


ROBBERY CRIME AND PRISONERS' PERSPECTIVES: A STUDY IN MORAL PSYCHOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative, cross-sectional study aimed to investigate prisoners' perspectives on robbery, drawing on the theoretical framework of the Psychology of Morality. Participants included 20 men awaiting their custody hearings at a triage center located in the metropolitan area of Greater Vitória, Espírito Santo, comprising a convenience sample. Two structured interview schedules were used for data collection, while content analysis was used for analysis. The results indicated that both defendants and victims are predominantly young, and that the crimes primarily occurred in public spaces, targeting passersby, on Wednesdays and Fridays at night, and with a focus on cell phones. It was also found that respondents reported financial needs and issues related to illicit drug use as motivations for the crime, and mentioned experiencing regret and fear after the act. Feelings such as shame and guilt, fundamental to moral action, were not mentioned. Furthermore, overall, participants demonstrated a discrepancy between their judgments and their actions, and identified family support as a potential factor in preventing recidivism. This research is expected to contribute to understanding the factors that influence robbery and, thus, inform the planning and implementation of strategies to improve public safety.

Keywords: Crime. Robbery. Prisoner. Psychology. Moral Development.

RESUMO

Este estudo, de abordagem qualitativa e método transversal, teve como objetivo investigar as perspectivas de presos a respeito do crime de roubo, a partir do suporte teórico da Psicologia da Moralidade. Participaram 20 homens que aguardavam suas audiências de custódia em um centro de triagem localizado na região metropolitana da Grande Vitória – Espírito Santo, compondo uma amostra por conveniência. Para a coleta de dados, foram empregados dois roteiros estruturados de entrevista, enquanto para a análise utilizou-se a técnica da análise de conteúdo. Os resultados indicaram que acusados e vítimas são predominantemente jovens, bem como que os crimes se deram, principalmente, em via pública, a transeuntes, às quartas e sextas-feiras, no período noturno e com o foco em

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aparelhos de telefone celular. Verificou-se, ainda, que os entrevistados relataram como motivação para o delito necessidades financeiras e questões relacionadas ao uso de drogas ilícitas, e mencionaram terem experimentado arrependimento e medo após o ato. Sentimentos como vergonha e culpa, fundamentais à ação moral, não foram citados. Além disso, no geral, os participantes demonstraram uma discrepância entre seus juízos e suas ações, e apontaram o apoio familiar como possibilidade de não reincidência. Espera-se que esta investigação contribua para a compreensão dos fatores que influenciam o cometimento do crime de roubo e, assim, possa fornecer subsídios ao planejamento e à implementação de estratégias para a qualificação da segurança pública.

Palavras-chave: Crime. Roubo. Preso. Psicologia. Desenvolvimento Moral.

RESUMEN

Este estudio cualitativo transversal tuvo como objetivo investigar las perspectivas de los reclusos sobre el robo, basándose en el marco teórico de la Psicología de la Moralidad. Participaron 20 hombres que aguardaban sus audiencias de custodia en un centro de triaje ubicado en el área metropolitana de Gran Vitória, Espírito Santo, conformando una muestra por conveniencia. Se utilizaron dos esquemas de entrevistas estructuradas para la recolección de datos, mientras que el análisis de contenido se realizó para el análisis. Los resultados indicaron que tanto los acusados como las víctimas son predominantemente jóvenes, y que los delitos ocurrieron principalmente en espacios públicos, dirigidos a transeúntes, los miércoles y viernes por la noche, y con un enfoque en teléfonos celulares. También se encontró que los encuestados reportaron necesidades financieras y problemas relacionados con el consumo de drogas ilícitas como motivaciones para el delito, y mencionaron sentir arrepentimiento y miedo después del acto. No se mencionaron sentimientos como la vergüenza y la culpa, fundamentales para la acción moral. Además, en general, los participantes mostraron una discrepancia entre sus juicios y sus acciones, e identificaron el apoyo familiar como un factor potencial para prevenir la reincidencia. Se espera que esta investigación contribuya a la comprensión de los factores que influyen en el robo y, por lo tanto, sirva de base para la planificación e implementación de estrategias para mejorar la seguridad pública.

