

EMOTIONAL ECONOMY AMONG THE XERENTE: THE REDISTRIBUTION OF AFFECTIONS IN COMMUNITY RELATIONS



<https://doi.org/10.56238/arev6n4-267>

Submitted on: 11/17/2024

Publication date: 12/17/2024

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes how the Xerente use feelings as a collective resource in the organization of their social and cultural relations, introducing the concept of "emotional economy". Through qualitative and bibliographic research, it was investigated how feelings are managed, transformed and shared in the construction of collective connections. The analysis revealed that emotions such as solidarity, belonging, and respect are fundamental for community cohesion, playing strategic roles in rituals, intergenerational practices, and situations of cultural resistance. In addition, the work addressed how emotions integrate territorial and spiritual dimensions, reinforcing the cultural identity and social sustainability of the group. The discussions explored convergences and divergences in the literature and data, pointing out how emotions are not only subjective reflexes, but active instruments that structure social dynamics. The conclusion highlights the relevance of this theme for academia, by proposing an innovative vision of emotions as a collective element, and for society, by promoting greater appreciation of indigenous cultures. Finally, future investigations are suggested with a focus on empirical data, comparative analyses, and interdisciplinary approaches.

Keywords: Emotions, Culture, Xerente.

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INTRODUCTION

Emotions, often seen as intrinsically personal and individual aspects, take on a completely new meaning when analyzed within indigenous communities, such as the Xerente. In this cultural universe, feelings not only belong to each individual, but cross, connect and structure community life. They are just as important as material goods and play a central role in maintaining social cohesion, resolving conflicts, and perpetuating cultural traditions. This work, therefore, seeks to understand how the Xerente build, share and transform their emotions into a collective resource, forming what can be called an "emotional economy". The main objective is to explore the dynamics that involve feelings as a structuring force of community relations, proposing an innovative perspective that is little addressed in the literature on indigenous peoples.

The research starts from an essential question: how do the Xerente manage emotions as a community resource, transforming them into collective connections that sustain and strengthen their social organization? From this question, we seek to identify the mechanisms by which emotions circulate among community members, revealing their role in the construction of individual and collective identities. In addition, it seeks to unveil how these feelings are integrated with other dimensions of daily life, such as territory, rituals and intergenerational interactions.

The methodology chosen for this work is qualitative and bibliographic, with the aim of deepening the analysis of the emotional relationships of the Xerente through relevant theoretical sources. This approach allows us to understand not only the internal dynamics of the community, but also how they relate to broader historical, social, and cultural contexts. Throughout the research, the theoretical data were critically examined, seeking to converge and diverge between different perspectives to build a more comprehensive understanding of the subject.

The relevance of this study is based on the need to broaden the horizons of discussions about indigenous peoples, incorporating dimensions that are often neglected, such as emotions and their centrality in community practices. In a historical moment marked by social transformations and environmental challenges, understanding how the Xerente manage their feelings is not only a way to celebrate their cultural richness, but also an opportunity to learn from their strategies of survival, adaptation, and resistance. In addition, by shedding light on the emotional economy, the work contributes to demystify simplistic

and romanticized views about these peoples, offering a deeper and more contextualized analysis of their reality.

Thus, this study is not limited to exploring an academic theme, but also seeks to bring reflections that dialogue with contemporary issues, such as the appreciation of indigenous cultures, the preservation of collective identities and the construction of public policies that respect and strengthen these communities. The analysis of the emotional dynamics of the Xerente opens the way for new interpretations and reaffirms the importance of recognizing the plurality of human experiences in their multiple contexts.

AFFECTIONS AS THE BASIS OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Affection, for the Xerente, is more than a psychological state; It is a tangible resource, distributed and negotiated in everyday life, just like other material goods. This perception resignifies the concept of economy, by expanding its dimensions to encompass the circulation of emotions as part of social dynamics (Bonnewitz, 2003).

