

SOCIOLOGICAL ISSUES AND PUBLIC SAFETY IN BRAZIL TODAY: BETWEEN CHALLENGES AND ALTERNATIVES"

SOCIOLOGICAL ISSUES AND PUBLIC SECURITY IN CONTEMPORARY BRAZIL: CHALLENGES AND ALTERNATIVES

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SUMMARY

This article analyzes the intersections between sociological issues and public security in contemporary Brazil, highlighting structural challenges and possible alternatives to address urban violence. Through a literature review, the study explores factors such as structural racism, gender inequalities, and repressive practices in the public security system. The research showed that racial profiling and gender-based violence are recurring manifestations of the dynamics of social exclusion, placing vulnerable populations in a position of greater insecurity. In addition, alternative policies, such as conflict mediation, community policing, and restorative justice, were analyzed, which appear to be more inclusive and effective approaches. The results indicate that traditional repressive policies perpetuate cycles of exclusion and violence, while alternatives focused on prevention and social inclusion have the potential to transform the public security system. However, institutional barriers, such as fragmentation and lack of resources, hinder the implementation of these strategies in Brazil. The conclusion reinforces the need to integrate sociological perspectives into public policy planning, recognizing the intersections between race, gender, and class. The study contributes to the academic and social debate by proposing solutions based on the promotion of social justice and the construction of a public safety model that prioritizes prevention and inclusion. It is suggested that future research should deepen the analysis of successful experiences, adapting strategies to local specificities.

Keywords:Public safety. Sociology. Structural racism. Gender. Alternative policies.

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the intersections between sociological issues and public security in contemporary Brazil, highlighting structural challenges and potential alternatives to address urban violence. Through a bibliographic review, the study explores factors such as structural racism, gender inequalities, and repressive practices within the public security system. The research revealed that racial profiling and gender-based violence are recurring manifestations of exclusion dynamics, placing vulnerable populations in greater insecurity. Additionally, alternative policies such as conflict mediation, community policing, and restorative justice were analyzed as more inclusive and effective approaches. The results indicate that traditional repressive policies perpetuate cycles of exclusion and violence, whereas alternatives focusing on prevention and social inclusion have the potential to transform the public security system. However, institutional barriers such as fragmentation and resource scarcity hinder the implementation of these strategies in Brazil. The conclusion emphasizes the need to integrate sociological perspectives into public policy planning, recognizing the intersections between race, gender, and class. The study contributes to academic and social debate by proposing solutions based on the promotion of social justice and the construction of a public security model that prioritizes prevention and inclusion. Future research should deepen the analysis of successful experiences, adapting strategies to local specificities.

Keywords:Public security. Sociology. Structural racism. Gender. Alternative policies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Public safety in Brazil is a central theme for understanding contemporary social dynamics, involving complex issues such as violence, social exclusion and structural inequalities. This

This scenario challenges not only the State's ability to guarantee protection to citizens, but also the way in which public policies are planned and implemented. This paper aims to analyze the sociological issues that permeate the Brazilian public security system, exploring the relationships between social phenomena and institutional practices in a context of growing demand for social justice and human rights.

The relevance of this topic is justified by its social and academic importance. Urban violence directly affects the population's quality of life and exposes the weaknesses of a fragmented and often inefficient public security system. In the academic field, the study of the connections between sociology and public security contributes to the development of more inclusive theoretical and practical approaches, capable of dealing with the challenges posed by social inequalities, structural racism and gender issues. Thus, this work aims to offer a critical analysis that can support debates and policies aimed at social transformation.

The research question guiding this study is: How do sociological phenomena, such as racism, gender, and structural inequalities, influence the public security system in Brazil? The overall goal is to understand these interactions and identify alternatives to overcome the limitations of the current system. Specific objectives include: discussing the role of sociology in the analysis of social control; exploring the impact of structural racism and gender issues on public security; and examining alternative security policies, such as community policing and restorative justice.

The methodological approach is based on a bibliographic review, using works by renowned authors such as Michel Foucault, Émile Durkheim and Abdias do Nascimento, as well as reports and case studies on public security practices in Brazil. The structure of the work is divided into chapters that address, in an articulated manner, the main themes related to sociological issues and public security, culminating in a critical reflection on the possibilities for change and progress in confronting violence and promoting social justice.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 THE SOCIOLOGY OF VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL CONTROL

The sociology of violence and social control examines how societies organize mechanisms to regulate behavior, maintain order, and confront transgressions. These mechanisms, which can be explicit, such as the use of force by the state, or implicit, such as cultural norms and values, are fundamental to understanding social dynamics. Émile Durkheim and Michel Foucault, two of the leading theorists in sociology, offer complementary perspectives on social control and violence, highlighting the relationship between norms, power, and social cohesion.

