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SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE OF VICTIMS OF HOMICIDES REGISTERED IN BELÉM-PA

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to define the socioeconomic profile of victims of homicide to understand some determinant aspects of their deaths. For such purpose, we used the descriptive analysis technique. The socioeconomic data of the victims were obtained from the Legal Medical Institute of the Center of Scientific Expertise "Renato Chaves", located in Belém-PA, from 2011 to 2013. The results identified conditions of socioeconomic vulnerability.

INTRODUCTION

Urban violence, especially homicide, is an increasingly evident and harmful phenomenon to the contemporary Brazilian society, which has been gradually losing its young people in tragic and often precocious ways due to offenses and crimes committed by others, thus requiring further studies in this field. According to Chagas (2014), there are multiple factors in the urban context that may contribute to the increase of violence, namely: social exclusion, poverty and the emergence of the *favelas* (or slums), factors observed especially in the peripheral areas of cities, which are often neglected by the

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public authorities, making them an appropriate territory for the establishment and propagation of crime. Among the crimes to which Brazilian society has been exposed, those that cause greater social repercussion and contribute to the dissemination of a sense of insecurity in the population are the ones committed against life. In order to understand and discuss this issue, researchers have promoted, through official statistics, information that allows the development of truthful and measurable knowledge on the intra-urban differentials of mortality due to violent causes, as well as to find out who these victims are, as shown by the successive reports of the "Maps of Violence", prepared by researcher Julio Jacobo Waiselfisz since 1998, which have beendemonstrating, for almost two decades now, that homicide mortality presents selectivity regarding the age, gender and race of its victims and also the geographical regions. It is important to point out that

in order to discuss the current scenario of violence at a local level, it is necessary to consider that the urbanization process occurred in the Amazon, more specifically in the city of Belém-PA, the *locus* of this research, proved to be exclusionary, contributing to the segregation of people, who have had their right to some spaces and their citizenships denied, which has significantly contributed to the emergence of crime in the socioeconomically disadvantaged spaces neglected by the State. The city of Belém-PA was founded in 1616 from the construction of a military fortification in its territory, which marks the beginning of its occupation. However, it was only after the "rubber boom" that the city began to have its first eminently urban structures, with the increase of capital arising from the extraction and sale of rubber, mainly to the outside of the country (ALVES, 2013).

Two other historical milestones influenced the process of growth of the population in Belem, namely: *i*) a new period of *rubber boom* (1940-1950); and *ii*) the period of the Amazon integration actions undertaken by the military government in the 1970s with the "National Integration Plan". Thereby, the Amazon region became integrated with the rest of the country, occupying a place in the International Division of Labour and the Territorial Division of Labor (RODRIGUES, 2000; ALVES, 2013). In spite of this, Santana (2014) points out that it was in this same context – in which policies to encourage the occupation of the Amazonian area were established, from the modernization of the borders – that there was a significant migration of poor individuals from other Brazilian states and from municipalities in the state of Pará towards Belém. When they arrived in the capital, these individuals migrated to the floodplain areas due to the low altimetry: the peripheries located around the city center. Although there was poor urban structure in such areas, it was the option left in the face of the appreciation and enhancement of the most central urban lands. In addition, this low-income population chose to live near the so called "institutional belt", which occupies the oldest part of the city. These belts are areas that comprise public institutions, such as CELPA, UFPA, UFRA, EMBRAPA, ELETRONORTE, Emílio Goeldi Museum, and military areas (Navy, Aeronautics and Army).

Thus, the cities and the urban structure were consolidated in the Amazon territory with emphasis on the metropolis of Belém-PA. However, as the expansion of Belém took place, the urbanization process proved to be exclusionary, segregating spaces and people, and removing the right to live in the urban centers and the citizenship of the population mass, forcing the migration to the peripheral areas due to lack of other options. (ALVES, 2013). With regard to the different housing conditions, it should be noted that the peripheries in general suffer from an evident lack of infrastructure and urban equipment, since the State tends to neglect such areas, often directing the financial resources to the areas of interest of the ruling class. Chagas (2014) adds that in spaces where there is little organizational structure of family, churches and community centers – and that is the case in peripheral areas – there is a vulnerability to the emergence of crime and violence, with disputes between criminals over the territory, which according to Haesbaert (2014) is related to power, both in the most concrete sense of domination and in the more symbolic sense of appropriation. It is important to emphasize that the poor population residing in these predominantly peripheral areas is doubly penalized for their socioeconomic vulnerability: firstly, due to their precarious housing conditions, and secondly, due to the daily exposure to the