Palabras clave: Delito. Robo. Recluso. Psicología. Desarrollo Moral.

1 INTRODUCTION

This article is derived from a larger project, integrated with the doctoral thesis of Borges (2011), which aims to understand – at different points of the prosecution and/or criminal execution in the State of Espírito Santo (ES) – the motivations and circumstances of criminal actions from the perspective of the offender himself. It is, specifically, the crime of robbery, typified in the Brazilian Penal Code (CP), in its Article 157, as the theft of someone else's property for oneself or for another by means of serious threat or violence (whether physical, moral or improper), under penalty of imprisonment and a fine (Brasil, 1940).

Robbery is, therefore, configured as a complex crime, considering that it can be characterized as the fusion of the crimes of theft and light bodily injury, when committed with violence to the person, or even as the synthesis of the crimes of theft and threat, when its commission uses 'only' the serious threat (Masson, 2018). Despite being in decline since 2018 (with a negative rate of 10.9% in 2023), the practice of robbery remains an important indicator of the severity of violence in Brazil, bringing direct impacts to the daily lives of the population and to the public coffers (Brazilian Forum on Public Security, 2024).

It should be noted that violence is a social, historical and multidimensional phenomenon, as well as associated with unjust and unequal social structures for citizens (Borges & Alencar, 2015). It "implies the dimension of power (understood as the correlation of forces) and the deprivation, momentary or perennial, of the exercise of freedom by the violated person" (La Taille, 2009, p. 330). Alves and Dongo-Montoya (2017) warn that the problems triggered by violence are not restricted to strata of society, generating unpleasant global consequences for individual and collective well-being, both at the affective and emotional level, as well as at the social and economic levels.

In Brazil, since 2015, once arrested in flagrante delicto, the accused of robbery (as well as any other crime) is submitted to the custody hearing within a maximum period of twenty-four hours, that is, he is presented to the judicial authority in a pre-procedural procedure so that he can explain the reasons why he was detained, as well as under what conditions he is incarcerated. Thus, the hearing has a dual role: to assess the legality of the arrest, and the magistrate may grant the benefit of provisional release to the accused or decide for his preventive detention (Brasil, 2019; Cardoso, 2023) and also humanize the process, with special attention to the possibility of freedom and presumption of innocence. Such a procedure thus marks an effort to transition from a culture of incarceration to that of guaranteeing fundamental rights (National Council of Justice, 2020).

It is in this context that this work is inserted, whose objective was to investigate the perspectives of men who were waiting for their custody hearings to be held regarding the crime of robbery for which they were accused. To this end, dialogues were undertaken with official data from government agencies and with the theoretical framework of the Psychology of Morality – a classic area of Psychology, especially the Psychology of Human Development, which is dedicated to understanding the psychological processes by which people legitimize rules, principles, and moral values (Couto et al., 2021). It is argued, as Alves and Dongo-Montoya (2017) do, that violence, here specifically treated through the crime of robbery, is close to the moral issue because it is based on the way respect occurs between people and between them and the rules. In this sense, the theoretical constructions of the Swiss epistemologist Jean Piaget and the French psychologist, naturalized Brazilian, Yves de La Taille, will be used as a lens of data analysis.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 DESIGN

This is a cross-sectional study with a qualitative approach, with the insertion of simple descriptive statistics. Its character can also be defined as exploratory-descriptive, insofar as it aims to know and describe in detail the phenomenon in question as it happens in the context in which it is inserted (Lösch et al., 2023; Pedroso et al., 2017).

2.2 PARTICIPANTS

Twenty (20) men arrested for the crime of robbery who were awaiting their custody hearings in a screening center in a municipality in the Metropolitan Region of Greater Vitória – ES were part of this investigation. The choice for men occurred because this is the largest prison population in terms of gender in the country and also in the federative unit under analysis (FBSP, 2024). The sample was designed for convenience, so it was not probabilistic.

