

BETWEEN KNOWLEDGES AND SILENCES: EXPLORING IDENTITIES OF EARLY-CAREER BRAZILIAN IMMIGRANTS IN PORTUGUESE ACADEMIA

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Abstract

This study explores the nuanced perceptions of early-career Brazilian immigrants in Portuguese academia, contributing to filling the gap in the literature on the experiences of researchers from the Global South in European higher education. As immigrants intersected by various matrices of oppression, they bear enduring imprints of Eurocentric coloniality that marginalises and silences them (Mignolo, 2003), a situation exacerbated when the destination country is their former coloniser. Drawing on critical frameworks of decolonial and intersectional scholarship, we delve into gender, nationality, sexuality, age, and linguistic proficiency to discern challenges to integration, knowledge production, linguistic barriers, and cultural adaptation in Portuguese academic spaces, aiming to shed light on the complex academic's power dynamics, particularly in former colonial contexts. Findings of the analysis of semi-structured interviews with ten (10) early-career Brazilian immigrant researchers in Portuguese universities articulate the enduring impact of colonial legacies on the experiences of immigrant researchers; and inform our discern and discussion of (1) integration and equity experiences; (2) the influence of identities and intersectionality on the researchers' scientific professional development; (3) dynamics of power and academic relations in promoting or limiting professional advancement; and (4) academic eurocentrism and its implications for epistemological diversity in

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academia. A more inclusive and equitable academic ecosystem is contingent on decolonization of knowledge production processes, the incorporation of Global South perspectives into academic curricula, and the re-evaluation of knowledge validation criteria to foster a more equitable and pluralistic academic environment.

Keywords: early-career Brazilian immigrants, European academia, Portugal, decolonial perspectives, southern global epistemologies.

Introduction

Many studies have investigated academic work relationships in terms of hierarchy, learnings, funding, and opportunities offered by the Global North to academics from the Global South (Choudaha et al., 2013, Silfver, 2018, Mahlak, 2018). However, there is a gap in the literature concerning the perceptions of these early career researchers (ECRs) from the Global South and their experiences and encounters in European higher education (HE) contexts.

Our intention was to investigate the subtle perceptions of early-career Brazilian immigrant researchers within the European academic ecosystem. Through exploratory research, we found relevance to the above in the responses of Brazilian students pursuing academic careers in Portugal.

There are various stereotypes concerning the Brazilian immigrant community in Portugal that interfere with their integration and ultimately reduce the likelihood of greater opportunities (Dias &

Ramos, 2019), thus illustrating our understanding of being a colonised body in the coloniser's space.

Currently, the largest foreign immigrant community living in Portugal is Brazilian, corresponding to 30.7% of all foreign residents (Oliveira, 2023). For some time, the country sought to attract more and more immigrants for internationalisation purposes, whether through HE institutions or the government itself (Amaral et al., 2006). Immigrants from the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP) and Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOP), are especially drawn to Portugal for higher education opportunities (Oliveira et al., 2023, Lamartine, 2022).

Therefore, delving into intersectional dimensions encompassing gender, nationality, sexuality, age, and linguistic proficiency, our study explores the dynamics of knowledge production and power relations in Portuguese academic spaces. We aim to understand the influence on professional trajectories, integration, and the (d)evaluation of Brazilian immigrant young researchers in the Portuguese academia, under the critical framework of decolonial and intersectional studies (Akotirene, 2019, Crenshaw, 2013, Mignolo, 2003).

To achieve this, we employed a qualitative approach through semi-structured interviews with ten (10) early-career Brazilian immigrant researchers based in Portuguese universities, seeking locally situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988), and guided by ethical

considerations to provide a platform for voices often unheard and impacted by imperialism and colonial legacies (Ribeiro, 2020).

Our analysis was divided into four major areas according to our specific objectives in (1) observing the integration and equity experiences of young researchers Brazilian immigrants in the Portuguese academia, (2) understanding the impact of identities and intersectionality on the researcher's scientific professional development, (3) identifying dynamics of power and academic relations in limiting or promoting researchers' professional advancement, and (4) understanding academic eurocentrism and global perspectives as constraints on epistemological diversity in academia, especially considering the prevalence of a Euro-American cultural hegemony (Oyēwùmí, 2005) that directly impacts the validation of scientific knowledge.

It is also important to highlight that in this study, we pursued to bring forth authors from the Global South and their heterogeneous epistemologies to enable a more comprehensive and holistic understanding and, albeit modestly, challenge epistemic hierarchies, as suggested by Mignolo (2003).