criminal and territorial violence in such places, since they do not have security mechanisms to avoid this continuous exposure. Santana (2014, p.2583) warns that the high demographic rates, coupled with high levels of unemployment and underemployment, low wages and income concentration, as well as poor public services, ensure the emergence of urban violence and, consequently, of lethal violence. In view of the issues discussed above, it is noted that the city of Belém-PA has been formed by different territories over the course of these four hundred years, in which different social strata coexist and establish different forms of *territorialization*, reterritorialization and power relations. Consequently, the spatial and social distribution of violence and crime intensified by this process of exclusionary urbanization also occurs in a heterogeneous way, but it stands out in the most peripheral and disadvantaged areas, where children and young people living side by side with operant drug trafficking are more easily corrupted and convinced to enter criminality, even though this choice could endanger their own lives.

In this sense, the focus of this research is to address the socioeconomic variables inherent in these victims of homicide, in order to understand if socioeconomic vulnerability in any way enhances the lethal risk. Thus, the present study is justified by the need to obtain, through statistical analyzes of criminological data, the specification of the socioeconomic profile of victims of homicide, killed in the city of Belém-PA, Brazil, in order to present solid information that provides a basis for the development of an intensive and efficient public policy aimed at reducing the frequency of new cases of death in the local population, based on a knowledge of the profile of individuals with the greatest potential to become victims of this type of crime and the identification of factors that contribute to the occurrence of these deaths.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present research was developed in different stages. Initially, a bibliographical research was carried out, which provided the theoretical contribution that served as a guide throughout the work. Next, there was the selection of a population to be studied that could foster statistical data related to the topic. The defined population, from which the final population of the present study was obtained, is composed of individuals of both sexes, of any age and socioeconomic reality, who died due to unknown natural or external causes (intentional or unintentional violent deaths), whose death records are from several municipalities in the State of Pará and whose bodies have been autopsied at the Legal Medical Institute (IML) of the Center of Scientific Expertise "Renato Chaves"(CPC-RC), located in Belém-PA. The final population, which originated the sample under study, consists of 990 cases of deaths recorded in Belém-PA, and is composed only of corpses of homicide victims that were at least 18by the time of their deaths, autopsied in the years 2011 to 2013 at the Legal Medical Institute of the Center of Scientific Expertise, in Belém- PA. It should be noted that the corpses ignored (those which were not submitted to action or recognition by their relatives) and the corpses whose cause and/or place of death were indeterminate or of uncertain origin were excluded from the final population. To perform this work, a simple random sampling was performed, obtaining a sample of 285 cases of death, with a sampling error of 5% (BUSSAB and MORETTIN, 2013).

Once the sample was defined, a documentary research was carried out on the raw data in the database containing information related to the corpses autopsied at the Center of Scientific Expertise "Renato Chaves". Such data are fostered by several documents that compose the records of the corpses, with emphasis on the death certificate (DO), completed by the medical examiners, from which most of the information analyzed was verified. In this way, we obtained the personal information of each individual of the sample, in order to identify them for the second stage of data collection of the research, described in the sequence. In addition, the socioeconomic variables of the sample were obtained in order to define its socioeconomic profile. A second moment of data collection was carried out, this time at the *Eneas Martins Identification Management Center* (DIDEM), a branch of the Civil Police of the State of Pará, which operates in the area of forensic papiloscopy. Through restricted access to the virtual criminal record contained on the website "http://didem. policiacivil.pa.gov.br/", the researchers obtained, under the authorization and supervision of the Board of DIDEM, information regarding the criminal background of the sample, which allowed to trace their criminal profiles.

