What's all the Buzz about?: 'Lightyear' and the attitudes toward homosexuality and same-sex parenting on social media in Ecuador

¿Por qué tanto escándalo?: 'Lightyear' y las actitudes hacia la homosexualidad y la homoparentalidad en redes sociales de Ecuador

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The study of attitudes towards homosexuality and same-sex parenting has employed multiple strategies to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. In this article, we analyze comments on public social media that arose following the release and controversy surrounding a scene featuring a kiss between two women in the movie Lightyear, released in 2022. The objective of this article was to identify attitudes and the main arguments that people provide in favor or against homosexuality and same-sex parenting. **Methodology:** Digital and print media outlets in Ecuador that published news about the movie were identified. A sample of 707 comments was extracted and a content analysis of the comments was conducted. **Results:** The number of 335 comments were opposing homosexuality and same-sex parenting, 23 supporting. Seven themes were identified: child protection, social aspects, imposition and indoctrination, double standards, religious arguments, attitudinal ambiguity, and biological reproduction and nature. The arguments, among other things, reveal a high concern for the well-being of children associated with beliefs about the origin of sexual orientation, the role of adults in protecting children from what is considered abnormal, and the role of families in filtering the content their children should watch. **Discussion y Conclusions:** There is rejection towards homosexuality and same-sex parenting that is based on negative views of sexual and family diversity, socially propagated theories about sexual orientation, the role of the family, and child development.

Keywords: Attitudes; Homosexuality; Same-sex parenting; Sexual diversity; Hate speech; Social media.

RESUMEN

Introducción: El estudio de las actitudes hacia la homosexualidad y homoparentalidad ha empleado múltiples mecanismos para recolectar y analizar datos cuantitativos y cualitativos. En este artículo, se analizan los comentarios en redes sociales públicas que se suscitaron ante el estreno y la polémica alrededor de la escena de un beso entre dos mujeres en la película 'Lightyear' estrenada en 2022. El objetivo de este artículo fue identificar las actitudes y argumentos que las personas proveen para estar a favor o en contra de la homosexualidad y la homoparentalidad. **Metodología:** Se identificaron los medios de comunicación digitales y escritos en Ecuador que publicaron noticias alrededor de la película. Una vez identificadas las noticias, se extrajo una muestra de 707 comentarios y se procedió a realizar un análisis de contenido. **Resultados:** 335 comentarios fueron en contra, 23 a favor. Se identificaron 7 temas: resguardo a la infancia, aspectos sociales, imposición y adoctrinamiento, doble moral, argumentos religiosos, ambigüedad actitudinal, y reproducción biológica y naturaleza. Los argumentos revelan una alta preocupación por el bienestar de los niños que se relacionan con creencias relativas al origen de la orientación sexual, el rol de los adultos de cuidar a los niños contra lo que se considera anormal, así como el papel de las familias de filtrar el contenido que sus hijos deben ver. **Discusión y conclusiones:** Existe rechazo hacia la homosexualidad y la homoparentalidad que se fundamenta en visiones negativas de la diversidad sexual y familiar, teorías socialmente difundidas sobre la orientación sexual, el rol de la familia y el desarrollo de los niños.

Palabras clave: Actitudes; Homosexualidad; Homoparentalidad; Diversidad sexual; Discursos de odio; Redes sociales.

1.   Introduction

Over the years, parenthood by same-sex individuals and couples has become an increasingly common reality. In Latin America, there are currently four countries that allow some form of individual or joint adoption by lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB)[1] individuals and their partners: Uruguay (2009), Argentina (2010), Brazil (2010) and Colombia (2015) (Costa y Salinas-Quiroz, 2021). In Ecuador, despite the fact that in 2019 same-sex couples were recognized with the right to form families through marriage (Corte Constitucional del Ecuador, 2019), there are still prohibitions to participate in adoption processes (Ministerio de Inclusión Ecónomica y Social, 2023). Likewise, there are no clear regulations for assisted reproduction processes in the country (Torres et al., 2019).

In the midst of the political and legal situation of a country that limits people's ability to form families, there are social factors that probably generate resistance and fear in LGB people when it comes to the possibility of having children. In particular, the existence of negative beliefs and attitudes in the social environment can convey the idea that their families will not be accepted or welcomed and that, in addition, they may be victims of discrimination and exclusion in areas such as family, work or education (Pacilli et al., 2011; Vecho et al., 2019). For this reason, it is important to study social attitudes. Doing so allows us to obtain an idea of the type of beliefs that circulate in the social environment in order to identify possible intervention strategies that contribute to changing them (Costa et al., 2019).

In Ecuador, studies have been carried out in order to understand attitudes towards homosexuality and same-sex parenting based on surveys (Hermosa-Bosano et al., 2021, 2022, 2023). These studies have provided clues as to which variables are associated with attitudes toward both homosexuality, LGB rights and adoption by same-sex couples. However, the results are inconclusive due to their quantitative nature, as well as the self-report format and sampling methods that were used (Hermosa-Bosano et al., 2023).

A potential source to identify attitudes could be social networks and, specifically, the comments that people write in reaction to news and other posts concerning LGB people and their families (Silva y Silva, 2021). Previous research has found that social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, among others, can be means through which people can quickly produce and disseminate messages of hate and rejection towards communities such as LGB people (Ștefăniță y Buf, 2021). Likewise, social networks are media that increase the possibility of people accidentally or deliberately consuming hate speech content, which in turn can contribute to reinforce their own negative attitudes (Castaño-Pulgarín et al., 2021; Soral et al., 2018).