Portuguese HE and Internationalisation

The (re)democratisation of HE in Portugal is relatively recent, inaugurated by the so-called Carnation Revolution of 1974, which marked the end of a 48-year era of Salazarism - considered Europe's longest dictatorship in the 20th century. However, remnants of this authoritarian period still reverberate in

Portuguese society, particularly concerning gender issues and educational disparities compared to other OECD countries.

Since then, significant socio-economic advancements have been in Portugal, largely catalysed by accession to the European Union in 1986 (Amaral et al., 2006). In 2005, Decree-Law 42/2005 (Ministério da Ciência, Inovação e Ensino Superior, Diário da República n.º 37, 2005), aligned with the principles of the Bologna Declaration, introduced substantial reforms in Portuguese higher education, including reorganisation, the introduction of ECTS credit units, and enhanced internationalisation efforts.

As noted by Andrade and Costa (2014), the Bologna process brought various advancements to Portuguese higher education, such as fostering partnerships, international cooperation, and promoting student mobility, because internationalisation "is considered as a fundamental vehicle for the affirmation of the vast majority of Higher Education Institutions" (p. 45) - and Portugal is no exception.

Currently, Portugal's HE system encompasses 34 public and 64 private institutions, overseen by the Portuguese Directorate-General for HE, responsible for policy conception, execution, and coordination (Cf. Regulatory Decree 20/2012, Ministério da Educação e Ciência, Diário da República n.º 27, 2012).

In recent years, Portugal has implemented several internationalisation strategies and programmes to attract foreign

students, including legal measures, such as the creation of the International Student Statute aimed at students from all non-European Union countries (Decree-Law 36/2014, Ministério da Educação e Ciência, Diário da República n.º 48, 2014) and, more recently, expanded recognition of academic degrees and diplomas from HE institutions (Decree-Law 86/2023, Presidência do Conselho de Ministros, Diário da República n.º 196, 2023).

While Portugal is still in the early stages of internationalisation and may not be as recognized and attractive as other international study destinations (Sin et al., 2019), considerable efforts have been made in the last decade to successfully increase foreign student enrolment in Portuguese HE (Oliveira, 2023).

According to Sin et al. (2019), two-thirds of international students in Portugal are from its former colonies, particularly highlighting countries in CPLP. This underscores Portugal's sensitivity to historical and cultural ties, with language being a critical factor (Iorio & Fonseca, 2018).

In fact, considering gender, women constitute most students from the CPLP in Portugal, comprising 53.1% (Oliveira, 2023). Portugal has committed towards gender equality in academia, implementing Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) as a requirement for European funding, alongside initiatives like CHANGE - "Challenging Gender (In)equality in Science and Research" and GE-HEI - Gender Equality in Higher Education Institutions.

Most Portuguese universities already have GEPs, which include objectives and strategic actions to achieve gender parity. Nevertheless, their implementation is relatively recent, such as at Nova University of Lisbon, Porto University and Coimbra University. Although it has gender parity at the start of careers and stands out as one of the OECD countries with the highest female representation in STEM fields and the lowest discrepancy between scientific publications by men and women (European Commission, 2021), Portugal still has a significant under-representation of women in leadership positions and top positions in its HEIs (Jordão et al., 2022).

Among CPLP students, Brazilians make up the largest nationality, accounting for 27.5% of all foreign students enrolled in Portuguese higher education, with women representing the majority (Oliveira, 2023). In the latest DGEEC (2021) report there were 11,150 Brazilian women enrolled in Portuguese universities, against a total of 8,263 men.

This trend has relevant historical antecedents, including the colonial past that connects the two countries and the tradition existing since colonial Brazil, which continued after its independence until the 20th century, of sending the children of the economic elite to continue their studies in Portugal (França & Padilla, 2018, p. 108).

Representation of Brazilians in Portugal: stereotypes and xenophobia

In Portugal, Brazilians are often portrayed through stereotypes that attribute to them an intrinsic role of entertainment, while also being associated with traits such as submission, laziness, and sexual availability, especially when gender is considered as an analytical category (Queiroz et al., 2020, Padilla & Gomes, 2016, Piscitelli, 2008).

These stereotypes contribute to naturalising implicit differences, reinforcing subjective judgments that validate and perpetuate historical inequalities related to categories such as ethnicity, race, gender, and sexual orientation (Lamartine & Silva, 2022). Furthermore, the colonial past and historical representations of Brazil in the Portuguese imaginary create specific niches for the actions and performance of Brazilian immigrants in Portugal.

