



Education and Prevention of Violence in Social Protests

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Abstract: This article reflects on the role of education in preventing violence in social protests. This research arises in the context of the crises experienced worldwide, with protests being one of the ways in which popular discontent is demonstrated in the face of problems affecting society. The objective of this study is to reflect on the role of education in preventing violence in social protests in Mozambique. A qualitative methodology based on a review of existing literature on the subject was used for its elaboration. The relevance of this study lies in the need to raise awareness in Mozambican society about education in human values that enable healthy coexistence, avoiding violence in conflict resolution. The results reveal that, internationally, peaceful protests are a right of citizens because they constitute a form of freedom of expression and contribute to the strengthening of human rights and democracy. However, in Mozambique, social protests have been violent, resulting in human and material damage, unemployment, and insecurity. Therefore, it is necessary for families and schools to educate Mozambicans not only in content and skills, but also in values such as love for one's neighbor and country, respect for public and private property, as well as dialogue for solving problems. Furthermore, education must raise citizens' awareness of the need to participate in solving problems, contributing to the socio-economic development of the country through sustained employment and the creation of self-employment.

Keywords: crises, protests, violence, education.

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, social protests have been notable in all corners of the world, constituting a clamor for political, economic, and social change [i]. These social movements are driven by the certainty of changing modern reality, eliminating oppression, injustice, and social inequality [ii]. Thus, through protests, the people express their indignation and discontent regarding political and socioeconomic aspects [iii]. According to the same source, the increasing number of protests worldwide indicates that global political instability and social inequality are increasing.

In general, protests are a democratic, public or private way of demonstrating discontent with something [iv], which can be economic, political, social, or cultural. Therefore, people who protest against something do not agree with or are not satisfied with a particular attitude or action, adds this author.

The topic of protests is a subject discussed by several authors internationally, and this is justified by the fact that it is a phenomenon that occurs in many countries around the world. From the research accessed, peaceful social protests and violent social protests stand out.

Thus, this article aims to reflect on the role of education in preventing violence in social protests in Mozambique, due to the need to raise awareness in society about human

values, in order to avoid protest actions that result in deaths and destruction of property. This article is of great interest because of its focus on people's lives, which must be protected and taken into consideration when thinking about protests.

The highlighted theme, the role of education in preventing violence in social protests, in addition to the introduction and conclusion, unfolds in four points, which should be highlighted: Social protests; Historical overview of protests in Mozambique; Characteristics of protests in Mozambique; Consequences of protests in Mozambique; Role of education in preventing violence in social protests.

SOCIAL PROTESTS

Social protests constitute a collective and expressive action of popular demand, resulting from discontent with social, economic, and political living conditions [v]. Thus, through protests, the people seek to influence changes in political decisions. Therefore, throughout history, through various collective actions such as protests, demonstrations, marches, strikes, boycotts, disobedience to laws, among other designations, the people have influenced important changes and forced the conquest of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights; they have brought down dictatorships and guaranteed universal suffrage; the end of slavery and apartheid; among other aspects related to humanity [vi].

These social movements bring together many people with different ideas, unequal objectives, and who perceive collective action in diverse ways. Hence, at times, the protest actions have been violent, leading to confrontations between protesters and the police, resulting in the disturbance of public order, material and human damage [vii]. However, according to De Oliveira [viii], the resolution of any type of conflict, whether interpersonal, intercommunity, or interstate, should be guided by peaceful means.

As mentioned earlier, at the international level, there are records of peaceful protests that have influenced profound and lasting social and political changes. For example, in 1930 in India, the salt marches against the payment of tax on the purchase of this product influenced the massive civil disobedience that propelled its independence in 1947 [ix]. In the United States of America, from the 1950s to the 1970s, peaceful protests by the Black population against racism were recorded and had fruitful results, putting an end to racial segregation [x]. Nonviolent action was essential to the success of the protests, as it prevented the forces of power from acting aggressively against the movement [xi].

In 1968, in France, there were peaceful student protests demanding better conditions for workers and improvements to the education system. These protests resulted in the beginning of a new era of valuing human beings, freedom of expression, student and parent participation in school decision-making, among other changes [xii].