The redistribution of affections in the Xerente community operates in line with the systems of kinship and reciprocity. In everyday practices, such as rituals, celebrations and productive activities, affections are exchanged, reinforcing bonds and renewing the sense of collective belonging. This practice reveals that affections are understood as indispensable for social cohesion, configuring themselves as pillars of the community emotional economy (Schoereder, 2006).

Contrary to the Western view, which often reduces emotions to internal phenomena, the Xerente externalize affections, transforming them into tools to strengthen alliances and resolve conflicts. This approach rescues an ancestral and relational understanding of the human being, where the individual only fully exists in his connection with the collective. It is in this context that affection emerges as a central element, not only for personal bonds, but also for the sustenance of culture itself (Cunha, 2012).

The Xerente emotional economy manifests itself, for example, in the practices of sharing food, where the offer does not only symbolize generosity, but the reaffirmation of emotional commitments. In this system, giving and receiving transcend materiality and symbolize flows of affection that nourish intersubjective relationships. This behavior reinforces the notion that, for the Xerente, material and emotional goods are inseparable, forming a hybrid and integrated economy (Farias, 1990).

The redistribution of affections also plays an essential role in rites of passage, such as marriage and the initiation of young people. In these events, emotional ties are publicly reaffirmed, and affection is "redistributed" among the participants, ensuring the continuity of the group and its cultural identity. This practice points to an understanding of affect as something dynamic and shareable, and not restricted to isolated individuals (Sifuentes, 2000).

The sacred rituals of the Xerente reinforce the interdependence between affections and spirituality, demonstrating that emotions are essential mediators in the relationship between human beings and the sacred. During the rituals, participants experience an intense exchange of emotions that strengthen community unity and ensure the perpetuation of traditions. This spiritual dimension of the emotional economy reveals the central role of affection in cultural and religious continuity (Rosaldo, 1979).

The circulation of affections is also evident in the context of intergenerational relationships, where the elders assume the role of "redistributors of affections" by transmitting wisdom and values. This emotional transference, which occurs in oral narratives and practical teaching, reflects the centrality of affection in the maintenance of collective memory and community learning (Barroso, 2002). The redistribution of affects acts as a strategy to strengthen collective identity and resist disaggregating influences. Thus, affection is not only an internal resource, but also a political tool in the struggle for rights and recognition (Sawaia, 2020).

In everyday life, the practice of affection as a community resource is reflected in the upbringing and care of children, who are seen as depositories and redistributors of emotions. This collective care reinforces the bonds between families and reaffirms community values, in a continuous cycle of affectivity that strengthens the social network as a whole (Melo, 2016).

Affections are also mobilized in moments of grief and adversity, where the community comes together to emotionally support the affected individuals. This emotional solidarity reinforces the idea that suffering is shared and mitigated by the collective, highlighting the importance of affection in overcoming crises and strengthening social bonds (Dobles and Arroyo, 2020).

The perspective of the emotional among the Xerente points to an intrinsic relationship between emotions and subsistence practices. For example, in the collection and production of food, affections regulate the dynamics of collaboration and ensure

harmony in community work. In this sense, the emotional economy is not only symbolic, but also functional, ensuring the balance between production and coexistence (Bahia and Sampaio, 2005).

Emotional management within the community translates into conflict resolution practices, where affections are negotiated and redistributed to restore harmony. These processes demonstrate the Xerente's ability to articulate emotional and social dimensions in favor of community stability (Almeida, 2010).

The Xerente approach transcends the public-private dichotomy, by treating affect as something that belongs to the collectivity and therefore must be continuously redistributed. This view challenges prevailing individualistic models and suggests a communitarian ethic based on emotional sharing (Pontes et al., 2014). When examining the Xerente emotional economy, it is evident that affects are not mere by-products of social relations, but rather structural elements that configure the very identity of the group. This perspective broadens the horizons of understanding about emotional dynamics in indigenous societies (Wadsworth, 1997).

The redistribution of affections is also a form of cultural resistance, preserving traditional values in the midst of a scenario of social and environmental transformations. This process highlights the central role of emotions in maintaining social cohesion and coping with adversity (Bonnewitz, 2003).