In order to analyze these attitudes, we decided to conduct a study based on comments written by social network users in reaction to news related to the movie Lightyear, released in June 2022. This Pixar Studios children's film tells the story of the character who inspired the toy Buzz Lightyear, a well-known figure in the Toy Story franchise, released in 1995 (Hernando, 2022). Within the film, the character of Alisha Hawthorne, Buzz's best friend and adventure partner, appears in a scene with her partner, Kiko, and her son. In the sequence, the characters exchange a kiss for seconds.

As a result of this scene, several news reports were published over the depiction of a kiss between two people of the same sex in a children's movie. The news generated such international controversy that the film was banned in 14 countries in Asia and the Middle East (Rittman, 2022). Disney initially removed the scene, however, after the attention of several activist groups and the same employees of Pixar Studios, they decided to reinstate and maintain it despite the possible economic losses it could represent (Weaver, 2023).

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[1]. This research focuses on the analysis of attitudes towards gay, lesbian and bisexual people because of its interest in analysing attitudes related to sexual orientation. We recognise that this leaves out of the analysis attitudes towards transgender and other gender identity populations. It is imperative that future studies make efforts to uncover the contents of these attitudes and the range of particularities associated with them (e.g., beliefs about transition processes and gender identity formation).

In Ecuador, although it was not officially banned, several groups spoke out against the broadcasting of the film (López, 2022). Some national media reported on the film and its controversy. Given the amount of coverage this news had, and due to the importance of social networks in the dissemination of content, their role in the exposure of opinions and their potential impact on people's attitudes, this study aimed to identify the attitudes of people in Ecuador regarding homosexuality and same-sex parenting based on the comments made on public social networks to news of the Lightyear movie.

1.1. Attitudes towards same-sex parenting

The study of attitudes towards homosexuality and same-sex parenting has been characterized by quantitative research, based on surveys and self-report forms, in order to describe attitudes, identify population trends, establish comparisons between countries and contexts, and identify related variables. Generally speaking, these types of studies demonstrate the existence of favorable changes over time, indicating a greater acceptance of LGB people in different parts of the world, especially in younger generations (Gerhards, 2010; Smith, 2011). In Latin America, a significant increase in acceptance of LGB people has been found, partially due to the enactment of laws in favor of diversity, non-discrimination and the recognition of individual and family rights (Barrientos, 2016; Navarro et al., 2019). Nevertheless, this progress has had a particular evolution for each of the countries in the region (Chaux et al., 2021). It has been identified that people in Southern Cone countries such as Uruguay, Argentina and Chile tend to have more favorable attitudes while in countries such as Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador people tend to express lower levels of support (Costa y Salinas-Quiroz, 2021).

In order to identify which factors contribute to the direction and intensity of attitudes, their relationships with demographic, psychological and social variables have been analyzed. Research in this area also found that women, more liberal, younger and more educated people tend to support LGB homosexuality and parenthood with higher levels of support (Costa y Salinas-Quiroz, 2019; Gross et al., 2018; Pacilli et al., 2011). Likewise, it has been found that beliefs about the origin and development of sexual orientation (Frias-Navarro et al., 2015), as well as the degree of closeness and contact with LGB people (Costa et al., 2015) explain part of the attitudinal differences. When people have the conviction that sexual orientation is an innate characteristic, genetically determined and free of choice or volition on the part of individuals, people tend to have more approving attitudes. In contrast, people tend to experience higher levels of rejection when they believe that sexual orientation is an attribute that is taught, learned by observation, or socially determined by the environments in which people grow up (Frias-Navarro et al., 2015; Rye y Meaney, 2010). The studies also indicate that attitudes tend to differ according to the topic about which people are asked. For example, there tends to be more agreement with same-sex couples getting married or having civil and employment rights, as opposed to having children and starting families (Costa et al., 2019).

Qualitative studies have also been useful in gaining a deeper understanding of beliefs about same-sex parenting. Clarke (2001), for example, analyzed arguments provided in magazine articles, television programs, and data obtained from talkshows. From the analysis of the content of these sources, elements against LGB parenting were identified as religious, biology-based arguments, aspects related to parental selfishness, the absence of different-sex parental figures, as well as the potential developmental effects on their children.

Similarly, in a study conducted in Ecuador Hermosa-Bosano y colaboradores (2022), an analysis was carried out regarding the arguments written by people after the random presentation of a cartoon with a story about heterosexual and homosexual couples interested in adopting a child. After the story, people had to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with the adoption and their reasons, through an open-ended question. The authors organized the arguments into nine types: three typically used against, four usually in favor, and another group of arguments that could not

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be classified because of their ambiguous nature. The comments against usually alluded to the importance of biological reproduction, the preservation of the traditional family, as well as the possible consequences for the children of the social disapproval and discrimination to which they would be exposed. The arguments in favor, on the contrary, referred to the importance of social networks regarding families, social stability and economic resources to facilitate adoption processes, adoption as an equal right that should not be denied on the grounds of sexual orientation, as well as others that included aspects related to the qualities of the adopters.

Similar to studies such as that of Clarke (2001) and Costa et al. (2013), the results proved that, behind these arguments, there were multiple justifications masking unfounded prejudices, both personal and societal, concerning same-sex parenting. In particular, the use of arguments supposedly based on religious precepts, medicine and psychology were found to be ways of justifying the perpetuation of prejudice (Clarke, 2001). Thus, when people use arguments based on what they believe the Church or science says, they are really covering up their own prejudices; moreover, blame is cast on LGB parents and society's responsibility is obviated.

1.2. Social networks and attitudes

A little explored territory for the study of attitudes towards homosexuality and same-sex parenting are social networks (Silva y Silva, 2021; Ștefăniță y Buf, 2021). Analyzing the interactions, debates and discussions posted in these media can be an opportunity to understand more about what people think about a given topic in an organic medium, without the need for deliberate interventions or the creation of fact-finding scenarios.