Similarly, in 2011, North Africa and the Middle East region experienced a wave of non-violent popular protests, dubbed the Arab Spring, which led to a reshaping of geopolitical dynamics, characterized by the end of dictatorships and the emergence of new democratic regimes in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Syria, and Yemen [xiii]. These protests, which addressed widespread unemployment, corruption, poverty, lack of political freedom, social inequalities, and rising food prices, were led by young people and characterized by spontaneous protests in the streets of cities [xiv].

As can be seen, nonviolent protests function as pressure and resistance from the population for the resolution of social conflicts. For, these attitudes communicate a message, create a crisis (financial, political) and provoke a disturbing social tension that leads the parties involved to dialogue and negotiation for the resolution of the problem [xv]. However, nonviolent protests must be adapted according to each specific situation and circumstance, adds this author. In addition, it is essential that all those involved have responsibility in the exercise and full enjoyment of the right to protest [xvi]. Given that, the right of some cannot impede the right of others.

Therefore, peaceful means of conflict resolution would be a polite way to demonstrate dissatisfaction with something and bring about positive changes [xvii].

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF POPULAR PROTESTS IN MOZAMBIQUE

Internationally, peaceful protests are a right of citizens because they constitute a form of freedom of expression and promote the practice of citizenship in the struggle for better living conditions, contributing to the strengthening of human rights and democracy [xviii].

In post-independence Mozambique, the first protests were violent and date back to 1993, against the increase in public transport prices in the city of Maputo [xix].

Along these lines, the 1999 general elections were characterized by political violence and disputed election results, culminating in the death of 17 people [xx]. Furthermore, the following year, 80 people died of asphyxiation in a police cell as a result of demonstrations organized by members of the largest opposition party, who demanded the invalidation of the election results [xxi].

In February 2008 and September 2010, violent street protests, without organizational leadership, took place in the cities of Maputo and Matola, contesting the rising cost of living (the cost of transport, water, energy, social inequality, unemployment, corruption, and the increase in the prices of basic products). These protests spread to other Mozambican cities, but on a limited scale, and were immediately controlled by the police, as well as by the restriction of communication by mobile phone operators. In these protests, dozens of deaths and hundreds of injuries were recorded, in addition to significant material damage [xxii].

Also in this context, in November 2012, other protests paralyzed the city of Maputo for a day and a half, which were also quickly controlled by the police forces, preventing the violence from becoming widespread. In these protests, the people demanded from the government the right to better living conditions [xxiii].

In 2013, the first peaceful, orderly, and non-partisan protests were organized by the human rights league, which protested against the violence of RENAMO (the opposition party) in the center of the country, corruption, and kidnappings [xxiv].

In October 2024, after the announcement of the results of the elections on the 9th of that month, popular protests began throughout the country contesting the electoral outcomes. These demonstrations extended until March 2025. However, they had a different dimension and intensity than the previous ones. In these protests, there were thousands of arrests, hundreds of injuries, and dozens of deaths. In addition to the human damage, many commercial establishments and companies were looted and vandalized. Furthermore, public and private infrastructure, private vehicles, and public transport were set on fire [xxv].

As can be seen, in post-independence Mozambique, the protests were of an economic-social nature and others of a political nature.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PROTESTS IN MOZAMBIQUE

In general, protests are characterized by acts of demanding something and involving one or more social groups depending on the reasons [xxvi]. Protests can be passive or violent, but both cause impact and instill change [xxvii].

In turn, Martins [xxviii] states that violent protests aim to respond to harsh state repression and draw attention to their demands. However, in order to maintain order and avoid greater damage, the police are called upon to intervene using force, adds this author. In Genyi's [xxix] view, non-violent protests are less expensive, constructive, and results-oriented. Because they involve lower costs for the restoration of destroyed infrastructure and do not cause pain and mourning in families.

