a database that will be built throughout the development of the research, containing information about transgender people who have a doctorate in the most diverse areas of knowledge, presented by area of knowledge, making it possible to identify and question which are the least inclusive areas that have few or no transgender people with doctorates, in addition to the most inclusive areas that have several transgender people with doctorates. In addition, the database on Wikimedia can be widely disseminated, so that companies and universities know these transgender people and can offer them opportunities, whether for work in the job market or for the development of future research.

Considering that there are no other initiatives to provide visibility to transgender people with doctorates, this is a seminal and fundamental research project to make female researchers with doctorates visible in Brazil, and they will be recognized through the products that will be delivered after the development of this research. Wikimedia's support is essential for the development of this research and the construction of the first database of trans people with doctorates in Brazil, a country where the transgender population is invisible in the most diverse spaces of society, including universities.

Risks

The risk is that it is not possible to make all trans people in Brazil who have a doctorate visible, because they do not have social media or have not been visible on institutional websites. In this sense, to reduce the risk, in Instagram posts, I will also try to ask people if they know other transgender people with a doctorate degree so that they can also indicate ways to get in touch with these people.

Community impact plan

The main community that will be impacted by the research will be the Brazilian transgender population, and the initiative will serve as a basis for replication in other countries and contexts. In partnership with Wikimedia, I intend to publish the database so that it can be consulted so that each transgender person with a PhD can be recognized, valued and have their potential made visible in society. The research will break down barriers and social stigmas, demonstrating that yes, transgender people can and do work in universities, producing quality science.

May the academic and scientific trajectories of Brazilian transgender people be recognized, recorded and publicized, so that these people are not forgotten in history. In this sense, I ask for financial support so that research can be developed and hundreds of transgender people can be recognized and made visible. Making visible what cisnormative society insists on making invisible, forgotten, excluded.

Evaluation

I believe in the potential of this research. It is a courageous, unprecedented, humane, innovative and inclusive initiative. This research will be a basis for the development of similar research in other contexts and countries. Transgender people are daily made invisible, invalidated and excluded in society. This is a project that proposes the visibility, recognition and appreciation of transgender people who exist and resist in Brazilian universities.

Budget

Budget link:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/14xBhsx9Vmjs6tpy1I_eh3-

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