2.3 INSTRUMENTS

As a means of data collection, two structured interview scripts were used, adapted from the work of Borges and Alencar (2006), with the consent of the authors for the research group on Public Security of the *stricto sensu Graduate Program* in Public Security of the University of Vila Velha – ES. The first of them referred to the characterization of the detainee (age, self-declared color, employment and housing conditions), while the second focused on

the crime itself, consisting of open and closed questions referring, for example, to the victims, the places where the crime was committed, the prisoner's motivations for the act and the feelings arising from it.

2.4 PROCEDURES

Each potential participant was approached with explanations regarding the objective of the research and received guidance on anonymity, confidentiality of data, willingness to collaborate and the right to withdraw at any time. Having accepted the invitation, he was given a Free and Informed Consent Form, signed by the researchers.

The interviews took place individually and in person in May 2020, at the aforementioned screening center. In addition, they were recorded in audio for later transcription and extraction of as much information as possible. Given the pandemic context, measures were taken to prevent contagion and the spread of the new coronavirus, such as the constant use of face masks and the maintenance of physical distance.

It is worth noting that the entire research process was developed in accordance with resolutions No. 466/2012 and No. 510/2016 (Ministry of Health, 2012; 2016), after approval by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Vila Velha, on May 21, 2020. The Certificate of Presentation of Ethical Appreciation obtained was No. 28903919.0.0000.5064, under opinion No. 4.039.639.

2.5 DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS

The data were analyzed, primarily, based on content analysis in its categorical subtype (Bardin, 2011), which seeks to identify recurring themes through detailed and successive readings of the textual material (Dalla Valle & Ferreira, 2024). Thus, three phases of work were undertaken, namely the pre-analysis of the texts of the interviews, followed by their exploration and, finally, the treatment of the results, with the performance of inferences and interpretations (Bardin, 2011). In addition, simple frequency statistical calculations were performed, as shown below.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In order to make the presentation of the data and the resulting analyses didactic, the results were organized into three sections, namely: *characterization of the accused of the crime*, *characterization of the crime and the victims* and, finally, *characterization of the*

motivations for the crime. It should be noted that this division is artificial and does not aim, in any way, to exhaust the complexity of the phenomenon of theft, but only to facilitate its understanding from the perspectives of its agents. These, by the way, are explored directly only in the third category outlined, but it would not be possible to deepen the look at them without first analyzing the broader context in which they are consolidated.

3.1 CHARACTERIZATION OF THOSE ACCUSED OF THE CRIME

The prisoners, aged between 18 and 36 years (Mean = 24.95; SD = 6.09), declared themselves as brown (n=12; 60%) and black (n=08; 40%). Most of them (n=13; 65%) reported being unemployed at the time of the crime, while none of them reported attending an educational institution. Of the seven employees, 57.1% (n=04) received between one and two minimum wages, 28.6% (n=02) two full salaries and 14.3% (n=01) less than one. Regarding housing conditions, the interviewees reported living alone (n=01; 05%), sharing a house with two to seven people (n=16; 80%) or even being homeless – the case of three of them (15%).

These data are in line with the social reality of the country, which, despite being composed predominantly of browns and blacks – who, according to the 2022 Census (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, 2023) represent 55.5% of the population – has the non-white segment occupying more precarious positions and lower income (Instituto Locomotiva, 2020). Although there is no causal link between poverty and crime (Jablonski, 2016; Nery, 2024), it is known that social inequalities have a stronger impact on this public and that, not surprisingly, they also make up the largest portion of people in the prison system in the country (National Secretariat of Penal Policies, 2025).

In addition, it is perceived that all the participants of this research are in young adulthood, especially in emerging adulthood, between 20 and 40 years old. This moment in the life cycle is marked by greater complexity of moral thoughts and judgments compared to previous periods (Papalia & Martorell, 2022), since human development "[...] presupposes basic transformations of cognitive structures, as wholes organized in a system of relations, which lead to higher forms of balance, resulting from processes of interaction between the organism and the environment" (Bataglia et al., 2010, p. 26). Young people are also the most expressive prison portion of both the regional and national contexts of Espírito Santo (National Secretariat of Penal Policies, 2025).