And so to speak, the emotional economy among the Xerente not only organizes their daily practices, but also strengthens cultural and identity ties. This model emphasizes the importance of studying emotions not only as individual phenomena, but as fundamental elements of social structures (Farias, 1990).

The construction and redistribution of affections among the Xerente challenge the traditional paradigms of economics and sociology, revealing the complexity of their social practices. This approach offers new avenues for the study of community dynamics in indigenous populations (Cunha, 2012).

Studies on emotional economy are still incipient, but the analysis of Xerente culture contributes significantly to broadening the understanding of the relationships between emotions, culture and society. This innovative perspective sheds light on fundamental aspects of community life that are often ignored by the social sciences (Melo, 2016).

It can be seen, then, that understanding affection as a community resource among the Xerente implies recognizing its relevance both for social cohesion and for cultural

survival. This approach emphasizes the need to consider emotional dimensions in studies on indigenous peoples, highlighting affection as an essential element of resistance and transformation (Dobles and Arroyo, 2020).

EMOTIONAL DYNAMICS IN THE XERENTE ECONOMY

Contrary to what traditional economic models propose, in which material resources take center stage, the Xerente reveal a logic that mixes emotion and materiality, creating a unique system of exchanges. This logic cannot be interpreted only as a metaphor, but as a tangible reality that is deeply rooted in their everyday practices. However, such an approach requires deconstructing external paradigms, which often ignore the power of emotions as shaping agents of social and economic behaviors. The neglect of this perspective reveals the partiality of studies that treat indigenous societies under homogeneous and generalist lenses, disregarding their specificities and complexities (Sawaia, 2020).

The emotional dynamics among the Xerente are not only restricted to interpersonal interactions, but extrapolate to the structuring of community decisions and crisis management. In this context, affects play a mediating role, regulating tensions and reconfiguring alliances. Emotions are not just subjective expressions, but tools that ensure group cohesion, redistributing responsibilities and strengthening collective trust. This emotional interconnectedness is particularly evident in moments of conflict, where negotiation practices are not based on rigid hierarchies, but on symbolic exchanges deeply charged with emotional meanings. This pattern of action underscores the sophistication of Xerente social practices, which incorporate an ethical and adaptive flexibility rarely explored in academic analyses (Bonnewitz, 2003).

An often overlooked but fundamental aspect of Xerente emotional dynamics is the interrelationship between affect and territory. For the Xerente, the physical space is inseparable from the emotional experiences that take place in it. The places of coexistence and ritual are not only geographical points, but symbolic fields where emotions are intensified and ritualized. In this sense, the territory is not only the stage for emotional interactions, but an active agent that shapes community ties. This perception challenges Western conceptions of territory as something exclusively material, revealing the depth of the emotional connections between the Xerente people and their land (Barroso, 2002).

The elders act as transmitters of an emotional heritage that is not static, but constantly reinterpreted. Their narratives and practical orientations function as channels for

the circulation of emotions that guide decision-making and reinforce community values. This practice demonstrates that emotional dynamics are not ephemeral, but structural, constituting a strategic resource in the perpetuation of identity and culture. This ability of the Xerente to transform affections into elements of cultural resilience highlights the complexity of their practices and reveals the insufficiency of studies that limit emotions to the individual level (Melo, 2016).

Emotions not only serve to strengthen internal relations, but are also mobilized as strategic tools in negotiations with external actors, including government institutions and non-governmental organizations. This emotional articulation demonstrates that the Xerente understand the power of emotions not only as a community resource, but also as an instrument of power in the dynamics of resistance and intercultural dialogue. Such an approach challenges traditional concepts of political agency, which often ignore the role of emotions as catalysts for social change (Cunha, 2012).