Social networks, therefore, can be understood as a platform for the dissemination of information and the establishment of close connections between different issuers and the receiving public (Castaño-Pulgarín et al., 2021). Thanks to the ability of social networks to reach a mass audience, broadcasting users can generate a significant impact and expand the reach of their message. According to Ramírez-Pérez et al. (2021), this high capacity for connection provided by social networks has a great influence on people's daily lives and their perception of the world. Part of its power on people is explained by the ability of messages to be read, shared and sent by millions of people in the same environment, which increases the likelihood that the message will be reproduced and reinforce the sender's discourse. People, when receiving these messages, process the information in different ways and act according to their own ways of thinking, so that the information transmitted does not always have a uniform impact on all users (Soral et al., 2018).

For authors such as Xiao et al. (2018), the way in which a user influences others is reflected in the ability to trigger chain reactions in other users. The importance and power of a user in a social network depends on their level of credibility and hierarchy within that network (Xiao et al., 2018). Thus, the media have the power to determine and influence people's thoughts and lives. In a society where certain media have greater reach and power, the dominant discourse will be the one they make available to others. It has been identified that certain news and publications have a greater impact than others depending on the media. For example, a well-known media with thousands of followers in its profile manages to reach more people and its message is passed on more times than any other news item, so it is important to pay attention to its discourse and the way in which the content is passed on (Xiao et al., 2018).

Now, with social networks, individuals also have power because they have the opportunity to expose their points of view and generate reactions in others, either in support of their opinions or against them. According to Xiao et al. (2018), with Web 2.0, users are no longer obliged to act as mere consumers, but have the opportunity to participate and become prosumers, i.e. people who produce and consume content at the same time. These are characterized by generating their own content according to the news and media they are informed about, so that their role as producers is closely linked to the channels they consume. In this way, as García-Galera et al. (2014) points out, "users, converted into active receivers who alternate this role with that of transmitters or producers of messages and contents, are also the channel transmitting information" (p. 4). Thus, audiences take an active role within these communities with their comments and subsequently, with the customization of their own discourse.

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Autonomy and the lack of strict control mechanisms to regulate and eliminate content that incites hatred towards others, generate ideal conditions for people to publish content aimed at misinforming, polarizing and disseminating hate speech (Castaño-Pulgarín et al., 2021; Chetty y Alathur, 2018; Matamoros-Fernández y Farkas, 2021). Research has found that social networks can be a platform for the broadcasting of hate speech. The possibility offered by these sites to spread information quickly, at low cost in terms of time and resources, as well as the advantage of anonymity, make these platforms propitious environments for this phenomenon (Chetty y Alathur, 2018). In general terms, hate speech is characterized by the broadcasting of offensive verbal, non-verbal or symbolic material aimed at denigrating or minimizing a group of people according to their identity characteristics or their belonging to a certain social category. Unlike cyberbullying, where people usually target individuals, hate speech-related behaviors are directed at groups and collectives (Ștefăniță y Buf, 2021).

The existence of hate speech related to gender, race/ethnicity, political ideology, religion, and sexual orientation has been found (Castaño-Pulgarín et al., 2021). Studies on this subject have found a considerable psychological impact as a consequence of people's exposure to this type of discourse. In the case of LGB people, it has been found that exposure to hateful discourses can fuel feelings of fear, shame and sadness (Silva y Silva, 2021; Ștefăniță y Buf, 2021). This in turn can lead people to experience anxiety and depression and the internalization of prejudice and stigma.

Similarly, it has been suggested that prolonged exposure to such discourses can lead to desensitization and normalization of violence towards LGB people by both heterosexuals and members of the same community (Soral et al., 2018). Research reveals how exposure to hate discourse can decrease the levels of empathy that people may feel towards others and, on the contrary, increase levels of contempt and negative polarization towards minority groups (Bilewicz y Soral, 2020). The presence of such discourse also generates a sense of a descriptive norm that promotes the denigration of minority groups, which in turn leads to the erosion of anti-discriminatory social norms. Likewise, through a process of naturalization, people lose the ability to recognize the offensive and discriminatory nature of discourse (Bilewicz y Soral, 2020).

2.   Objectives

This study was aimed at identifying the attitudes of people in Ecuador in relation to homosexuality and same-sex parenting from comments made in public social networks before news of the movie Lightyear.

3.   Methodology

To compile the news and publications, the authours carried out an initial mapping of mass and non-mass media, whether independent or not, both written press and television existing in Ecuador. Three websites were used to identify print media: prensaescrita.com, the Centro de Información Bibliotecaria ESPOL and prensadigital.ec. To identify the country's television channels, lists of national channels were found at tvenvivoecuador.com and in the annex of Ecuador's television channels on Wikipedia. Both digital and print media and both types of media were identified in the mapping. Subsequently, there was an identification of those media in which publications related to the Lightyear movie had been published. The Google search engine was used as well as the search engine of each web page to find the news. The search criteria were based on keywords such as: "Lightyear", "Lightyear Ecuador" and "Buzzlightyear Ecuador". Table 1 shows the media in Ecuador that published about the movie. All the news were published in media from Costa (Coast) and Sierra (Highlands) regions. No publications were found in the Amazon or Insular regions of the country.

Initially, 46 news items published digitally were identified; out of these, nine news items were excluded because they did not have written comments in response. Out of the remaining 37 news items, 14 were identified whose headlines were repeated, giving a sample of 23 items. Out of these, two news items were excluded because it was not possible to access the comments. Finally, a sample of 21 news items was obtained.