As Gomes (2018) explains, there still prevails in Portuguese society a Luso-tropical discourse that directly acts in the omission and camouflage of various past violences under the guise of friendly and consensual miscegenation, that is, there is the notion that the Lusophone (i.e. Portuguese-speaking) space is intercultural, characterised by fragmentation and plurality (Andrade, 2021). This perspective contributes to the difficulty of identifying and formulating measures to confront xenophobia and other entrenched prejudices related to this community.

When it comes to discrimination, this plurality of perceptions is due, according to Fibbi et al. (2021), both to the behaviour of one person in relation to another, as well as one's own self-awareness, rights, and duties, in addition to the context. In this case, it should be noted that "at the same time, although it is not widely discussed, the legacy of Portuguese colonisation is alive in both Brazil and Portugal" (Śliwa et al., 2023, p 10).

Several studies have highlighted the representation of the Brazilian immigrant community in Portugal, especially regarding the media's role as disseminators and agents of status quo of this mentality, as well as attesting to the impact of these perceptions on the personal and professional quality of life of these immigrants (Śliwa et al., 2023, Lamartine, 2022, Queiroz et al., 2020, França & Padilla, 2018, Padilla & Gomes, 2016, Piscitelli, 2008).

In the academic sphere, studies have pointed to an intellectual devaluation of the Brazilian immigrant population, also related to the language issue, since in the Lusophone context, the linguistic variety of European Portuguese is considered the standard; therefore, speaking with a Brazilian accent is evaluated as inferior (Śliwa et al., 2023). Questions about scientific curricula, work performed, and professional careers, along with the frequent assignment of lower grades to their work, inhibit denunciation processes (Lamartine & Silva, 2022, Padilla & Gomes, 2016).

Additionally, Brazilian immigration to Portugal has been characterised since its inception by different temporal waves, with

the current one marked by the presence of qualified Brazilians, influenced by investors, retirees, and, especially, a massive number of university students (Góis & Marques, 2018; França & Padilla, 2018).

Lenses of the colonised body: challenging epistemic hierarchies

In the context of early career Brazilian researchers' experiences in Portugal, it is fundamental to recognize the dynamics of colonised bodies inserted into the space of the coloniser. This implies not only the presence of various marks of coloniality but also the overlapping with other forms of oppression, culminating in the intersection of diverse identities. In this sense, the concept of intersectionality emerges as a crucial tool, capable of challenging legal structures, knowledge production, and demands for social justice (Collins & Bilge, 2020, Crenshaw, 2013).

Intersectionality becomes relevant when considering the multiple aspects that comprise the identity of Brazilian immigrant researchers in Portugal, acting as layers of oppression. Thus, intersectionality presents itself as a political form of activism, opposing sources that produce differences, promoting social, material, and intellectual efforts against neoliberal hegemony to articulate identity fragmentations in the fight against colonialist oppressions (Lugones, 2008; Akotirene, 2019).

Therefore, in the heterogeneity of oppressions connected by modernity, the perspective of hierarchising suffering is ruled out, since all suffering is intercepted by structures. [...] intersectionality refers to what we do politically with the matrix of portions responsible for producing differences, then seeing them as identities (Akotirene, 2019, p. 46).

Considering the body as a category, especially a colonised body, highlights the importance of reconfiguring ideologies historically imposed by society. As emphasised by Mignolo (2003), it is not about eliminating Eurocentric knowledge, but rather reconstructing original epistemologies suppressed by the colonial process. The decolonial perspective, therefore, challenges the standardisation of epistemic power that results from the Euro-American cultural hegemony (Oyěwùmí, 2005), and Eurocentric and patriarchal society grounded in measures of racialization and universalized categorization.

The structure of the colonial matrix of power is complex and multifaceted, exerting control over various domains, including economy, authority, nature, gender, sexuality, subjectivity, and knowledge. Therefore, understanding the colonality of power is essential to comprehend how colonial relations persist even after the formal end of colonialism (Ballestrin, 2013).

In this sense, context plays a critical role as Brazilian immigrant researchers are inserted into a broader academic ecosystem

(Oliveira et al., 2023). For Mignolo (2003), geopolitical positioning in knowledge production is fundamental, highlighting the epistemic hierarchies that privilege and validate certain forms of knowledge and subjects, favouring the superiority of the global north (Madsen, 2018).

As we have seen, these hierarchies are deeply ingrained in society and in academic institutions and are perpetuated through dynamics reinforced by language, citation practices, and disciplinary boundaries, as the legacy of colonisation is reflected in the polarised and racialized social structure of Portuguese society, as manifested, for example, through the linguistic supremacy of European Portuguese (Śliwa et al., 2023).