Durkheim, in his work *The Rules of Sociological Method* (1895), emphasizes that social cohesion is sustained by collective norms and values, the transgression of which generates sanctions. He argues that

Crime is not only an offense against moral and legal norms, but also a condition for social evolution. By challenging norms, crimes can lead to reflection and transformation of social rules, adapting them to new conditions. Punishment, in this context, reinforces collective solidarity, reaffirming the values shared by society (DURKHEIM, 1895, p. 82).

In this approach, the author suggests that crime, far from being just an evil to be eliminated, is also a necessary social phenomenon, as it challenges established norms and instigates reflections that can lead to the evolution of social rules and values. This perspective highlights that, by exposing tensions and contradictions within a society, crime forces the community to reevaluate its norms, adapting them to new realities.

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In this sense, punishment is not only a form of repression, but also a mechanism that reinforces collective solidarity by reaffirming the values that unite individuals. This process demonstrates that social control, even in its repressive aspect, has an integrative function, strengthening social cohesion by aligning norms with changes in social conditions.

Foucault, on the other hand, offers a critical view of social control, highlighting its disciplinary character and the way it is exercised through modern institutions such as schools, prisons and hospitals. In *Discipline and Punish* (1975), he states:

Disciplinary power manifests itself in practices that shape bodies and minds, introducing a

economy of coercion that regulates behavior without the need for explicit violence. Prisons, for example, not only punish crime, but also produce disciplined subjects who internalize social norms. This model of diffuse control is more efficient because it operates silently, naturalizing hierarchies and submission (FOUCAULT, 1975, p. 210).

Foucault reveals the subtlety and effectiveness of social control in modern societies. He proposes that disciplinary power does not act only through direct repression, but operates in a diffuse manner, shaping behaviors through norms and practices that are internalized by individuals. In this context, institutions such as prisons, schools, and hospitals become spaces for the production of disciplined subjects, who begin to regulate their own acts according to socially accepted standards. Furthermore, the author exposes how the penal system goes beyond punishing crimes to act in the production of subjectivities that accept the current norms. This model of social control is more efficient because it acts silently, creating a conformity that seems natural and inevitable. Thus, hierarchies and power relations become invisible, while at the same time being reproduced more efficiently. This analysis is particularly relevant in the context of public security, as it questions the extent to which the penal system and other institutional practices promote justice or merely reinforce structures of domination and submission.

Foucault broadens the discussion on social control by introducing the concept of “biopower,” which refers to the management of populations’ lives through policies that regulate everything from health to behavior. He notes that “modern power does not limit itself to repression; it produces and organizes. Biopower acts to optimize and control life by classifying and hierarchizing individuals and groups, while promoting a conformity that reinforces existing social structures” (FOUCAULT, 1975, p. 245).

This perspective broadens our understanding of power by demonstrating that it does not only act through coercion, but also through the management of life and the creation of norms that structure society. This concept of biopower refers to the control exercised over entire populations through policies that regulate aspects such as health, education and behavior, organizing social life in a systematic way. Biopower is not simply repressive; it classifies and hierarchizes individuals and groups, promoting a conformity that naturalizes inequalities and reinforces existing social structures. Thus, biopower, as a tool of organization and control, not only regulates life, but also defines who has access to resources, rights and opportunities, consolidating a system that favors the elites and marginalizes the vulnerable.

Based on these theories, violence can also be understood as a mechanism of social control, especially in contexts where structural inequalities are striking. According to Wacquant (2008),

In unequal societies, state violence is often not only a response to crime but also a way of managing marginalized populations. This type of coercive social control reinforces social hierarchies, keeping the most vulnerable groups in subordinate positions (WACQUANT, 2008, p. 122).

This analysis highlights the role of violence as a tool of control in urban peripheries, where the State often acts more as a repressive agent than as a guarantor of rights. In this context, violence is not merely reactive but proactive, being used as a tool to control and subjugate groups that already occupy positions of vulnerability. This approach reveals how coercive social control serves to reinforce power structures, perpetuating exclusion and inequality. Instead of combating the causes of violence, the State often directs its repressive actions at marginalized populations, naturalizing their subordination and restricting their access to rights and opportunities.