3.2 CHARACTERIZATION OF THE CRIME AND THE VICTIMS

The crimes analyzed here occurred predominantly in the municipality of Serra, where eight cases (40%) were registered, followed by Vila Velha with six (30%), Vitória with three (15%), Cariacica with two (10%) and Viana with one (05%). These data are in line with the *ranking* of the 50 cities with the highest rates of robbery and cell phone theft in the Brazilian Yearbook of Public Security (FBSP, 2024), which includes four of these locations in Espírito Santo: Cariacica with the 15th position, Serra occupying the 23rd, Vitória the 28th and Vila Velha the 36th.

It was noteworthy that the robberies were committed mainly on public roads (90%), to passers-by (n=13), on Wednesdays and Fridays – with the two days adding up to 50% of the records (n=10) – and also at night (n=16; 80%). Once again, these data demonstrate that the State follows a national trend, corroborating those of the aforementioned Yearbook, in which it can be seen that the highest frequency of robberies occurs, precisely, on weekdays, when people are leaving home for work or returning from it, especially from 5 am to 7 am and 6 pm to 10 pm (FBSP, 2024).

The victims, in turn, were alone (n=09; 45%), followed by unaccompanied women (n=05; 25%) and pairs or small groups formed by both genders (n=06; 30%). The male predominance in the target of robberies was also found in the national study of the Brazilian Forum on Public Security (2024), but with an even higher statistic (78%). most, men

Similar to the profile of the accused, exposed in the previous subtopic, the victims are also predominantly young (n=16; 80%). This reveals that youth, at least in this context, is doubly affected by violence, both as perpetrators and victims. In ninety-five percent of the cases (n=19), by the way, the victim was not chosen in advance. The exception was D. (19 years old) who reported that he selected his target because "the boy had given me the tape of a guy who was going to have three thousand at the time".

It was found that cell phones were the preferred objects in the robberies under analysis (n=13; 65%), although more than half of the interviewees (n=13; 65%) stated that they had not chosen, in advance, what they would steal. Among the seven (35%) who declared that they had gone out looking for such a device, three justified that they would steal it because of the ease of sale or exchange 'in the mouth', while a third indicated that he wanted cell phones because he had a receiver for these products. In this regard, it must be mentioned that the receipt of proceeds of crime also constitutes a crime of its own, described in Article 180 of the CP (Brasil, 1940).

The phenomenon of massive theft of cell phones is recent and worldwide, arising from the evolution, in recent years, of electronic means of payment and banking transactions, which resulted in a considerable decrease in the circulation of paper money (Thompson, 2017). So much so that, in 2023, 14,570 devices were stolen in the State of Espírito Santo and 442,999 in the country as a whole (FBSP, 2024). In 2022, the National Telecommunications Agency received 2,620 daily requests for *SIM* blocking of mobile phones (G1, 2023; Mannara, 2023).

Finally, the other objects of theft mentioned referred to motor vehicles, with three cases (15%), money with two (10%), and women's purse and attempted robbery (in which nothing was taken) with only one occurrence each (05%). It is clarified that the attempt concerns the non-consummation of the robbery for reasons beyond the agent's control (Brasil, 1940).

3.3 CHARACTERIZATION OF THE MOTIVATIONS FOR THE CRIME

In general, we sought to verify the perspectives of the interviewees on the crime committed, not only past at the time of the robbery, but also present, already in the judicial system. First, it is noteworthy that the participants reported, homogeneously, having stolen due to financial needs ($n=10$; 50%) or for issues related to the use of illicit drugs ($n=10$; 50%).