Mignolo's (2003) proposal to challenge these hierarchies occurs when historically marginalised subjects in knowledge production detach from Eurocentric concepts. They modify the geopolitical understanding of what is valid, promoting a decolonization of dominant epistemologies, hierarchies, and epistemic practices.

Enabling knowledge from these lenses is, at the same time, seeking to make visible historically marginalised and silenced bodies, ensuring the fulfilment of the right to speak (Ribeiro, 2020), also in a form of activism, to advance the recognition of the relevance of the relationship between research, education, social movements, and activism, as suggested by Tarlau et al. (2014).

And, at the same time, decolonizing traditional and unified knowledge, paying attention to epistemologies, particularly from

the Global South, as situated and valid knowledge, deepening what Madsen (2018) proposes as an intermediary third space that inserts the researcher within the various knowledge systems.

Method

To understand the experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by Brazilian immigrants in the early stages of their careers in the Portuguese academic environment, we opted for a qualitative exploratory research approach, aiming, especially, to provide a platform for these identities that are not always visible (Ribeiro, 2020).

Following preliminary research, we selected participants who were Brazilian immigrants in the early stages of their careers within the Portuguese academia. The participant selection process was conducted using the snowball sampling technique, where one participant led to another, and so on. Initially, contact was made, and participants were asked to respond to a questionnaire. Subsequently, participants were selected for individual remote interviews, each lasting an average of 45 minutes, based on the questionnaire sent.

Thus, the corpus of this research consists of ten (10) ECRs, aged between 26 and 42, from various fields of study, residing in Europe for a period ranging from 4 to 10 years. Among them, seven (7) identified as female and three (3) as male. Regarding sexuality, three (3) identified as homosexual, six (6) as heterosexual, and one

(1) participant did not feel comfortable answering this question, thus characterising a diverse and comprehensive sample when considering the qualitative methodology deployed, as outlined in the table below:

Table 1. Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	ECR's degree	Time in Europe
A	F	42	PhD Student	10 years
B	F	31	PhD Student	6 years
C	M	26	PhD Student	5 years
D	F	31	PhD Student	8 years
E	M	30	PhD Student	6 years
F	F	35	PhD Student	4 years
G	M	41	PhD Student	4 years
H	F	37	PhD Student	5 years
I	F	34	Postdoctoral	7 years
J	F	33	PhD Student	6 years

It is important to mention that, prior to the interview, all participants received comprehensive information about the research objectives and gave their informed and voluntary consent to participate, in addition to being informed of their right to

withdraw from participation at any time without penalty. Furthermore, to protect the participants' integrity, we ensured the suppression of the names of their universities and assigned a letter designation (from A to J) to further safeguard their identities. Hereinafter, they will be referred to as “participant” followed by their respective assigned letter (e.g., Participant H). This research was conducted as part of a larger research project, which received ethical clearance from FCT (2021.07485.BD), in addition to following the ethical principles of the Association of Internet Research (AoIR) from the Internet Research Ethics guide (Franzke et al, 2020).

Our data underwent qualitative analysis to identify recurring themes and relevant patterns concerning the experiences of our participants. Thus, employing an inductive approach, where the data themselves guided the interpretation of the results, we structured thematic areas according to the presented guidelines (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Findings and discussion

In this section of the study, we delve deeply into the experiences and perceptions of early-career Brazilian immigrant researchers. The discussion of the findings of the analysis is organised into four themes: (1) Integration and Equity Experiences, (2) Identities and Intersectionality, (3) Power and Academic Relations, and (4) Academic Eurocentrism and Global Perspectives.

Integration and equity experiences

The integration and equity experiences of early career Brazilian immigrants in Portuguese academia reveal significant challenges in terms of access to resources and career opportunities. The sense of needing additional efforts compared to national colleagues is a recurring theme, as articulated by Participant E, often attributed to cultural differences:

"(...) I constantly found myself in a position where I felt I needed to exert more effort than my local colleagues. This feeling can be partly attributed to cultural and linguistic differences, which often created barriers to my full integration into the academic environment. Additionally, I faced the challenge of feeling that my work and my research stance were sometimes subjugated or not valued in the same way as those of my local colleagues."

Linguistic prejudice is noteworthy. Although both Portugal and Brazil have Portuguese as their native language and have signed the Orthographic Agreement of the Portuguese Language in 1990 to harmonise the spelling of the Portuguese language, we perceive a downgrading of the Portuguese spoken/written in Brazil, constantly referred to as "Brasileiro" (Brazilian-specific language). For Śliwa et al. (2023, p. 10) this happens because "Portuguese still refer to Brazil as a colony, consider European Portuguese as the 'correct' Portuguese", consequently, what they call Brazilian language is considered substandard.