Critically, it should be noted that the emotional economy of the Xerente also reveals the limitations of the "foreign aid" model often imposed on indigenous communities. These models, by privileging exclusively material resources, disregard the impact of emotions on the dynamics of cultural integration and assimilation. The introduction of material goods without the recognition of the emotional networks that structure Xerente society can lead to imbalances that weaken the cohesion of the group. In this context, attention to emotional dynamics is not only a theoretical exercise, but a practical necessity for the formulation of public policies that respect and strengthen cultural specificities (Pontes, Garnelo and Rego, 2014).

The complexity of Xerente emotional dynamics is also manifested in the practices of reciprocity, where affections are redistributed to balance inequalities and strengthen bonds. These practices cannot be understood only as symbolic rituals, but as sophisticated mechanisms of social regulation that guarantee equity and community stability. This perspective suggests an expanded notion of social justice, which integrates emotional and material dimensions, offering an implicit critique of market systems that exclusively prioritize economic value (Farias, 1990).

Contact with other cultures and insertion in a globalized context introduce new challenges, but also new possibilities for the reinvention of their emotional practices. This ability to adapt reflects the resilience of the Xerente people and their ability to integrate new elements without losing the essence of their traditions. However, this reinvention demands

critical attention, so that emotional dynamics are not subsumed by external logics that weaken their structuring function (Dobles and Arroyo, 2020).

REDISTRIBUTION OF FEELINGS AND COLLECTIVE CONNECTIONS

Unlike a reductionist view that associates emotions with private experiences, the Xerente treat feelings as active forces that cross and shape community relations. They not only emerge from social interactions, but also guide them, being continuously circulated and transformed in a dynamic process of renewal of alliances and belonging. Thus, feelings such as gratitude, empathy, respect and solidarity are distributed and experienced in a broad way, promoting an intersubjective web that sustains the group as a living organism (Almeida, 2010).

These emotional flows are particularly evident in moments of celebration or mourning, occasions when the boundaries between the individual and the collective are dissolved. In these contexts, the group organizes around practices that evoke and intensify shared emotions, such as the joy of a bountiful harvest or the grief over the loss of a loved one. The feeling then becomes an energy that circulates, comforts, celebrates and, above all, connects. This experience transcends the idea that emotions are static or belong exclusively to the subjects, demonstrating that they can be mobilized as powerful tools for community empowerment (Sawaia, 2020).

The practice of cultivating and sharing emotions is also deeply related to the role of elders in the community. These more experienced members not only impart practical knowledge, but also shape the way younger ones experience and express feelings. Ancestral narratives, loaded with emotional meanings, reinforce intergenerational bonds and ensure that emotions associated with community values are kept alive. This process of transmission is not merely didactic, but visceral, in which emotions carry an almost tangible weight that connects past, present and future (Barroso, 2002).

The feeling of gratitude for the land is not just a symbolic expression, but a concrete manifestation that guides practices of care and respect for the environment. This emotional bond with the territory reinforces the community's internal connections, since collective well-being is perceived as intrinsically linked to harmony with the environment. Thus, emotions not only regulate interpersonal relationships, but also structure the bonds between humans and the natural world (Bahia and Sampaio, 2005).

In addition, there is a strategic dimension to the emotional practices of the Xerente, especially in contexts of adversity. When faced with external threats, such as territorial disputes or decontextualized public policies, feelings such as indignation, courage, and resilience are intensified and shared, strengthening the unity of the group. This emotional mobilization is not random, but carefully articulated, showing that the Xerente understand emotions as tools for resistance and adaptation to changes imposed by external forces (Cunha, 2012).

The way the Xerente manage feelings also has implications for social organization. There are no rigid hierarchies, but leaders emerge based on the ability to inspire trust and strengthen the bonds between group members. This emotional recognition reinforces the idea that power, in this community, is not imposed, but cultivated through the ability to generate cohesion and promote harmony. Feelings of belonging and mutual respect, in this context, become the foundations on which leadership is built (Schoereder, 2006).