As for the first aspect, the statements of J., 20 years old, and L. com 18 years old at the time, are illustrative, which follow this order: "I was working as a bricklayer's assistant, but then the coronavirus came, then the job ended"; "Due to the coronavirus I didn't work for a while, things 'tightened' at home. Then I went on the wave of friends, I ended up doing this stupid thing, but if I could go back...". In them, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is evident, in addition to the health of the population. Araújo and Brandão (2021) warn that the lack of work, here related to the sanitary measures necessary to contain the virus, causes both a reduction in income and its complete extinction, which, naturally, has put many people and families at full psychosocial risk. In the imperative of physical distancing, urban workers – already precarious, because they do not have an employment relationship and are supported by social security – were forced to interrupt their activities, with no immediate possibility of replacement.

Regarding the second aspect mentioned, it is necessary to consider that there is, on the part of the State, a repressive policy against drug use and, especially, drug trafficking in Brazil (Martins & Rocha, 2021). However, preventive actions are timid. In this sense, several scientific productions (to name a few: Azevedo & Hipolyto, 2023; Paula et al., 2024 and

Tatmatsu et al., 2020) draw attention to the need for the persuasive and prohibitionist logic to be deconstructed, since it is not very efficient, and to give way to investments in education and health based on other paradigms.

In addition, five prisoners (25%) stated that they had been influenced by other factors for the practice. The situation of I. (36 years old) stands out, who stated that he sought to prevent his partner, a crack user like him, from prostituting herself in order to obtain the drug, which she had already done in the past. I. also stated the following:

In addition, I was a driver. I had a problem with my license, it was suspended, revoked, then I started washing and watching the car, then with the corona everything stopped. What happens: the church where I worked stopped all the celebrations, you know, then I couldn't wash cars and watch cars. Then, addicted to drugs, I ended up letting go, I made a decision that I knew was not correct. Hence there is a consequence.

When asked about the judgment they made in relation to the victim, 10 (50%) interviewees considered it wrong. Eight (40%) indicated that they had not carried out any analysis – either because they were under the influence of narcotics, had been forced to commit the crime or because they had been arrested immediately after the crime. Contrary to these positions, two (10%) defendants reported having evaluated the criminal conduct against that victim as correct, since they needed money, thus demonstrating the primacy of their demands to the detriment of respect for others, and therefore also their integrity (Alves & Dongo-Montoya, 2017). On the other hand, J. (18 years old), arrested for the first time, declared: "I regret it, I don't regret it, but I feel sorry for the person. I don't regret it. It didn't work. Do what?".

When asked about the judgment they would have made about the criminal conduct shortly after its practice, nine (45%) interviewees evaluated it as wrong, while eleven (55%) indicated that they had not reflected on it. This last fact is exemplified by the statement of E. (32 years old): "Sir, I didn't think about anything, I just wanted the victim's things". On the other hand, M. (of the same age) stated:

I thought it was wrong, because in addition to taking something that is not yours, you are harming a person who has never done you any harm. In my case, I felt like using [crack]. I could have returned home to my wife, but I continued in that situation there, and I ended up committing this act.

As can be seen, in general, the data reveal a discrepancy between the judgments and actions of the interviewees, aspects that, in fact, maintain a complex interaction (Souza & Vasconcelos, 2009). While judgments refer to the cognitive acts of evaluation, actions refer to the doings themselves (Gonçalves & Oliveira, 2020). It is noted, in the cases in question, that being able to issue moral judgments does not guarantee the taking of equally moral attitudes, and it is therefore also necessary to shed light on the affective states of the accused so that one can, to some degree, understand their conduct (Piaget, 1954/2005; 1983; La Taille, 2002). Thus, one of the questions asked referred to the feelings that arose soon after the crime was committed, for which there was a predominance of "regret", mentioned by eight participants (40%), followed by "fear" (n=04; 20%). There were also "satisfaction" and the allegation that "there was no feeling at that moment", with three mentions each (15%), and "pity for the victim" with two (10%).

It is interesting to note that none of the interviewees alluded to guilt, defined as a negative feeling of having caused harm to someone (La Taille, 2009), a fact that naturally results from theft. Nor was shame pointed out, which is known to be fundamental for moral conduct and development (La Taille, 2002). It is worth clarifying that the latter consists, in the Piagetian perspective, in a continuous process of evolution of two moral tendencies: heteronomy and autonomy. The first is characterized by relations of coercion and unilateral respect, in which moral norms are not yet understood in their social function. The second, on the other hand, is marked by the overcoming of this moral realism, which culminates in social interactions aimed at cooperation and reciprocity, without the need for external vigilance in compliance with the rules (Piaget, 1932/1994).