It is worth noting that once the victims of homicide who had criminal antecedents (a total of 148) were identified, we decided to present and discuss in this research only the socioeconomic data related to such victims, in order to facilitate the knowledge of the socioeconomic and criminal profile of victims of homicide who have committed criminal offenses. The quantitative perspective was chosen to approach the research problem, since it will carry out the statistical analysis of the data on criminal records and the socioeconomic information on the victims of homicide with criminal background. Finally, the analysis and exposure of the data was conceived by descriptive statistics, which according to Fávero *et al*. (2009) assures the researcher, through tables, charts and summary measures, a better understanding of the data's behavior, identifying trends, variability and atypical values. In this sense, the data were organized and presented in the form of tables and charts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On an average, the age of the victims of homicides with criminal records whose deaths were recorded in the city of Belém-PA is 28, with a standard deviation of ± 08 years, that is, 68.26% of homicide victims were between 20 and 36 years of age. The most frequent age among these victims is 22. The highest age observed was 55, and the lowest 18. (Table 01). Regarding this information, it should be noted that the age mentioned in this research does not refer to the age at which the offending victims committed a criminal offense or were arrested, as commonly reported in the literature, but at their age by the time they were killed. Therefore, one must consider the possibility of a time gap from the practice of a criminal offense to the death of the offenders. Resuming the analysis of the average age of the studied victims, Chagas (2014, p.200) reports that in neighborhoods where it is observed the highest homicide rates occurred in the city of Belém-PA, the most affected population is young people aged 16 to 24, in accordance with the national standard. "A lot of these young people are killed by managers of drug sales point to settle a score, or because of disputes between rival groups, today on a small scale, or even in confrontation with the police." Regarding this information, it should be noted that individuals

under 18 did not compose the sample of the present study, so there would be no way to reach an age group with the minimum age mentioned by Chagas, which justifies the apparent divergence between his results and the results from this research.

Table 1. Statistics for the Age of Victims of Homicide with Criminal Records, whose Deaths were recorded in the Municipality of Belém-PA, in the years 2011 to 2013

Statistics	Age (in years)
Mode	22
Average	28
Standard Deviation	8
Maximum	55
Minimum	18

Regarding the marital status of lethal victims with criminal records, the individuals were either single, married or in consensual unions. The "married" and "consensual union" categories were grouped into a single category ("married/ consensual union"), given that, in practice, they have the same family structure. As a result of that, Table 02 shows that the majority of these victims were single (87.76%), which shows a significant number of criminal offenders who demonstrate the lack of formal family relationships and a social behavior little involved in the construction of emotional bonds in a traditional way. Cano and Ribeiro (2007) obtained similar results in a study carried out in the state of Rio de Janeiro in 2001 – having as information source the Mortality Information System (SIM)[4], of the Ministry of Health –which indicates that single people present higher homicide rates than the rest of the population consisting of married, divorced and widowed people. What is more surprising in this study is that the results obtained show that this difference cannot be explained exclusively by what seemed to be unquestionable: the age factor. *A priori*, such difference seemed to be explained only by age, since the probability of an individual being single is naturally lower as they grow older, and the same thing applies to homicide rate in Brazil, since it mainly affects the youngest individuals of the population. However, the analysis of the specific rates by the age of single and non-single individuals reveals that the difference between them remains even when people of the same age are compared to one another. Also, such difference is greater for ages between 20 and 30, so that the effect of the marital status of lethal victims diminishes as they get older.

In this sense, we believe that the rhythm and lifestyle adopted by unmarried individuals – who generally have a more intense social life, with a greater participation in activities, places and times of high risk – imply a greater lethal victimization in comparison to the other strata of the population and, at the same time, compete with other factors to justify such an occurrence. Thus, it is inferred that marriage stands out as a shield against lethal victimization. With regard to the level of education, Table 02 shows that the majority of victims with a criminal background had finished Elementary School II (5th to 8th grade), with 53.07% of the records; followed by those who had finished Elementary School I (1st to 4th grade), with 31.97%, and those having complete or incomplete High School education (12.24%). It is worth noting that victims who had extreme opposite levels of education, that is, those with no education at all (illiterate) and those who had complete and incomplete Higher Education represent only 2.72%. Therefore, it is inferred that few are the criminal offenders who can enter a faculty or university. On the other hand, it is a very

encouraging fact that the percentage relative to illiterates is also very reduced, since illiteracy is considered a negative indicator for social, educational and economic inclusion. However, the data on the level of education among the population of Pará[5] show that more than half (56.40%) of those who are 25 or older have not finished Primary School, while only 6.20% finished Higher Education (IBGE, 2010). In this sense, Adorno (1996) understands that the level of education of the offenders is not low because they are criminals, but because the education of the population is at elementary levels. In view of the considerations concerning the level of education of victims with criminal records, it is clear that education is an important instrument for establishing the socialization process of an individual. Thus, the limitation to the access and permanence in school can be "a determining factor for a defective conditioning of their socialization process "and may also interfere in their process of moral and cognitive development (Guimarães *et al.* 2015).