In several countries around the world, young people, adults, and even the elderly participate in protests, showing solidarity with their children in their demands [xxx]. On some occasions, the protests are organized and led by specific groups, and on others they are spontaneous. That is, the group members only meet at the time of the protests without any prior coordination [xxxi]. As mentioned earlier, protests arise from the demand for something. In some cases, protests begin with a certain motive, and as the act progresses, other causes emerge, making it difficult to clarify the demands, as well as to achieve the objectives [xxxii].

In the case of Mozambique, the protests that have occurred over the years have many similar aspects, namely: the causes of the demands (better living conditions, cost of living - increased prices of basic products and transport, unemployment, social inequalities); the form of mobilization (telephone messages and social networks, without leadership); the acts of protest (setting up barricades in the streets and avenues of cities; burning tires on the roads, looting and pillaging of shops and warehouses, destruction of public and private infrastructure, setting fire to state and private vehicles, clashes between protesters and the police force); consequences (human and material damage).

In their majority, the protests were driven by young people and were most intense in the poor neighborhoods of the capital city [xxxiii].

Unlike previous protests, the recent ones (October 2024 to March 2025) were led by the second most voted presidential candidate and involved children, young people, and adults, demanding accountability for the election results, and later other reasons similar to those of previous years were cited [xxxiv]. In addition, they were larger in scale (they took place throughout the country) and had a greater destructive impact (in addition to public and private infrastructure, residences and private vehicles were set on fire). Besides deaths, injuries, and arrests, some people became unemployed because certain projects and companies went bankrupt [xxxv]. In short, it can be considered that, in general, the protests that occurred in Mozambique were violent and with the same pattern of action. However, Penido and Kailil [xxxvi] state that protests will always exist, therefore it would be important for the police to find an appropriate way to avoid violent confrontations and guarantee the enjoyment of this right in a peaceful manner. Similarly, social movements should be guided by peaceful and responsible acts of protest that do not endanger human life.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE PROTESTS IN MOZAMBIQUE

Globally, the consequences of protests vary according to each reality or context. In some cases, popular protests achieved tangible effects, but in others, they were unfulfilled promises, and governments implemented actions that led to the collapse of the economy [xxxvii].

As a consequence of the protests of 1993, 2008, and 2010, the Mozambican government took some measures, such as containing product prices and introducing some subsidies, public passenger transport, bread, basic food basket, and reducing customs duties on rice and sugar [xxxviii]. However, subsidies for some products and the basic food basket were canceled due to financial difficulties, adds this author. According to Bertelsen in De Brito [xxxix], the protests of 1993, 2008, and 2010 achieved their immediate objectives, which were to prevent price increases for basic goods and services.

In response to recent protests, the government accommodated the demands by making concessions and announcing new policies [xl]. Within this context, the new government announced austerity measures and administrative rationalization aimed at improving the living conditions of Mozambicans [xli], such as the exemption from value-added tax (VAT) on essential goods, reduction of toll rates, reduction of water costs, reduction of fuel prices, among others.

Following these protests, the government initiated a process of inclusive political dialogue with political parties and different social strata. One of the key aspects of this dialogue is the change in the electoral law [xlii].

Furthermore, on a social level, the fear of protesting has diminished, and the active expression of dissatisfaction has grown [xliii]. There has also been the emergence of a new social attitude based on strikes and protests to address any problem or claim. In other words, protests have become the most appropriate way to demand better performance from institutions and politicians.

Another notable transformation was the citizens' increased awareness of some of their human rights, such as freedom of expression and demonstration, but not of their duties, as there was disrespect for police authorities and rules of moral coexistence.

However, the closure of some businesses and commercial establishments led to unemployment for some Mozambicans. In parallel, this generated insecurity and a climate of fear of others due to hatred and a feeling of injustice against those who had better socioeconomic conditions.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN PREVENTING VIOLENCE IN SOCIAL PROTESTS

As mentioned earlier, throughout history, protests in Mozambique have been violent, resulting in human and material damage. Given the impact caused by the scale and violence of the 2024 post-election protests, it is believed that education plays a fundamental role in raising awareness among Mozambican citizens of the need to be part of the solution to the various problems listed as causes of these protests. Each contributing to the socio-economic development of the country, as well as developing the capacity for peaceful resolution of different problems through negotiation, mediation, and dialogue [xliv], in order to avoid human and material damage.