Thus, it can be seen that, for Piaget, there is no human nature for morality, being the subject active in its construction and also influenced by social relations (Nakano & Oliveira, 2018). La Taille (2006a, p.29), in turn, understands morality as a set of duties that, therefore, refers to the answers that are obtained from the question "how should I act?". The author also provides clarification on ethics, which focuses on the reflection "what life do I want to live?" and, in this way, refers to the definition of personal life projects (Salgado & Alencar, 2013).

Returning to the issue of moral shame, it is emphasized that if a person lives in a context where, for example, money and social *status* are taken as answers to the question of who one wants to be, the former may be weak or even non-existent (La Taille, 2006a). Since those who experience shame do so based on a judgment of themselves, not seeing

themselves in a negative way does not lead to the subjective experience of displeasure and, therefore, contributes to the maintenance of the behavior. Furthermore, it is known that one of the basic motivations of human beings is the search for positive representations of themselves (La Taille, 2002), which corresponds to self-valorization. For Piaget (1954/2005), this refers to a kind of exchange that the individual makes with himself in response to the exchange with others, which reaffirms the influence of the context in his formulation and judgment.

In the cases under analysis, it can be hypothesized that, for the most part, the values that guided the interviewees' actions of theft were not moral and were more associated with the private sphere than with the community dimension (Tognetta & Vinha, 2009). However, it is not appropriate to generalize such a perspective because, for example, recalling the speech of I. (36 years old), there is the existence of a moral dilemma, understood by La Taille (2006b) as a situation in which two conflicting moral elements have weight. Here, it is possible to distinguish the value of dignity as opposed to that of property, making I. weigh them and place them in hierarchy, that is, equate them morally, reflecting on their implications in his life, but especially in that of his partner (La Taille, 2006a).

Focusing on the most cited feeling, namely, "regret", it was possible to perceive, during the interviews, that it was associated with the negative consequences of the crime, especially the deprivation of liberty and the internal conditions of the screening center. This data, once again, reveals that the participants did not put themselves in the victim's shoes, a fundamental posture for the possibility of an autonomous morality (Alves & Dongo-Montoya, 2017). On the other hand, it is also noteworthy that the feeling "pity for the victim" was the least mentioned, which seems to point, again, to the lack or low concern of the accused in relation to his target.

In another question, almost unanimously among the interviewees (n=19; 95%) informed that the reason for committing the robbery would not be, in an analysis after the fact, sufficient to commit it again. The only interviewee (05%) who took a different position, I., 21 years old, pointed to 'addiction', that is, chemical dependence, as a maintenance of motivation, recalling his affliction in moments of abstinence. It was noticed, among the 19 mentioned above, that most of their evaluations were related to the 'jail' factor, since those who were arrested for the first time were frightened by the inhumane conditions of prison, in which there are notable violations of fundamental rights, for example, in terms of hygiene and safety (Vieira & Silva, 2024).

In addition, we sought to investigate whether the participants considered that something could prevent them from reoffending in the crime of robbery, which found a predominance of responses related to family support (n= 08; 40%). Job opportunities (n= 05; 25%), fear of being detained again (n=03; 15%), possibility of hospitalization in a specialized clinic for the treatment of chemical dependency (n= 03; 15%) and religious reasons (n= 01; 05%) were also factors raised by the men.

I., 21, shared that he has been 'pulling jail since he was twelve' and, somewhat accustomed to this reality, he is not afraid of being arrested again. In this case, the hostile environment of the prison institution no longer produces the repressive effect that it awakens in those others, incarcerated for the first time, and demonstrates that the supposed resocializing function of the system falls short of the need that, here, is configured as individual and social.