Thus, one of the determining factors in the choice of immigration country, beyond the approximations and recognitions of Lusophone universities and the CPLP Community (Iorio & Fonseca, 2018), ends up becoming one of the biggest obstacles when it comes to integration, as there are nuances and significant differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, and even grammatical structure that can complicate communication and understanding in an academic environment.

At the beginning of my PhD, it was agreed that I would not write anything in Portuguese to facilitate 'corrections', so I did everything in English. To this day, my supervisor does not accept the orthographic agreement (Participant I).

There was a professor who called Brazilian Portuguese 'Brazileiro', showing linguistic prejudice. This same professor once said that the quality of writing in the Portuguese media was declining due to the influence of Brazilians in communications agencies (Participant G).

The main barrier, I would say, is nationality and speaking Brazilian Portuguese rather than European Portuguese. Comments like 'you write very well, one can hardly tell you're Brazilian' might seem like compliments to some, but they also sound like xenophobia (Participant D).

It is worth noting that all participants in this study are proficient in more than one (1) language in addition to Portuguese. The main languages mentioned in decreasing order are English, Spanish, French, German, Italian, and Dutch. Participants who reported experiences in other countries, where the native language is not Portuguese, consider the linguistic factor a barrier, but not as a factor of devaluation.

Outside of Portugal, I never felt this, the diminishment related to my native language. Of course, we see a predominance of English in academia, but the ignorance regarding the orthographic agreement and the Portuguese corrections here made me rewrite my project and conduct all my research in English in a country where the native language is the same as mine (Participant A).

Regarding social integration, many participants reported difficulties in fully integrating into the research group and University Welcome Centers. It was observed that these challenges not only impacted social interactions but also had implications in terms of academic collaboration and access to resources and opportunities available in the academic environment, reinforcing our perspective of the colonised body, as this immigration is also perceived as a return to its former colonial metropolis (Gomes, 2018).

There were situations where both my Brazilian colleagues and I couldn't participate in group activities because no Portuguese colleagues were interested in doing the activities together. We even had to give up on a course unit because we realised we wouldn't be able to do the assessment in a group as recommended by the professor, who also didn't accept us doing it in a smaller group since we couldn't be included in any group with Portuguese colleagues (Participant H).

Despite my efforts to engage and contribute significantly, I often felt marginalised in group interactions and decisions (Participant E).

I believe that because I am also Portuguese (Luso-Brazilian), my experience and perception of prejudice was 'biased in relation to other colleagues (Participant J).

For us, this reflects a complex intersection of individual, cultural, and structural factors. These experiences highlight, even though some more positive ones have been reported, such as obtaining research funding through the Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT), the need for more effective institutional policies and practices to promote diversity, inclusion, and equity in the academic environment. As Fibbi et al. (2021) remind us, perceiving

these situations and joining efforts to minimise them is, at the same time, thinking about the well-being of society.

Identities and intersectionality

The intersection of identities emerges as a crucial aspect in the experiences of participants due to marginalisation in the academic environment, often subtle but deeply impactful. Participants reported facing invisible barriers and additional challenges related to their identity as Brazilian immigrants, especially when combined with other characteristics such as gender and sexuality.

I have already faced some forms of discrimination and marginalisation within the academic environment for being homosexual. Unfortunately, there are still ingrained prejudices in some academic institutions, which can make the journey of LGBTQIA+ students like me a bit more challenging. In some cases, I have encountered unpleasant comments or homophobic jokes, which created an unwelcoming atmosphere. Additionally, there are times when I felt that my work and my research stance were subjugated or belittled simply because of my sexual identity. This was quite disheartening and ultimately affected my confidence in the work and study environment. It would be naive to ignore the fact that someone's nationality or sexual orientation can still be seen as obstacles to professional progress, even in seemingly progressive environments (Participant E).

In Germany, I didn't feel 'unique' or different. Here in Portugal, I found the environment more conservative, and although there is an effort to appear as a neutral environment, you can perceive that there is a certain strangeness because I am a queer woman, for example [...] besides, the Luso-tropical idea serves as an 'excuse' to mask all the micro-violence we faced (Participant A).

The presence of the Luso-tropical discourse, in addition to omitting colonial violence, perpetuates a false idea of Portuguese miscegenation, establishing a foundation of non-racism that permeates society (Gomes, 2018, Padilla & Gomes, 2016). This reality reflects the persistence of structural inequalities and ingrained prejudices, challenging the principles of equality and merit that should be fundamental in the academic environment. Thus, the stereotypes associated with Brazilian women further emphasise a colonial imaginary that diminishes these women (França & Padilla, 2018), depicting them as deviant bodies, passive to sexism, machismo, and various forms of harassment (Lamartine & Silva, 2022, Piscitelli, 2008).