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Table 1. *Media that published news related to Lightyear.*

	Written Press	Television
Costa Region		
Guayas	*El Universo*	BalaoTV
	Expreso	Ecuavisa
	Extra	TC Televisión
	Qué!	RTS
	La República	
	Vistazo	
Manabí	*El Diario*	Oromar
	La Marea	Manavisión
Sierra Region		
Cotopaxi	*La Primicia*	
Pichincha	*El Comercio*	Teleamazonas
	La Hora	
	Metro Ecuador	
	Primicias	
	GK	
	Forbes EC	

Source: Own elaboration.

In the final sample of 21 news items, as many as 35 767 comments were identified with an average of 1703.1 comments. Due to the large number and variability of comments, the first 50 comments of each news item were collected. If a news item had fewer comments, the total number of comments was used.

To form the qualitative database, comments that met the following criteria were transferred to Excel: 1) to come from news items that have Facebook or Instagram pages, 2) to be replies to the main news item and not a direct response to other users' comments and 3) to include text only or a combination of text with images, gifs or emojis. Comments in which people used only emojis, gifs or images were not included in the database. In the process of creating the database, the text was copied and the word "image", "gif" or "emoji" was placed between asterisks. Due to their frequency of use, and in order to avoid losing the meaning of the emojis in use, an Emojipedia page was made available, where the common use and meaning of each emoji is explained (https://emojipedia.org/). The final base included 707 comments. As part of the ethical procedures, the names of the people in the database were not copied. Likewise, the sex of the individuals was not recorded in order to avoid making assumptions about the gender or gender identity of the individuals.

In order to process the information, a deductive content analysis was carried out. (Mayrin, 2000). The comments were analyzed independently by three of the researchers. Initially, the intention was to make use of codes that were established a priori considering previous studies on attitudes towards same-sex parenting (Clarke, 2001; Hermosa-Bosano et al., 2022). Following the analysis of those studies, the comments were classified according to their type (i.e., supportive, unsupportive, ambiguous) and also the type of argument (biological reproduction and nature, social structure and function of the family, social approval and consequences for the children). However, after reading the comments, it was necessary to inductively develop new codes because they did not necessarily fit with the previously reviewed literature. To review the results, the three researchers held meetings to reach consensus. Finally, a fourth researcher reviewed the final results matrix to ensure the validity of the analysis. To ensure the reliability of the content analysis, we also considered the

recommendations of Elo et al. (2014) in each phase of the study (preparation, organization, and reporting). The results are presented qualitatively, although category frequencies are also included for a quantitative view of the information. It should also be mentioned that the study was reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of the first author's university (2022-EXC-001)

4. Results

4.1. Type of comments

The analysis had two levels. First, comments were classified according to their degree of support or disapproval of sexual diversity (i.e., homosexuality, LGB populations), family diversity (i.e., homoparental families) or both Initially, it was planned to classify the trends into three groups (comments in favor, against and ambiguous); however, during the analysis process it became evident that there were two types of ambiguous comments, those that tended to be more in favor of sexual and/or family diversity (SFD) and those with a more opposing tone. A more convenient classification of the comments into four groups was determined: supporting, pro-oriented ambiguous, counter-oriented ambiguous, and opposed. In the process, comments were also excluded under the criterion "does not apply" if they referred to other topics that did not relate to the film or were not understood (e.g., labeling another person, laughter ["jajaja"]). Table 2 shows the definitions given, the total number of comments for each trend, as well as examples for each type of comment. As shown, the vast majority of the comments were classified as against and a small number were in favor.

Tabla 2. *Número de comentarios de acuerdo con el grado de favorabilidad-desfavorabilidad.*

Trend	Description	Comments	Example
Supporting	Comments that explicitly mention acceptance, support, respect or openness towards the SFD.	23	*(...) instead of banning this kind of movies, we should educate our children and make them understand from an early age that there are different sexual preferences and that we must all be respected and accepted. By acting with restrictions we are creating abusive and homophobic children and the only thing they will achieve is that children with different sexual preferences will continue to suffer because of the closed-minded society.*
Pro-oriented ambiguous	Comments that implicitly suggest acceptance, support, respect or openness towards SFD. However, they do not include explicit elements about such acceptance.	101	*In this country, every day 2 cases of sexual abuse are registered and, even so, it is estimated that 8 out of 10 sexual abuses are not reported due to negligence and socio-environmental pressure as they are perpetrated by people close to the immediate social or family circle of the surviving infant. Statistically the real danger is you homophobic curuchupas; not a movie that shows 2 seconds of a kiss between two women.*

Counter-oriented ambiguous	Comments that implicitly suggest opposition, nonconformity, discontent, rejection, or dislike of SFD. However, they do not include explicit elements about such opposition.	25	*Let's not criticize. Maybe these children will form a family in the future *EMOJI Family: Man, Woman, Girl, Boy* because of the good values they have been given.*
Opposing	Comments that explicitly suggest opposition, nonconformity, discontent, rejection, or dislike of SFD.	335	*My full support for the banning of this film, enough of so much social degeneracy.*

Source: Own elaboration.

4.2. Types of arguments used

The second part of the analysis was aimed at identifying the type of arguments used by people to justify their standpoint. After reading and analyzing the comments, 11 codes were obtained and organized into 7 categories; in some cases, the codes constituted a category by themselves. Some comments were classified into more than one category. The categories and their codes are listed below: child protection (3 codes, 261 comments), social aspects (2 codes, 156 comments), imposition and indoctrination (135 comments), double standards (2 codes, 96 comments), religious arguments (33 comments), attitudinal ambiguity (31 comments), and biological reproduction and nature (17 comments).