Therefore, the Sociology of violence and social control offers analytical tools to understand how norms and practices of coercion shape social relations. While Durkheim highlights the role of violence as an integrator of social control, Foucault criticizes its disciplinary and productive function, revealing the subtle forms of power that operate in modern societies. This duality is essential to understanding the dynamics of power, resistance and compliance in the context of public security and urban violence in Brazil.

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2.2 STRUCTURAL RACISM AND PUBLIC SAFETY IN BRAZIL

Structural racism in Brazil is a central element in understanding the dynamics of public security practices. This form of racism, deeply rooted in institutions and social relations,

operates systematically to marginalize the black population, perpetuating inequalities and naturalizing violence against these groups. In the field of public safety, this manifests itself through practices such as racial discrimination and racial profiling, which reinforce the stigma associated with black bodies and place them as priority targets of the State's repressive actions.

Abdias do Nascimento, in his work *The Genocide of the Brazilian Negro* (1978), states:

Racism in Brazil is not limited to individual attitudes, but is embedded in the very structure of society. It manifests itself in policies that, directly or indirectly, exclude the black population from spaces of power, education and access to rights. In the case of public safety, racial profiling is an institutionalized practice that reinforces the idea that black people are naturally associated with danger and criminality. This legitimizes violent and discriminatory police approaches, perpetuating a cycle of oppression and exclusion (NASCIMENTO, 1978, p. 92).

This analysis by Nascimento is crucial, as it highlights that structural racism is not just a matter of individual prejudice, but a systemic practice that shapes policies and institutions, including public safety. Racial profiling, for example, is an explicit manifestation of this system, in which black individuals are approached and treated as suspects based on their appearance, regardless of their conduct. This practice not only violates fundamental rights, but also reinforces exclusion by consolidating a negative image of the black population in society.

Contemporary studies reinforce the view that structural racism is intrinsically linked to state violence. According to Wacquant (2008),

the marginalization of racialized populations in unequal societies is often managed through state violence, which functions as a mechanism of social control. This process is not accidental but intentional, reflecting the hierarchical structure of society, in which the black population is systematically placed in subordinate positions (WAC-QUANT, 2008, p. 125).

Wacquant emphasizes that state violence is not just a response to crime, but a deliberate tool of social control in societies marked by inequality. This perspective reveals that the marginalization of the black population does not occur by chance, but is intrinsically linked to a social structure that perpetuates hierarchies and privileges. Violence, in this context, serves to reinforce positions of subordination, naturalizing exclusion and hindering this population's access to rights and opportunities. This cycle of oppression highlights the need to rethink the role of public security institutions, promoting policies that actively confront structural racism. Thus, Wacquant's analysis exposes the systemic and intentional nature of discriminatory practices in state control.

An emblematic case that illustrates this dynamic in Brazil is the high rate of police lethality in predominantly black communities. Data from the Brazilian Public Security Forum (2022) reveals that 77% of victims of police interventions are black. These numbers reflect the reality pointed out by Nascimento and Wacquant: public security, instead of protecting, often becomes a threat to racialized populations, consolidating a cycle of repression that prevents full access to citizenship.

Therefore, structural racism in public security practices is not only a reflection of Brazil's historical inequalities, but an active mechanism that perpetuates these inequalities. The critique by Abdias do Nascimento and other authors highlights the need to transform these structures, promoting public policies that explicitly recognize and address racism. This includes affirmative action, anti-racist training for police forces, and the creation of monitoring mechanisms that ensure accountability for discriminatory practices, aiming to build a public security system that respects equality.

and human rights.

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2.3 GENDER, SECURITY AND URBAN VIOLENCE

Gender issues play a central role in the dynamics of urban violence and in the way different groups access public safety. Women and LGBTQIA+ people face specific vulnerabilities in urban contexts, where violence manifests itself in a variety of ways, such as femicide, domestic violence, harassment and marginalization. These phenomena reveal how power relations based on gender and sexual orientation profoundly influence the experience of violence and responses

institutional.

Femicide, the most extreme form of violence against women, is one of the greatest challenges in the field of public safety. The update of the Maria da Penha Law, through Law 14.994/24, brought important advances, such as the increase in the penalty for femicide and the creation of specific measures for its classification and punishment. According to the Câmara de Notícias Agency (2024):

Law 14.994/24 reinforces the protection of women by toughening the penalties for femicide and providing for additional measures, such as the use of electronic ankle bracelets for convicted individuals and the transfer of prisoners who threaten the victim or their family members. These changes aim not only to punish the aggressors, but also to prevent new crimes and protect victims more effectively (Agência Câmara de Notícias, 2024).