Finally, the participants were asked if they had committed or would commit the crime of robbery due to the desire for I) adventure or 'adrenaline', II) defiance of any authority, such as paternal or state and III) obtaining approval, respect or other similar feeling within a group. Almost unanimously in all three questions they said that they would do so 'very little or nothing' (with response rates ranging from 85% to 95%), thus disagreeing that these would be legitimate motivators for the illegal practice. However, in all three situations, more than half of the interviewees (from 50% to 65%) considered that other people steal or would steal under the weight of these aspects. When they underestimate or deny the influence of these factors on their actions, the interviewees meet the need for self-worth, already mentioned (La Taille, 2002; Piaget, 1954/2005). Additionally, although they take a diametrically opposite position in the way they evaluate themselves and others, it is necessary to consider the social desirability factor, which will be clarified in the next topic.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis of the perspectives of these 20 men, accused of robbery and awaiting their custody hearings, revealed that the motivations for committing the offense were related to financial needs and chemical dependency. Although this division is useful in analytical terms, it is known that its borders have intersections, since the availability of money facilitates access to psychoactive substances and their abuse. In addition, the preponderant subsequent evaluation of the interviewees in relation to the choice of the victim and the criminal conduct itself was negative or wrong, but the feelings of guilt and shame, which could

be expected in this context, did not appear in their narratives. This results in a clear damage to the formation of ethical personalities and the development of autonomy, insofar as such feelings are essential to moral thinking and acting.

It is crucial to highlight that this study was composed exclusively of young people, black and brown, unemployed or underemployed. Such aspects denounce that, in addition to the legal question posed, that is, the clear violation of the victim's right to property, there are (undeniably and affecting to a greater degree the accused) others of social, racial and racist orders, both structural and institutional which, although not discussed in this work because they are not its focus, need to be mentioned. It is no coincidence that these participants listed family support and insertion in the formal labor market, with their consequent labor and social rights, as protective factors against involvement or recidivism in crime.

It is also essential to consider that, given the complexity and multifactoriality of the phenomena of violence and crime, this investigation does not intend to reduce them to individual conditions, nor to simplify the contexts in which they occur, but rather to provide other possibilities of analysis and subsidies for policies related to public security (Bagalho et al., 2024). In this sense, a single reading of the phenomenon is not proposed here, but it cannot be denied that, in general, the data revealed possible links between social inequalities and the entry or permanence of the interviewees in the world of crime, in which the pandemic situation had considerable prominence.

It is worth pointing out, as a limit of this research, the participants' own condition as prisoners, awaiting custody hearings, which possibly led them to adopt a defensive or socially desirable position in the interviews due to the concern of possible interference of their reports in the subsequent judicial decision, although they were informed during the *rapport*, which would not occur. In addition, the sample analyzed referred to a single state and was composed only of people identified with the male gender, which does not allow the generalization of its results to other audiences and conjunctures.

Therefore, the relevance of new research with a diversity of participants can be inferred, which can provide a deeper understanding of the phenomena explored here. It is also considered pertinent to adopt the Piagetian clinical method for conducting interviews, so that it is possible to understand from the point of view of the analysis of the subjects under study, that is, the structure that underlies their judgments (Souza & Vasconcelos, 2009; Queiroz & Lima, 2010). No less important, there is the possibility of investigating the life

projects of these men accused of the crime of robbery, which can reveal clues to the understanding of their ethical plans, and in them, in fact, the motivations for moral actions lie (Salgado & Alencar, 2013).

This work ends with the defense that the understanding of the factors that influence the commission of the crime of robbery is fundamental to the definition and implementation of strategies for the reduction of crime. However, one cannot fail to consider those who are already in the prison system, in which overcrowding, the denial of fundamental rights and the insufficiency of resocializing actions are daily and clearly demand greater attention and public investments. Similarly, it is crucial that the State cares more effectively for education, a device capable of promoting the transformation of society (Lepre & Ferreira, 2020), as well as that professionals in the school environment receive training and enjoy concrete possibilities to develop projects aimed at teaching moral values and, therefore, the constitution of subjects capable of cooperation and aligned with cultures of peace.

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