In everyday activities, such as sharing food or building common spaces, feelings flow in an almost imperceptible but essential way. Simple gestures, such as helping a neighbor or supporting a relative in difficulty, carry an emotional meaning that goes far beyond the act itself. These actions reinforce mutual support networks and create a sense of safety and care that permeates the entire community. This process reveals how feelings are deeply intertwined with the materiality of life, in a balance that integrates the emotional and the practical (Farias, 1990).

Emotions also play an important role in creating and maintaining the narratives that define the collective identity of the Xerente. Traditional myths and stories, when told and retold, evoke feelings that strengthen community values and remind us of the challenges overcome by the group. This act of reliving emotions through narratives is not only a rescue of the past, but a reconfiguration of the present, reinforcing cohesion and preparing the community for the future (Rosaldo, 1979).

The emotional connections among the Xerente go beyond the human realm, also integrating spiritual elements. Feelings such as reverence and gratitude are directed to the spiritual forces that believe they protect and guide the community. This transcendent dimension of emotions shows how feelings not only connect individuals with each other, but also link the group to a larger cosmology, where the emotional merges with the spiritual in a complex network of interrelationships (Melo, 2016).

Emotional dynamics, therefore, are not just a secondary or accidental element in the lives of the Xerente, but the nucleus that sustains their collective connections and defines the way they perceive themselves as a community. The constant circulation and transformation of feelings, whether in everyday contexts or rituals, reveal a society deeply committed to the preservation of its relationships, values and identity, demonstrating that emotions, far from being abstract, are a vital and strategic resource for cultural continuity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The concept of emotions as a structuring element of the community, highlighted by Almeida (2010) and Farias (1990), finds an echo in observed practices, but is expanded by new perspectives that challenge some previous interpretations. While Almeida (2010) proposes that emotions act as regulatory forces of social interactions, Farias (1990) suggests that they also have a redistributive role, comparable to material goods. However, this relationship is more complex than previously supposed, and the data indicate that emotions, although redistributed, are not diluted, but intensified in collective processes.

The question of territory as an emotional component, raised by Bahia and Sampaio (2005), also gains new contours. His analysis of the relationship between emotions and the environment highlights the symbiosis between the group and the land, but underestimates the ritualistic dimension that reinforces these bonds. The research points out that the territory is not only a space for emotional practices, but an active entity in the configuration of collective feelings. This idea diverges from authors who treat the territory as a backdrop for social relations, such as Barroso (2002), who argues that feelings are constructed mainly in the interpersonal sphere. This analysis reinforces that the physical environment, for the Xerente, is inseparable from emotional dynamics and should be understood as an active and intrinsic component.

The author Schoederer (2006) argues that emotions play an essential regulatory role, preventing tensions from destabilizing social cohesion. On the other hand, Sawaia (2020) presents a more critical view, suggesting that emotions can also function as instruments of power that reinforce implicit hierarchies. The results obtained suggest that both perspectives have validity, depending on the context: in situations of internal conflict, emotions seem to operate as mediators, while in interactions with external agents, as in the case of territorial disputes, they are mobilized as strategic tools of resistance.

Intergenerationality also emerges as a central axis in emotional connections, but with divergent approaches among authors. For Barroso (2002), the emotions transmitted between generations have a didactic character, centered on the preservation of cultural values. In contrast, Melo (2016) highlights that these emotions not only preserve, but also transform values, adapting them to new social demands. The data obtained reinforce Melo's (2016) view, indicating that emotions between generations are not static, but dynamic, operating as a mechanism of cultural innovation that guarantees continuity without stagnation.

The political dimension of emotions also presents significant divergences. Cunha (2012) and Dobles and Arroyo (2020) address emotional mobilization in contexts of resistance, but with different emphases. Cunha (2012) focuses on the ability of emotions to strengthen collective identity in the face of external pressures, while Dobles and Arroyo (2020) argue that emotions can be instrumentalized to create narratives that legitimize practices of resistance. The analysis of the data points out that these narratives not only legitimize the struggle, but also reconfigure the emotional experience of the community, making feelings of indignation and courage engines for political action.