4.2.1. Child protection (261 comments)

This category includes everything related to the consequences of exposing children and adolescents to examples and representations of homosexuality or same-sex parenting, how to prevent this exposure and its consequences. The category contains three codes: not suitable for children (138 comments), adult protection (76 comments) and consequences for children (47 comments).

Comments within the code not suitable for children state that children should not be exposed to content depicting SFD either because of their developmental stage, age or cognitive ability For example: (...) *Whoever wants to be homosexual has the right to do so, we must respect that. But it is NOT right that they want to impose that thought to children who are not able to distinguish whether it is right or not that simple "kiss"* or *Children do not have analytical skills or a formed character to make a decision, so we must let them be children (...) when they are 16 or 18 they will become aware and they will be the ones to decide which orientation or ideologies to support... (...).*

There is an adult-centric view underlying these arguments in which it is assumed that children are unable to understand such scenes or make decisions about them. It is striking that the exposure of a kiss between two women raises, in some adults, a call to protect children. This involves a duty of care for children, filtering or restricting what is appropriate or inappropriate. For example: (...) *everyone protects their family as they see fit, (...) parents have the right to decide whether they watch it or not!!!* Behind these ideas there is evidence of fears related to the possible awakening of desire and sexual curiosity that the exposure of a kiss may bring and, beyond that, the need for adults to direct this desire towards heterosexuality. Sexual diversity, in this sense, is seen as a deviation that should be avoided in order to reduce the probability of the development of different sexual orientations or identities. In one of the comments, for example, the following is stated:

> (...) *it is not discrimination, it is a protective filter until they are able to understand, analyze and make their own decisions, which takes years.* (...) *You have to filter out behaviors and behaviors that can influence a child's decision making or character development.* (...) *IT IS MY JOB AS A PARENT TO ACT AS A FILTER, until my children can make their own decisions.*

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Behind these comments there are also other ideas that convey disapproval towards homosexuality and that are related to the possible consequences for children derived from exposure to homo-affective expressions. The consequence most frequently evidenced in the comments is related to the development of attractions for people of the same sex after the observation of contents and representations of diversity. One of the comments illustrates this very point: (...) *although* [it may seem] *harmless it affects children* [who] *are just learning to identify, learn and relate to other friends... [let's remember that] children are like a sponge, they observe everything and absorb it*. Parents, under this logic, are then responsible for ensuring their children's heterosexuality, showing them -or hiding from them- what is considered correct, normal and desirable in society. In one of the comments, for example, it is stated: *I would have to be crazy to take my children to see something that could affect them emotionally or be out of line with the principles they see at home.*

4.2.2. Social aspects (156 comments)

This category covers comments in which people express how much society approves or rejects homosexuality and same-sex parenting. In this type of comments, people refer to society as an entity composed of a set of traditions, norms, values and beliefs that are threatened by SFD because it threatens its structure and functioning. Sometimes this same criterion is used to emphasize that diversity must be respected. The comments within this category, therefore, range along a spectrum with endpoints. This category groups two codes: comments alluding to the normality/abnormality of homosexuality/same-sex parenting (84 comments) and the level of social approval/disapproval of SFD (72 comments).

Within the normality/abnormality code there are comments referring to homosexuality as normal or abnormal, good or bad, healthy or sick. These types of comments generally have a negative connotation, associating homosexuality with mental disorders. Examples of such thoughts include: *Disgusting film that thinks that mental illness is normal, It is an abomination that they want to pervert the minds of our children... My God so much filth*. As it is possible to observe, heterosexuality is once again positioned as the standard to be followed while the expression of other identities is a deviation that, from their perspective, is trying to be normalized by certain groups that seek to promote and even encourage the development of homosexuality in children. This is reflected in the following comment: (...) *they are bullies, trying to normalize homosexuality in children in this way is being disgraceful* (...).

Likewise, in this type of comments, it is assumed that sexual orientation is learned by observation, or even a disease that could be 'contagious' if actions are not taken to stop its 'spread'. In response to this, some people choose to make comments calling for action to prevent children's exposure to the film by banning it. Some people, for example, expressed things like: *I fully support the banning of this movie, enough of such social degeneration or Boycott this movie to make it clear to Disney that we will not tolerate them perverting our children*. These comments denote social rejection and disapproval and incite public opposition to representations of SFD.

On the other hand, the code level of social approval/disapproval encompasses comments that allude to the acceptance or rejection of homosexuality/same-sex parenting, emphasizing the constitution and role of the family. For example: *Respect for children must be a constant, as well as the decision of societies that decide to restrict these demonstrations that whatever they say do not reflect natural behavior*. According to these standpoints, society's duty is to protect children from "unnatural" demonstrations or those that depart from heteronorma. On the other hand, it is worth mentioning that there are also some people who observe sexual diversity as a normal expression of sexuality. One person, for example, notes the following:

> (...) *they are alarmed by a kiss, but there they are, watching family time "comedies" full of racism, xenophobia and homophobia.... *EMOJI Face With Rolling Eyes* Whether they want it or not, homosexual love is NORMAL! IT'S LOVE, PERIOD!*

As will be discussed below, these types of comments often tend to question homophobic ideas, criticizing these types of standpoints, labeling them as hypocrisy or double standards.