This legislation represents a milestone in the fight against gender-based violence, but it also highlights the challenges of its implementation, especially with regard to training security forces and ensuring equal access to protective measures. Violence against women is not just an individual problem, but a reflection of social structures that perpetuate gender inequalities and naturalize oppressive practices.

Furthermore, LGBTQIA+ people face specific forms of urban violence, including institutional discrimination, physical violence and economic exclusion. These forms of violence are often made invisible, making it difficult for victims to access justice and public policy support. Butler (2004) highlights that:

Bodies that do not align with established gender norms are often marginalized and excluded from full recognition as subjects of rights. This exclusion reinforces the vulnerabilities of these individuals, while also sustaining the power structures that legitimize violence against them (BUTLER, 2004, p. 62).

This analysis highlights that urban violence against LGBTQIA+ people is inseparable from the social norms that marginalize them. Recognizing and including these populations in protection and security systems is essential to reducing inequalities and promoting broader justice.

Finally, public policies aimed at combating gender-based violence still lack integration and effectiveness. The implementation of specialized police stations, educational campaigns and victim support programs have proven insufficient in light of the magnitude of the problem. Gender analysis in public security requires an intersectional approach that recognizes how different forms of oppression – class, race, gender and sexuality – overlap, increasing vulnerabilities.

Therefore, public security in Brazil needs to go beyond repression and incorporate strategies that recognize the specificities of gender and sexual orientation in urban violence. The protection of women and LGBTQIA+ people requires integrated actions that combine effective punishment, prevention and the promotion of a culture of equality and respect for human rights.

2.4 ALTERNATIVE SECURITY POLICIES: EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS

Alternative public security policies emerge as a response to the ineffectiveness of traditional repressive approaches, offering models based on prevention, mediation and social inclusion. These strategies seek to reduce violence and strengthen the bond between the State and communities, promoting a more humanized vision of security. National and international experiences in conflict mediation, community policing and restorative justice illustrate the potential of these approaches to address public security challenges in a more sustainable and inclusive way.

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Conflict mediation is a strategy that focuses on the peaceful resolution of social and interpersonal tensions, avoiding escalation into situations of violence. According to Christie (1977), “mediation gives the parties involved back control over their conflicts, removing the centrality of the state punitive system. This process encourages dialogue, mutual understanding and reparation, creating solutions that strengthen social bonds rather than breaking them” (CHRISTIE, 1977, p. 5).

This approach is especially relevant in communities where violence is associated with the absence of institutional channels for conflict resolution. In Brazil, community mediation programs have shown that creating spaces for dialogue can significantly reduce social tension and crime, promoting a culture of peace.

Community policing, in turn, represents an attempt to bring security forces closer together. community security, promoting a relationship of trust and cooperation. According to Kelling and Moore (1988):

Community policing proposes a model in which the police work in partnership with citizens, focusing on solving local problems and preventing crime. This approach reduces the distance between the police and the community, creating a safer and more collaborative environment (KELLING; MOORE, 1988, p. 4).

In Brazil, initiatives such as the Community Police Base project in vulnerable neighborhoods have shown that when security agents are placed as partners in communities, trust increases and crime rates tend to decrease. However, the effectiveness of these policies depends on adequate training of police forces and an ongoing commitment to the principles of the community approach.

Restorative justice is another alternative policy that has gained prominence for its emphasis on reparation and social reintegration rather than just punishment. Zehr (2002) explains:

Restorative justice invites all parties involved – victims, offenders and the community – to participate in a process that seeks to repair the harm caused by the crime. This approach promotes accountability of the offender, support for the victim and the reconstruction of the social fabric affected by the criminal act (ZEHR, 2002, p. 25).

In Brazil, restorative justice projects in schools and communities have shown promising results in reducing recidivism and improving social relations. By prioritizing dialogue and reconstruction, this approach challenges the traditional model of punishment, pointing to a more inclusive and effective vision of public safety.

Therefore, alternative public security policies, such as conflict mediation, community policing and restorative justice, offer more humane and preventive models to address violence. These approaches demonstrate that it is possible to build a security system that prioritizes inclusion, cooperation and the reconstruction of social relations. However, their effective implementation requires political will, specialized training and community engagement, factors that still represent significant challenges in Brazil.

3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

This is a bibliographic study that adopts a qualitative approach to investigate sociological issues related to public security in contemporary Brazil. The research was structured based on a broad theoretical review that integrates contributions from classic and contemporary authors in Sociology and Criminology, as well as legislative documents, institutional reports, and case studies. The methodology seeks to understand how phenomena such as structural racism, gender issues, and urban violence influence the public security system and its practices.