In a doctoral class where the classroom was full of men, with me being the only woman, I heard from the professor: “I don't understand what a woman, especially a Brazilian, is doing in this engineering class. Besides all Brazilian women being stupid and lazy” (Participant I).

I didn't suffer harassment directly, but I know a lot of women who were. It is evident the sexism and machismo with which Brazilian women are seen, is not only present in academia. Several hidden complaints are circulating, such as the case of a renowned harassing professor, but nothing happens (Participant A).

It is noteworthy that these representations often persist, even when these women do not identify as black. In this context, it is crucial to recognise that the ethnic issue is not strictly limited to race but also to remember that race, just like gender, is a powerful fiction itself (Lugones, 2008).

My perception is that it is impossible to detach these characteristics from me and be seen as just another common student. I believe that my identity makes all the difference in how relationships are established, especially as a black woman (Participant H).

I believe that being white has helped me to be included in the academic environment. The law course has a significant racial aspect; it is not so common to have black people, and most of those I come into contact with within my teaching activity are PALOP² students, not Portuguese (Participant B).

² The Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOP) consist of six African countries (Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Equatorial Guinea) where Portuguese is an official language.

The variety of perspectives we observe derives, as explained by Fibbi et al. (2021), from the need to consider not only interpersonal behaviour in discrimination issues but also the individual awareness and sensitivity of everyone. This shows us, therefore, that the discrimination suffered by Brazilian immigrants in Portugal varies according to the social spaces they come to occupy in society (Góis & Marques, 2018).

Another interesting point was related to the age of the participants. The duality between "too young" and "too old" appeared in the half of the participants' responses since, as Choroszewicz and Adams (2019) affirm, age is also a system of structural inequality co-constructed with gender, gaining meaning in specific organisational and institutional contexts by shaping job opportunities and likely career progression.

Of all the characteristics, I feel that age is the most burdensome. The PhD in Law is usually done by middle-aged people. I recurrently notice the expression of amazement from people (it was even more noticeable when I started the PhD at 26 years old). I notice that age impresses people within academia - some treat it as a positive point ("you must be smart to be here so early") and others with reluctance ("it's not possible that you're already prepared at such a young age"). It is definitely noticed (Participant J).

It is important to emphasise that there is no hierarchy in oppression layers, and marginalisation based on nationality can be exacerbated by the intersection with other identities such as gender, race, sexuality, and age, as we have seen in this topic. Thus, according to Akotirene (2019), intersectionality matters because it does not essentialize these categories as if they were a single, identical, and inseparable social group but presents the multiple forms of exclusion and disadvantage.

Power and academic relations

Brazilian immigrants, intersected by various oppressive layers that directly act to diminish them, often find themselves in positions of academic disadvantage, primarily because they are immersed in historical power relations that construct and sustain hierarchies into contemporary times, including authority, sexuality, and gender (Ballestrin, 2013), as seen in Participant B's report regarding power dynamics in academia.

In my academic trajectory, it is usually white European men who hold positions of power and are at the top of the hierarchy. I believe I have not yet seen any black person [male or female] in the faculty of my university (Participant B).

When considering the coloniality of power (Mignolo, 2003), we see that it generally manifests in more subtle ways, where dependencies are related to influence networks, control over

research resources, and decisions on funding emerge as essential elements in the reproduction of post-colonial knowledge relations (Mahlck, 2018).

Here, the professors demarcate their positions much more. There is a hierarchy where they maintain a certain distance towards students. In Germany, it was the opposite. Having lunch, dinner with professors, interacting in other environments rather than just in academic ones was even part of the routine and habits from the professors. Here, the professors make this distance clear, especially if the student is Brazilian (Participant A).

There is a much greater hierarchy in Portugal than in my home country (Brazil). This hierarchy can often distance students from professors, especially in more traditional Portuguese universities (Participant D).

The participants' accounts highlight that behind the facade of collaboration and meritocracy, which can also be read as a discriminatory factor (Fibbi et al., 2021), there is a prominent conservatism present at various levels, touching upon economic, political, and especially epistemic aspects, emphasising power and knowledge hierarchies as metrics for classification and improvement of global scientific knowledge (Shahjahan, 2016).

I perceive that the hierarchies have very formal, solid structures, and the status quo is highly valued. They have been in the hands of the same people for many years, and there is generally little willingness to change (Participant H).

I notice that there is a need to emphasise my background sometimes (mainly because I come from a school with a multidisciplinary tradition). That is, this needs to 'justify' some points of view (Participant J).