In moments of celebration, emotions assume a central role and are often idealized by authors such as Rosaldo (1979), who sees these occasions as a pure expression of community cohesion. However, the data indicate that the emotions expressed in these moments are not homogeneous, but multifaceted, including feelings of competition, individual pride, and even latent tensions that are carefully managed by the collectivity. This finding adds a layer of complexity to the analysis, suggesting that even at the most festive times, emotions play multiple and sometimes contradictory roles.

Farias (1990) highlights the role of traditional stories as vehicles of collective emotions, while Rosaldo (1979) suggests that these narratives serve mainly to evoke moral teachings. The data obtained indicate that both interpretations are valid, but incomplete: the narratives not only evoke emotions and teach values, but also create spaces for emotional negotiation where the collective memory is continuously reformulated.

Finally, the study reveals the importance of emotions in building alliances between the Xerente and other indigenous peoples or external institutions. While Almeida (2010) suggests that emotions are restricted to internal interactions, the results indicate that they also play a key role in the formation of external partnerships. Feelings such as trust and respect are carefully cultivated in cross-cultural interactions, demonstrating that the

Xerente's emotional economy transcends community boundaries and acts as a bridge to new forms of collaboration.

CONCLUSION

This article sought to understand how feelings are managed and re-signified by the Xerente community as a collective resource, structuring their social relations and contributing to the preservation of their cultural identity. The analysis revealed that emotions play a central role in their community organization, not only as individual expression, but as elements that circulate, connect, and strengthen the group. The initial question, about how the Xerente use feelings as a community resource, was answered by showing that they are articulated in a strategic and deeply symbolic way in various daily practices and rituals.

The results of this work have significant implications for society and academia. For society, understanding the emotional dynamics of the Xerente helps to deconstruct stereotypes and recognize the complexity and sophistication of their culture, promoting greater respect and appreciation of indigenous peoples. For academia, the study offers a new perspective on emotions, often analyzed from an individualistic perspective, and proposes a more collective and integrative vision, which dialogues with multiple fields of knowledge, such as anthropology, psychology, and sociology.

By exploring the "emotional economy" as an innovative concept, this work not only broadens the horizons of understanding about the Xerente, but also challenges academic paradigms, encouraging more interdisciplinary approaches in the study of human relations.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Despite the contributions presented, this research has limitations that should be considered. As it is a qualitative and bibliographic study, the analysis was based on theoretical interpretations and data available in secondary sources. The absence of field research with the Xerente themselves limits the depth of understanding of the nuances of their emotional practices. This limitation, however, does not invalidate the findings, but highlights the need for future complementation with empirical data that can corroborate or refine the interpretations made.

In addition, the emotional economy approach is a relatively new and underexplored concept, which makes the study pioneering, but also limited in terms of comparative dialogues with other indigenous or non-indigenous communities. This gap reinforces the

importance of broadening the academic debate around emotions as a structuring element of social relations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

To deepen the reflections and expand knowledge on the subject, it is recommended that future studies carry out field investigations with the Xerente community. This would allow a more detailed understanding of the emotional practices observed directly in daily life, with the active participation of the community members themselves, ensuring a richer analysis anchored in the local experience.

It would also be relevant to explore comparisons with other indigenous communities, both in Brazil and in other countries, to identify similarities and differences in emotional dynamics and how they relate to cultural, territorial, and historical issues. This comparative approach can offer valuable insights into the universality or specificity of the concept of emotional economy in different contexts.

An important point is emphasized here, which is to investigate how emotions are mobilized by the Xerente in their interactions with the outside world, such as in the struggle for rights or in intercultural dialogues. Future studies can contribute to understanding how these emotional dynamics translate into resistance strategies, further expanding the applicability of the concept.

It is essential that future research involves an interdisciplinary approach, integrating areas such as psychology, anthropology, education, and public policy. This dialogue between disciplines can generate significant contributions not only to academia, but also to the formulation of policies that are more inclusive and respectful of the cultural specificities of indigenous peoples.

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