Education is the basis for economic, social, cultural, and human development, through the training of individuals who will be responsible for the transformation of society. It is through education that individuals acquire knowledge and skills for life. Therefore, education must ensure the training of individuals who can live with dignity, work for the good of the country, supported by employment and the creation of self-employment. Therefore, each individual must work towards achieving their aspirations and the goals of the country.

According to Pacheco [^{xliv}], it is through education that the individual begins to develop a national and common civic identity, through the incorporation of officially described values and behaviors. However, for the results to be effective, the educational process of man must be carried out in a coordinated manner between the school and the family. In addition, it is necessary for the younger generation to find in the older generation good examples of social justice, love for the homeland and for their compatriot.

To this end, it is essential that the family and the school provide adolescents and young people with an education focused on knowing how to be, to exist and to do, directed towards solving the concrete problems of the population. Furthermore, it is fundamental that school and family education develop in the student critical thinking about the political, economic and social reality of their community, following the moral and ethical principles foreseen in society. Through education, citizens should cultivate responsibility and love for the homeland (even in times of difficulty) where they were born, understanding that they need to fight to protect it and not destroy it, placing the interests of the homeland above personal interests, doing good for the country. In addition, it is fundamental that each citizen understands that their actions influence the lives of other fellow citizens. Therefore, everyone should enjoy their right to protest, but responsibly, avoiding violence and destruction, since these bring negative consequences to everyone's lives.

The commitment to non-violence must be built into the conscience of each citizen, accepting different ways of thinking, thus leading to the building of a pacifist society. Thus, it is important that school and family education develop in students respect for human rights and duties, tolerance, and love for their neighbor, thereby cultivating a culture of social peace and respect for the common and private good [^{xlv}]. Through education, Mozambicans could learn to dialogue and collaborate in the peaceful resolution of different societal problems with a view to the desired development. These attitudes would be transformed into daily practices, habits, and behaviors of students with a view to creating a new way of being and existing in society where tranquility reigns. Furthermore, the country's future leaders need to cultivate these values, also having living role models. Hence, today's adults, at all levels, have the responsibility to practice these ethical values in order to influence the desired changes in younger generations. Therefore, with this knowledge, citizens would be able to lead a personal and social life guided by ethical values, respecting others as they respect themselves, thus ensuring good social, political, cultural and economic coexistence [^{xlvii}].

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Internationally, peaceful protests are a right of citizens, similar to strikes, demonstrations, and marches, because they constitute a form of freedom of expression and contribute to the strengthening of human rights and democracy. However, when protests are violent, they

result in human damage (deaths, arrests, and injuries), looting, vandalism, and destruction of infrastructure.

This study sought to demonstrate the role of education in preventing violence, since in Mozambique, throughout history, protests have resulted in human and material damage.

This research found that the protests that have occurred over the years have many similar aspects, namely: the causes of the demands, the way the protests are called, and the impact caused.

Given this scenario, it became clear that education has a fundamental role in raising awareness among Mozambican citizens of the need to be part of the solution to the different problems that lead to protests, through the development of income-generating activities that guarantee their sustainability and the generation of employment for other fellow citizens.

Furthermore, education must develop in Mozambicans the capacity for peaceful resolution of different problems through dialogue, since it is through dialogue that individuals acquire knowledge and skills for life.

Therefore, it is important that education strengthens ethical values in Mozambicans, such as respect for human rights, tolerance, love for one's neighbor and country, thus cultivating a culture of social peace and respect for the common and private good.

These conclusions highlight the need for ongoing debate in educational institutions and in society in general about the actions that should be taken in protests, in order to develop a collective awareness of the advantages of non-violent protests.

In addition, it is essential that families get involved in the education of their children, seeking to understand their attitudes inside and outside the home in order to avoid aggressive behavior and appealing for the peaceful resolution of disagreements with colleagues and friends.

From all that has been mentioned, it is clear that the protests reveal the tears of Mozambicans. Furthermore, it is believed that with the involvement of the school, family, and society as a whole in values education, the protests would be peaceful, without material or human damage.

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