Power relations can be shaped by factors such as institutional affiliation, academic reputation, and personal connections, creating an environment where certain groups or individuals may have a significant advantage over others. This dynamic can be particularly challenging for those in more vulnerable positions, like us, early-career researchers, who may feel pressured to conform to established expectations or to struggle to be heard and recognized in a field already saturated with voices (Participant E).

This vulnerability reported by the participants also reflects at the level of contestation or denunciation of unbalanced power situations. The fact of being ECRs, expecting a prosperous and relevant professional future, coupled with the fear of invalidation and academic persecution, are likely reasons why there are not as many complaints (or these appear in an insignificant manner)

about discrimination and stereotyping in Portuguese institutions and scientific productions (Lamartine & Silva, 2022, Padilla & Gomes, 2016).

Academic eurocentrism and global perspectives

The prevalence of academic Eurocentrism in Portuguese institutions is considered a significant phenomenon, as highlighted by all participants in this study. This Eurocentrism is directly related to the production, dissemination, and homogenization of knowledge, with a predominance of what is produced in the European and Northern global context:

It is frustrating because I am aware that much of what is produced elsewhere, with high added value, ends up having little visibility. Another issue is that there is a lot of content being produced, the quantity of articles, book chapters, etc., is valued, but the way this Eurocentric approach remains present, results in a distant civil society. I believe that the debate rarely yields the result it should, impacting public policies, promoting change, and fostering a more plural society (Participant H).

There is a total invisibility of epistemologies beyond the American-European core. They are not even discussed, and when they are, they are rarely taken seriously. The few people I see researching more progressive topics are

still grappling with epistemological perspectives from the Global South (Participant B).

Participants' reports attest to the premise of the coloniality of knowledge, where Eurocentrism is not only representative but also structural at the level of power, imposing epistemic hierarchies that perpetuate relations of domination and subalternity, excluding non-European voices and perspectives (Ballestrin, 2013, Mignolo, 2003).

As Mahlck (2018) points out, there is a predominance in representing the Global South as lacking or backward, constructing a dichotomy between active and passive, that is, the Global North and South. Due to the entrenched social beliefs in the social imaginary, individuals from socially stigmatised backgrounds are perceived as only suitable for subaltern positions (Oliveira et al., 2023).

Projects on law in the Southern Hemisphere, in general, tend to function more as studies of specific cases (Participant J).

The Global South is often seen as an object of study, and here it is interesting to observe the idea of “white saviours” so often mentioned in contemporary feminist studies. The openness to new epistemologies, especially critical and decolonial ones, is still in its early stages (Participant A).

The idea of Euro-American cultural hegemony, as Oyěwùmí (2005) points out, is highly present in participants' interpretations, creating significant barriers to the inclusion and recognition of other forms of knowledge and worldviews, especially in contexts where historical colonial relations are evident, in the prevalence of being a colonised body in the colonising space (Lamartine & Silva, 2022).

Historical Eurocentrism has promoted a hierarchy of knowledge that places perspectives and approaches from the West in a position of supremacy, while often marginalising or ignoring contributions from epistemologies of the Global South. However, despite various efforts by Brazilian immigrants in a European context, many academic institutions continue to privilege Eurocentric perspectives, which can result in the invisibility and devaluation of non-Western epistemologies (Participant E).

I see epistemologies that do not come from the Global North as being considered less credible. Within Research Centers, there are few researchers who value what is produced in Global South countries, and even fewer within the context of classes (Participant H).

At this point, we recognize the favouring of knowledge produced according to specific Western frameworks. For Mignolo (2003), the

way to challenge deeply entrenched epistemic hierarchies in academic institutions is through the production of historically marginalised knowledge that alters the geopolitical understanding of what can be considered epistemically valid.

Certainly, there are opportunities to incorporate more perspectives and knowledge from the Global South into European academic curricula and practices. This inclusion is not only important but also essential, as the diversity of perspectives enriches the learning process and knowledge production. Incorporating epistemologies from the Global South into curricula allows for a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of the phenomena studied, providing different angles of analysis and interpretation (Participant E).

Portugal itself is a very diverse country that has been investing in immigration as a tool for economic development. The current political crisis also highlights the need to "open people's minds" to issues such as colonialism, xenophobia, and gender-based political violence. Universities need to be prepared to demystify and disseminate a more intersectional and diversified knowledge (Participant A).

The importance of incorporating more perspectives and knowledge from the global South, in my opinion, is related to the empirical visibility of the Brazilian reality,

and global South's reality in general, that these authors can provide in their studies and the increased possibility of academic exchange between researchers (Participant G).