As shown in Table 02, in terms of gender, the majority of victims with a criminal record are male (98.65%). In this regard, it is worth mentioning that men, in general, besides having physical advantage, usually have a greater participation in social activities, especially unmarried ones, who tend to an even more intense exposure to external activities. As for the race/color of the individuals, the database provided by the Center of Scientific Expertise "Renato Chaves" uses the same categories used by IBGE, namely: white, brown, black, yellow and indigenous. However, among the studied victims of homicide with a criminal record, there are only records for the brown and black categories, so that 98.65% of such records are of brown individuals and 1.35% of black individuals, making up a total of 100% of records referring to "people of color" (browns and blacks). For this study, the "people of color" category is taken as the sum of the black and brown categories, according to the IBGE reports and the "Map of Violence in Brazil". According to Waiselfisz (2014,p. 149), the black category "results from the sum of the black and brown categories used by the IBGE." On the *age, gender, color/race* and *level of education* variables, Waiselfisz (2014, p.150) emphasizes that the internal structuring of violence in Brazil occurs through the "social selectivity of those who are going to be murdered". That said, one must consider the historical slave process of construction of the country, which portrays the production and reproduction, even over the years, of an exclusionary society in which black people and their descendants – socially and economically more vulnerable – continue to live on the margins of society and, lacking support from institutions such as the State, family, school, church and others, they become more likely to be attracted by the illusory world of crime, and consequently, the main suspects and targets of homicides committed in the country.

Parallel to this is the rooting of a social process by which one sows a negative expectation and a prior qualification, from previous experiences, that certain individuals and groups, depending on the physical, economic and/or social characteristics they possess, constitute "social types" undesirable to society, given their potential danger (MISSE, 2014). Regarding the neighborhood of residence of the victims, it is noted, in a decreasing order, the prevalence of individuals from Guamá (18.83%), Sacramenta (9.46%), and Jurunas, with 7.43% of the records (Table 02). Only the eleven neighborhoods that had the highest incidence of records were highlighted. However, the percentage calculated was for all

other neighborhoods that were not exposed in Table 02. In what concerns the neighborhoods of Belem, attention is drawn to the fact that many of them, considered as peripheral, like Guamá, Sacramenta and Jurunas, are in fact heterogeneous neighborhoods, since they are constituted as much by precarious housing as by new buildings developed by the real estate market, all sharing the same space. Nevertheless, most authors characterize, in a more general way, such neighborhoods as peripheral, given the genesis of their construction and occupation process, as well as the perpetuation and prevalence of poverty to a great extent of them.

Chagas (2014, p. 200) shows the critical situation of Guamá, describing it as a neighborhood formed by areas of intense *peripheralization*, composed mostly of subnormal clusters (*favelas*), thus becoming one of the poorest and most populous neighborhoods of the municipality of Belém-PA, where the state action is configured, primarily, by police intervention as a way of controlling the existing violence, overlapping actions aimed at basic sanitation, education, health, transportation, leisure etc. The author draws attention to the possibility, still to be clarified, of the existence of extermination groups in that neighborhood, which allegedly have been committing homicides in the area, directly involving "people who had some connection with crime, had committed crimes in the neighborhood or even who had recently been released from prison." The author complements signaling that the Guamá and Jurunas neighborhoods are the most populous of Belém-PA, presenting precarious socioeconomic indicators and high rates of homicide. He also points out that in recent years these neighborhoods have been the scene of an intense territorial dispute between criminal groups that control drug trafficking in the area, so that crime is manifested not only by the rivalry between these groups, but mainly by the effect of this rivalry, which is reflected in the constant need to maintain and expand the local drug consumption.