4.2.3.   Imposition and indoctrination (135 comments)

This category includes comments that identify and question the imposed indoctrination and opinion of the people involved in the making of the film and, in general, the film industry. In this type of publications, people often state the existence of hidden interests to teach children about SFD and to promote and encourage homosexuality in them. One of the comments, for example, the following is stated: *Enough of shoving their* [gender ideology] (...) *they're gay or whatever* [they] *are... I don't care but* [they] *want to shove their faggots in our kids yeah* [go] *fuck yourselves. Same thing is Netflix.*

Further analysis of the comments reveals a number of ideas related to the role of the family, the media and the state in people's lives. Indeed, one of the elements that stand out is related to the alleged attack on the family in terms of its role as responsible for the education and formation and welfare of children:

> (…) *I ask: what do they gain by confusing the heads of the little ones?????* (…) *This is the cultural battle against the family, they do it from all fronts and romanticize this issue that is clearly an adult issue?*

From this perspective, parents fulfill two functions, one of an individual nature aimed at protecting and satisfying the needs of their children, and a social one, in which they act as agents that guarantee the transmission and perpetuation of culture and society. Indeed, many parents see themselves as the owners and guardians of their children and, therefore, they are the ones who must give consent on what they can and cannot watch. In one of the comments, for example, it is mentioned how the family has a role in deciding what children can watch and learn: (…) *As parents with principles and values we have the right to decide what our children can watch. That is called R E S P E C T!* From their perspective, neither the state nor the media have the right to instill ways of thinking different from those promoted in the family. This tension reflects a debate about the role of the state and the private spheres. From this logic, the public power (i.e., industries and the State itself) should respect their autonomy and provide elements so that parents can make decisions about what their children should believe and think.

However, another element that stands out in the comments is related to a tension and struggle between majority and minority groups. Some of the comments, for example, position sexual minorities as groups that want to abuse and demand more rights than those already won at the moment (e.g., the right to non-discrimination, the right to marriage) wishing to move from acceptance to "promotion" of homosexuality: *it is not being homophobic since it is one thing to accept that it is what they asked for and today they are accepted, but now they are asking us to promote, then what else are they going to ask for?* Another person even states that: *Before that was forbidden, now it is legal, in a couple of years it WILL BE MANDATORY.*

Given this, some people feel that the majority social group should unite to protect children by banning the film and the exposure of this type of scenes. The following comment is an example: [This] *minority that is trying to impose [this] absurd ideology *EMOJI Face Smiling In Cold Sweat*.... (...) Personally it's man and woman, period...!!!!! And the majority of us who think differently must stop these "ideological impositions".* Additionally, people who identify themselves as part of the majority group often put themselves in a position where they are offended by the supposed demands of the minority and where they know they will be judged as 'backward' or 'conservative'. One person, for example, sarcastically writes: *They demand respect, but don't respect the opinion of others #Soyretrogrado (I am old-fashioned) or should I say "RETROGRADE" to be inclusive.* Another person also mentions that: there is a trend to think you are brilliant when you accept the imposition of gender ideology... because if you don't, you are an idiot, a fool or a backward person.

Other comments put sexual orientation as a characteristic that does not deserve more attention or about which no 'promotion' should be made through its representation in a film. According to these people, these types of scenes in movies correspond to an "inclusive fashion". Film companies, from their point of view, only seek to make money through the representation of morally incorrect realities.

4.2.4.   Double standards (96 comments)

This category groups the comments of those who question those who are against homosexuality/same-sex parenting. In this type of publications, people usually draw attention to the reactions of some people and sectors of society in relation to the film. Those who made these comments usually put forward arguments that were categorized as supporting or having a certain degree of favorability towards homosexuality/same-sex parenting. This category is divided into 2 codes: social hypocrisy (72 comments) and vicarious/observational learning (24 comments).

The code social hypocrisy was used when people question the attitudes of those who are against diversity because there are 'worse' things than the depiction of LGB people within movies. People making these comments often claim that exposing children to violent, racist and xenophobic content is more damaging than scenes with SFD: *They are scandalized by a kiss in a children's movie, but then well they let them watch every soap opera where everything is full of lovers, hate, betrayal, violence, narcos and a long etc.* Likewise, there are people who question the male chauvinism of some socio-cultural practices. One person, referring to sexual abuse as a problem more relevant to the reality of the country, questions those who oppose the film:

(…) *Statistically the real danger* [are] *you homophobic* curuchupas; *not a movie that shows 2 seconds a kiss between two women. Ah*[!] *but it wasn't finding them "boyfriends" from the time they enter the first grade, promoting beauty contests or sexualizing children and adolescents, because they don't give a damn about the safety and integrity of children.*

On the other hand, the vicarious learning code contains comments that state that homosexuality is not learned through observation or through an experience that contains homo-affective representations. These comments indicate that the exposure of same-sex affection scenes is not a reason for alarm or danger for children because, according to them, it is not because they see such content that they will develop a homosexual or bisexual sexual orientation. An example of this is the following:

How much ignorance and hatred in the comments of this post, assuming that your children will turn gay because of a less than a second kiss that comes out in the background of the movie is like assuming that by watching "Despicable Me" they will become thieves...

From this point of view, however, some people point out that what they do learn is homophobia and rejection of diversity:

(…) *if they are afraid that watching a kiss in an animated movie is going to make their kids turn gay, it's because it was going to happen at any moment. It doesn't happen that way. If you want your children to grow up full of hate and homophobia like you, you will have to do more than banning a movie, because nobody is born with hate and nobody becomes gay by watching a kiss.*

4.2.5.   Religious arguments (33 comments)

The category religious arguments comprises the use of the figure of God or the Bible to raise some kind of opinion in relation to sexual diversity. This type of argument is characterized by the use of biblical quotes, passages, stories and punishments for individuals, society or the world. The entirety of the arguments observed in this category are based on Catholic and Christian doctrines to put forward their positions.