This enriches learning, allowing students to gain a more comprehensive understanding of global issues and break stereotypes and paradigms. Many European academic curricula have historically been dominated by Eurocentric perspectives, reflecting the legacy of colonialism. Moreover, in an increasingly interconnected world, it is crucial for students to understand the issues and challenges faced by different regions of the world, breaking the idea that there is a right and wrong in epistemologies, as if only what is produced here is valid (Participant H).

In alignment with Mignolo's proposition (2003) to promote new perspectives and non-generalizing approaches, participants suggest measures for fostering environments where diverse perspectives and experiences are valued and integrated into the knowledge production process.

Enforcing the orthographic agreement would be a good starting point; increasing academic exchange and providing a broader collection of works by non-European authors would also help to expand knowledge and to study intersectionality. Indeed, it would be an important

tool for the real inclusion of students/immigrants, especially Brazilians, in Portugal (Participant A).

I hope there is a tangible commitment to equal opportunities for all researchers, regardless of their origin or migratory status. This means policies and practices that actively promote diversity and inclusion in the academic environment and eliminate barriers to entry and progression in academic careers, as well as measures that ensure a safe and respectful working environment for all. It would be opportune to ensure the representation of immigrants on committees and decision-making bodies within academic institutions, to ensure that their voices are heard, and their needs considered in institutional policies and practices (Participant E).

Providing training for faculty and staff on diversity, inclusion, cultural sensitivity, and identification of specific needs of immigrant students can reduce barriers of prejudice and Eurocentric hegemony. Conducting research and regularly collecting feedback from immigrant students to assess the effectiveness of policies, programs, and support services, and adjusting them as needed to meet their constantly evolving needs. Promoting greater visibility for immigrant students, researchers, and professors, in order to reduce

hegemony within academic spaces, diminish prejudice, and strengthen diversity (Participant H).

Therefore, the incorporation of Global South's perspectives not only challenges ingrained Eurocentrism and the predominant cultural bias in academic discourse, but also promotes a fairer and more equitable approach in academia, highlighting the importance of diverse approaches in producing a more comprehensive understanding of the world (Oliveira et al., 2023).

Conclusions

Ensuring the voice and positionality (see Ribeiro, 2020) of early-career Brazilian immigrants in Portuguese academia, a sense of needing additional efforts compared to local colleagues, linguistic barriers, and social integration difficulties emerged as obstacles affecting not only academic trajectory but also researchers' self-confidence and well-being.

Most participants highlighted nationality (Brazilian) as the main complication, emphasising the premise of being a colonised body in the coloniser's space. The link with gender was also expressed, as the colonised body is also a readily available body. Regarding sexuality, prejudices were mostly attributed to Portugal being a very conservative country, which also served, to a lesser extent, as a justification for ageism.

However, it is necessary to emphasise our caution against generalisation in this research, especially considering the limitation in terms of participants and their intersecting identities. Additionally, participants' knowledge of ontology, epistemology or critical and feminist scholarship, manifested in the responses, also implies the risk that their contributions are underpinned by motives of ideological validation.

In the logic of the coloniality of knowledge (Mignolo, 2003; Ballestrin, 2013), the invisibility of non-European epistemologies and the imposition of a hierarchy of knowledge reinforce relations of domination and subalternity, perpetuating epistemic inequalities that were reported in all participant's testimonies, highlighting the cultural and epistemic global North's hegemony, which marginalises perspectives and knowledge from the global South (Oyěwùmí, 2005).

Adding the nationality layer, we advance the critique undertaken in the articles by Lene Madsen (2018) and Rebecca Tarlau et al. (2014) who understand the vision of knowledge production as something that is superior in the global north. Therefore, in addition to the coloniality of knowledge, there is the perpetuation of the subjective coloniality of the subject itself, which is evident when we talk about the relationship between Brazilians and Portuguese, especially in academia.

The persistence of stereotypes, prejudices, and structural inequalities linked to early-career Brazilian immigrants reinforces

the need for more effective institutional policies and practices to promote diversity, inclusion, and equity in the academic environment. This implies not only expanding the representation of non-Eurocentric research and perspectives in academic institutions, including in bibliographic references, but also rethinking the criteria for evaluating and validation of knowledge, making them more sensitive to the plural and intercultural realities of the contemporary world, especially when we have cultural approaches as latent as those between Brazil and Portugal.

By challenging entrenched Eurocentrism, incorporating global South's perspectives into academic curricula, valuing different forms of knowledge, and overcoming epistemic inequalities, we are not only enriching the learning and knowledge production process but also contributing to the construction of more balanced and symmetrical power relations on a global scale.

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