Table 2. Percentage of Victims of Homicide Occurred in the Municipality of Belém-PA, in the years 2011 to 2013, by Marital Status, Level of Education, Gender, Race/Color and Neighborhood

Variable	Category	Percentage
Gender	Male	98,65
	Female	1,35
Color/Race	Brown	98,65
	Black	1,35
Marital Status	Single	87,76
	Married/Consensual Union	12,24
Level of Education	N.E.	1,36
	E.S.I	31,97
	E.S. II	53,07
	C/I. H.S.	12,24
	I.H.E.	0,68
	C.H.E.	0,68
*Neighborhood of residence	Guamá	18,83
	Sacramenta	9,46
	Jurunas	7,43
	Bengui	5,41
	Cremação	4,73
	Pedreira	4,73
	Val-de-Cans	4,05

Nota: S.E.: No Education; E.S.I: Elementary School I (1stto 4thGrade); E.S.II: Elementary School II (5th to 8thGrade); H.S.: Complete or Incomplete High School; I. H.E.: Incomplete Higher Education; C. H.E.: Complete Higher Education; There was 1 (one) case with no information regarding the Level of Education of the victim; The variable with (*) refers to the seven first neighborhoods of residence of the victim with the highest incidence.

As a consequence of the dispute over new areas of expansion of drug sales, the peripheral areas of the Metropolitan Region of Belém-PA have been turned, in general, into new areas of violence and crime, so that the first action of the State in such places, or perhaps the only one, often occurs with the arrival of the police to control the violence, as if it were a phenomenon that could be solved as a mere police case and not as a broader social issue. Moreover, the police entry into these territories often leads to an increase of violence and even more homicides for various reasons (Chagas, 2014). The Sacramenta neighborhood, in turn, as well as other neighborhoods in Belem, is configured as a lowland with several flooded areas or areas subject to the risk of flooding, which has a predominance of low-income residents. Therefore, although in recent years some actions of these residents and the public authorities have been made in the neighborhood in favor of basic sanitation, and despite the fact that it has been the object of new investments by the real estate market, the neighborhood still shows a scenario of segregation and social exclusion, as well as criminal activities, while maintaining poor teaching, health and safety structures (ALVES, 2013). That said, it appears that the neighborhoods of victims with criminal records are predominantly poor in structural, social and economic terms, and a place where the territorial dispute between criminals is evident.

Conclusions

Taking into account the literature review and the results obtained through this research, some considerations deserve attention. Firstly, the process of urbanization occurred in the city of Belém-PA took place in a segregating way, so that the poor population, "confined" to the predominantly peripheral neighborhoods of the capital, was and still is deficient in structures regarding basic sanitation, education, health, safety, sports and leisure, suited to the demands of its residents, who are notably neglected by the public authorities. If it has not been for the real estate market, which values and devalues certain urban spaces for financial interests, many of the few actions aimed at these neighborhoods would never have been put into practice. Amid all the precariousness that the residents of these neighborhoods have to face on a daily basis, a relevant factor concerns the intense drug trafficking operating in these areas, since there is an adjacency of traffickers who lead the area with the local residents which, in turn, do not have technological security devices, or public or private security, and are bound to live in a vulnerable – socioeconomically speaking – and crime-dominated territory that corrupts and diverts the social standards of children and adolescents, dazzled by a false idea that crime pays off for elevating their status and yielding easy profit.

Thus, based on the results of this study, it appears that the distribution of lethal violence occurred in the city of Belém-PA is not random, since there is a prevalence of a "social type" for this type of victimization, a product of a segregating territorial dynamics and of a socioeconomic context that excludes and marginalizes and that, in the absence or deficiency of other basic pillars, such as family, education, religion, among others, corrupts the young and leads them to a choice of life that may cause their early death. As for the "social type" selected for this victimization in the city of Belém-PA, the results of the present study allow us to affirm that it is mainly composed by individuals with a criminal background, such as young black men, who are single, with low level of education, and coming from predominantly peripheral neighborhoods of Belém-PA, indicted by the practice of 02 (two) or more criminal infractions, with emphasis on robbery and theft.

In addition, drug trafficking is directly and indirectly related to the increase in homicide cases in the areas of the city where *peripheralization* predominates, since its expansion implies a new territorialization of such areas, evidenced by both the dispute of new areas of drug use and trafficking and the stimulation of theft and robbery by young addicts, which, consequently, increases the occurrence of homicides of these young people, since they end up risking their own lives during such criminal practices.

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