The selection of theoretical materials included reference works such as *Discipline and Punish* by Michel Foucault, *The Genocide of the Brazilian Negro* by Abdias do Nascimento, and *The Little Book of Restorative Justice* by Howard Zehr. In addition, reports from the Brazilian Public Security Forum, data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), and recent legislation, such as Law 14.994/24, which updated the Maria da Penha Law, were analyzed. These documents were chosen for their relevance to understanding the dynamics of public security in Brazil and for providing distinct perspectives on the challenges faced.

The qualitative method was used to interpret the information collected, allowing a critical and contextualized analysis. The research was organized around four main thematic axes: Socio-violence and social control; Structural racism and public security; Gender, security and urban violence; and Alternative security policies. Each of these themes was explored based on theoretical sources and data collected, articulating the structural and contextual dimensions of public security in Brazil.

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The methodological approach adopted allowed for an integrated analysis, identifying not only the limitations of the public security system, but also the possibilities for transformation based on more inclusive and preventive policies. The analysis was guided by questions such as: What is the role of social inequalities in the dynamics of public security? How can alternative approaches contribute to reducing

urban violence? These questions guided the study, ensuring its academic and social relevance.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this research show that the public security system in Brazil faces complex challenges, largely influenced by sociological factors such as structural inequalities, racism and gender issues. The literature review revealed that traditional repressive approaches, such as the use of state violence and racial profiling, have been insufficient to deal with public security demands, while reinforcing dynamics of social exclusion.

One of the main results highlighted was the impact of structural racism in perpetuating urban violence. As analyzed, institutionalized racial discrimination directly affects the black population, which is disproportionately targeted by repressive actions, such as violent police stops and mass incarceration. Data from the Brazilian Public Security Forum (2022), which indicate that 77% of victims of police interventions are black, corroborate Abdias do Nascimento's (1978) analysis on the role of structural racism in maintaining social hierarchies. These results highlight the need for anti-racist public policies that combat discriminatory practices and promote racial equality in the security system.

Furthermore, the research revealed how gender issues influence the experience of urban insecurity, especially for women and LGBTQIA+ people. The update of the Maria da Penha Law through Law 14.994/24 was identified as a significant advance in addressing gender-based violence, but implementation challenges point to the need for greater training of police forces and a more integrated system of victim protection. Similarly, the marginalization of LGBTQIA+ people in public security reflects exclusionary social norms that perpetuate their vulnerability.

Regarding alternative security policies, the results indicate that initiatives such as conflict mediation, community policing, and restorative justice have the potential to transform the dynamics of public security. These approaches have proven effective in national and international contexts by prioritizing prevention and social inclusion over repression. However, their implementation in Brazil faces structural barriers, such as lack of resources, cultural resistance, and institutional fragmentation. Kelling and Moore's (1988) analysis of community policing reinforces the importance of building partnerships between law enforcement and communities to create safer and more collaborative environments.

The discussion of the results points to the need for an integrated approach that combines preventive, repressive and resocializing actions. Public security in Brazil cannot be understood in isolation from social inequalities, racism and gender issues, and it is essential that public policies recognize these intersections. Only through comprehensive and inclusive strategies will it be possible to reduce urban violence rates and promote social justice in an effective and sustainable manner.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study explored the sociological issues related to public security in Brazil, highlighting the structural challenges that limit its effectiveness and deepen social inequalities. Based on the theoretical review, it became clear that practices such as racial profiling, gender-based violence, and the marginalization of vulnerable groups reflect dynamics of exclusion that are largely rooted in structural racism and class and gender inequalities. These factors not only fuel urban violence, but also hinder equal access to justice and protection.

The results indicate that traditional repressive policies, although still predominant, have proven insufficient to meet the population's security demands, especially in territories marked by social vulnerability. In contrast, alternative initiatives, such as conflict mediation, community policing and restorative justice, have proven to be promising strategies, promoting a more preventive and inclusive approach. However, their implementation faces significant challenges, such as institutional fragmentation and lack of resources.

Public security in Brazil needs to be comprehensively rethought, recognizing the intersections between race, gender and class, and promoting policies that actively combat structural inequalities. It is essential to move towards security models that prioritize prevention, social inclusion and the strengthening of community relations. To this end, the commitment of the State, institutions and



security institutions and civil society, ensuring that security is a right accessible to all, and not a privilege for the few.

Finally, this work reinforces the importance of deepening studies on public security from the perspective of Sociology, contributing to the development of more integrated and fair solutions. It is believed that the reflections presented here can support public policies and foster debates that promote the construction of a more equitable and safer society.

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