Some comments for example usually support their standpoints from the idea that *God created the world and with it man, and gave him a woman as a companion to populate the world.* Behind this idea lies a heteronormative view of sexuality and the family. People who stray from this mandate represent a threat to children, society and additionally are responsible for situations that affect the world because (…) *they set aside God's law and opt for erroneous ideas that turn the world upside down.*

In the same vein, SFD is seen as immoral and is reduced to a sexual act condemned by God rather than a normal expression of human sexuality. Thus, people with diverse sexual orientations are conceived as less worthy or valuable. An example that illustrates this is: (...) t*he word of God condemns these immoral acts as abominable... they have no respect for morals and good principles so you cannot demand respect... take care of your children please*.

It is worth mentioning that not all arguments based on religion were against diversity. In certain cases, people were found to use this type of argument to expose the contradiction they feel between the teachings of religion, particularly as they relate to respect and love for others, and negative attitudes: (...) *If God loves everyone equally, why don't you love and respect others? And if you come to say "but God hates sin" then that is very hypocritical of him*.

4.2.6. Attitudinal ambiguity (31 comments)

This category describes those comments where contradictory positions are raised within the comment itself. Here, the opinions begin with elements that give the impression of partial support or respect for diversity, however, antagonistic elements that clearly go against the SFD are added later. Thus, they are characterized by three elements: one apparently supporting, followed by the use of adversative or oppositional connectors (e.g., "but", "however", "nevertheless"), and a last element opposing. Examples of these comments are the following: *I respect gender diversity minorities, but I do not agree that they mess with children's innocence; I respect the thinking of the LGBT community, but I do not share it; I am not puritan or pointed out, everyone can do with their lives whatever they want, but there are limits, children are like sponges*. These types of comments cover up negative attitudes of people through the use of discourse tools aimed at denying their presence. Although they are not so frequent, their existence raises questions about how people may want to appear to have politically correct positions of respect for diversity, but with limits and restrictions.

4.2.7. Biological reproduction and nature (17 comments)

Finally, this category takes into account all comments that mention the importance of having different-sex parents and the relevance of procreation through sexual reproduction as the only way to form a family. This type of comments usually emphasize that the family should be born only after the union of two heterosexual cisgender people. Comments of rejection and exclusion such as [Go] *to another planet.... This is where men and women were created! Please stop imposing your rules on the rest of us*, are evidence of preconceived ideas about heterosexuality as the natural sexual orientation and sexual reproduction as the only mechanism for childbearing. It is important to mention that many comments in this category tend to be linked to religious beliefs about the creation of the world and society. Homosexuality, in this regard, goes against these precepts. (...) *It is clear, both the chromosomes and the bible do not lie. Men and women created in the image of God*. Such views reduce the experience of human sexuality to sexual activity, leaving aside issues such as diversity.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to delve into people's attitudes towards homosexuality and same-sex parenting in media where people freely interact with each other, express their opinions and react to national and international news and events. In the case of this study, we used comments on public social networks to explore people's attitudes in reaction to the Lightyear movie. From this information, we have identified some categories that gather the main thoughts and arguments that people have about socially sensitive topics. Seven categories were found, including child protection, social aspects, imposition and indoctrination, double standards, religious arguments, attitudinal ambiguity, and biological reproduction and nature.

One of the categories found alludes to the perceived need of people to protect children from those manifestations of DSF that appear in movies such as Lightyear. In this type of comments, it is stated that children should not be exposed to this type of representations under the premise that they are not able to understand or process the information presented. As mentioned above, many people believe that presenting

images related to sexual diversity could corrupt the innocence of children and, in turn, trigger other processes such as the development of homosexual sexual orientation or -at the very least- sexual curiosity and desire. Previous studies have found similar results. Clarke (2001), for example, argues that such arguments arise when people view children's normative development as a delicate process, which may be subject to external influences. People tend to make more negative judgments about homosexuality and same-sex parenting when they think that sexual orientation is a trait or characteristic that is learned by observation or imitation (Frias-Navarro et al., 2015; Rye y Meaney, 2010). These types of beliefs are fed by others that are held at the sociocultural level, such as the idea that being raised by homosexual people can lead to the development of this sexual orientation or that homosexual people have the desire for their children to be equally homosexual (Kuvalanka, 2013). These ideas reflect negativity and define homosexuality as an undesirable orientation that should be avoided.

Thus, it was interesting to observe how in some comments a hierarchy is established, where one particular sexual orientation -heterosexuality- is seen as the norm, what is desirable and the standard towards which parents should direct the development of their children. Other sexual orientations, on the contrary, are seen as a psychological and social affectation that should be avoided at all costs. Also, behind these ideas, there are other beliefs regarding the traditional family, as if it is this family model that provides the best environments for the normative development of children (Costa et al., 2019). These arguments, moreover, view children as innocent and vulnerable, in need of the protection of care and protection from adults considered appropriate or morally superior.

Another category in our study suggests the existence of certain groups whose purpose is to impose and indoctrinate an ideology. Those who align themselves with this type of ideas indicate that there is an ideological movement that seeks, among other things, to achieve social change through what some call a 'disguised', 'subtle' or 'forced' indoctrination against which children and adolescents have no way to protect themselves. This way of thinking, usually understood as a political agenda of liberal collectives, corresponds to the so-called gender ideology that in recent years has been questioned and criticized from the most conservative spheres of society (Chaux et al., 2021). As a result, in several Latin American countries there have been a series of demonstrations by groups in favor of the traditional family. As mentioned above, these arguments reflect tensions in the way the family is viewed as a social institution, the media as key agents of social change, and the role of the State as guarantor of rights for both majority and minority groups. We believe that these discussions can be nourished from fields such as sociology and social psychology in order to go deeper into and better understand them.

Ecuador is a traditional, conservative and religious country. According to data from the National Institute of Statistics and Census, 80.4% of people in the country identify themselves as Catholics and a large proportion of them report practicing their religion regularly (INEC, 2012). However, only 33 of the analyzed comments used religious arguments. Although they are not a majority, those who use this type of argument tend to justify their opposition to SFD based on what, from their perspective, God considers good and bad, desirable and undesirable, as well as on preconceived ideas about God's intentions regarding biological reproduction between men and women. Some of the comments show examples of this type of ideas as universal laws that guide coexistence, sexual reproduction and well living, especially when they use biblical quotations and passages. It is worth mentioning, however, that not all people employ religious arguments in the same way; some, for example, emphasize the teachings of respect and love for others that should underpin support for diversity.

Arguments using adversative connectors are of interest because they are used relatively frequently in people's colloquial language. In this type of argument a certain degree of support is expressed in which the presence of a homophobic standpoint is denied; however, by using expressions such as "but", other aspects are placed in the discourse that are perceived as more important at a social level, such as maintaining the innocence of children or, on the contrary, minimizing the struggles of diversity groups. These messages ultimately call on people of diversity to maintain the heteronormativity and the status quo, asking these collectives to restrict themselves from having children in order to avoid consequences for the children. To blame LGB people for being responsible for the prejudice that exists at the societal level ultimately eliminates the responsibility of heterosexism and rather perpetuates the idea that LGB people have chosen to be discriminated against because

they "chose" that path (INEC, 2012). This type of argument also tends to blame society for existing homophobia ("that's the way things are", "society is homophobic, not me"), shifting the responsibility for prejudice to an abstract, distant actor that cannot be judged and cannot be changed.

We thus believe that these results can be applied to other situations related to sexual and gender minorities, such as the enactment of new laws aimed at improving their living conditions, labor and health rights, as well as other social events related to this community. It is common for people to react on social networks to these types of topics and it would be interesting for future studies to investigate in greater depth the beliefs that people hold. Doing so would allow us to obtain more ideas about the imaginary that persists in relation to LGB people and the families they make up. This in turn would allow us to get more ideas about what to intervene and how to do it. For example, some interventions could focus on increasing the knowledge of specific individuals about the development of sexual orientation and the existing evidence about same-sex parenting (e.g., educators, students, communicators). Others, on the other hand, could increase the skills of news producers and media managers to effectively communicate news related to vulnerable communities.

It is worth mentioning that this study does not seek to generalize and affirm that all people in Ecuadorian society think in the ways that have emerged from our analysis. However, we do consider that the results obtained show that many of the beliefs held at the social level are not questioned. This results in the reproduction of biases and prejudices that ultimately hinder the creation of safe and inclusive environments for LGB people and their families. Accordingly, the non-existence of environments where it is possible to present information and discuss same-sex parenting (e.g., the existing evidence regarding its dynamics and challenges) is an important challenge that must be addressed in order to demystify these family forms. The fact that people can also be provided with sexuality education and training related to SFD may be a useful form of intervention to achieve changes in social imaginaries in the medium and long term.

Of course, this study has limitations. We have tried to follow a systematic methodology for the extraction of comments regarding the publications found, taking into account only those comments that are proposed as primary comments (direct replies to the posted articles or news); not the interactions that people have with each other. The discussions that people have with each other in virtual environments could be of interest in future research. It is possible that online discussions between people who do not know each other contribute to the polarization of attitudes and make it impossible for people to engage in dialogues that contribute to persuasion and attitudinal change. Likewise, the fact that the first 50 primary comments were selected means that the process did not take into account variables such as gender, age and other factors that could explain people's attitudes.

Finally, we consider it necessary to draw attention to the ethical implications of using information available through social networks versus the benefits that this type of platform can have for the generation of knowledge on socially sensitive issues. We have been very careful in extracting comments and have submitted our procedures for consideration by an ethics committee, which evaluated the relevance and methodological quality of this study. However, the comments used in this research were written in a natural context of discussion in virtual environments. As in the case of ethnography or natural observation processes, obtaining consent would have generated alterations in the data used. We understand that this type of practices may be debatable and have been discussed in different academic environments (Zimmer, 2010). However, as we commented above, accessing attitudes through self-administered questionnaires and the use of vignettes is not the same thing. For this reason, we believe that it is important to continue discussing the advantages and disadvantages of this type of research practices, as well as the best practices to achieve knowledge related to topics that continue to reflect beliefs and attitudes.

"People making these comments often claim that exposing children to violent, racist and xenophobic content is more damaging than scenes with SFD"

6. Conclusions

This article aimed at generating greater knowledge of existing social attitudes in Ecuador towards homosexuality and same-sex parenting. There are some implications that these results could have for the design of interventions, the generation of dialogues and debates, the construction of public policy, as well as the generation of new knowledge. On the one hand, the results of the study demonstrate the persistence of some negative beliefs and prejudices towards homosexuality and same-sex parenting that could be addressed through educational campaigns and programs aimed at fostering understanding and acceptance of sexual and family diversity. These programs can be designed for educators, students, communicators, media managers in order to address some of the attitudes identified in the study based on evidence-based information.

On the other hand, given that the comments reflect people's attitudes on social networks, it is considered that it is possible that these media could be used to promote positive and respectful messages about sexual and family diversity, as well as to challenge the arguments identified in the study. Social networks can also be an environment for discussion and debate in order to address the tensions found in the study based on informed and respectful dialogues. Likewise, the results of the study could be used to inform decision makers in public policy and legislation in order to build more inclusive policies and ensure the protection of the rights of all people.

Ultimately, this study has important practical implications for promoting greater understanding and acceptance of sexual and family diversity in Ecuadorian society. We expect that the questions, debate and research that may emerge from this process will contribute to the achievement of that purpose.

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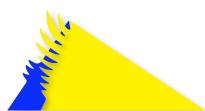
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