# Medidas Socioeducativas: Avaliação da efetividade através de Representações Sociais dos egressos

Socio-Educational Measures: Assessing Effectiveness Through the Social Representations of ex-offenders

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RESUMO: O aumento da ocorrência de casos de violência e conflito com a lei, protagonizados por menores de dezoito anos, vai delineando um campo infinito de problematizações para as ciências humanas e sociais. As medidas socioeducativas surgem como tentativa de enfrentamento por parte do Estado ao cenário de violência e ato infracional cometido. Tais medidas surgem de movimentos de lutas por direitos humanos e das crianças e adolescentes desde o século passado e, no presente momento, configuram-se a partir da Doutrina de Proteção Integral, como afirma o Sistema Nacional de Atendimento Socioeducativo. Frente ao cenário acima apresentado, a presente pesquisa objetivou caracterizar as Representações Sociais de egressos de medidas socioeducativas. Para atingir a esse objetivo foram aplicados Teste de Livre Associação de Palavras (TLAP) e realizadas entrevistas semiestruturadas individualizadas com os egressos do serviço (n1 = 07). Para análise dos dados advindos do TLAP utilizou do programa EVOC e a técnica de Análise de Conteúdo para os dados coletados nas entrevistas. Como resultados encontrou-se que os núcleos centrais das Representações Sociais são constituídos dos termos Educação e Responsabilidade. A partir das análises das entrevistas fica evidente como esses núcleos centrais vão produzindo reverberações na apresentação das crenças e percepções sobre a vivência de uma MSE e os impactos pelos sujeitos da pesquisa experimentados. A pesquisa pode contribuir para refletir sobre a eficácia das MSE em atingir seus objetivos de reintegração social, empoderamento e fortalecimento dos vínculos familiares e comunitários.

Palavras-Chave: Representações Sociais; Medidas Socioeducativas; Efetividade.

ABSTRACT: The increasing occurrence of violence and legal conflicts involving individuals under eighteen years old raises numerous issues for the human and social sciences. Socio-educational measures emerge as the State's response to this scenario of violence and infractions. These measures stem from human rights and child and adolescent advocacy movements of the past century and are currently structured under the Doctrine of Integral Protection, as established by the National System for Socio-Educational Assistance

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(Sistema Nacional de Atendimento Socioeducativo - SINASE). Given this context, the aim of this study was to characterize the social representations of individuals who have completed socio-educational measures. To achieve this objective, the Free Word Association Test (FWAT) was applied, and semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with exoffenders (n = 07). Data from the FWAT was analyzed using the EVOC software, while the interview data was examined through content analysis. The results indicated that the central elements of social representations are the terms "Education" and "Responsibility". The interviews further demonstrated how these core elements influence beliefs and perceptions regarding the experience of socio-educational measures and their impact on participants. This study may contribute to reflections on the effectiveness of socio-educational measures in achieving their objectives of social reintegration, empowerment, and strengthening family and community ties.

**Keywords**: Social Representations; Socio-Educational Measures; Effectiveness

### Introduction

Socio-Educational Measures, aimed at adolescents in conflict with the law, stem from human rights movements since the past century and are based on the Doctrine of Integral Protection, as outlined by the National System of Socio-Educational Assistance (CONANDA, 2006). This doctrine represented progress compared to the previous Doctrine of Irregular Situation, which was characterized by youth control and the criminalization of poverty.

Risk factors, such as living in areas with limited access to essential services, contribute to adolescents' involvement in legal conflicts (Pereira et al., 2015). Caetano and Bazon (2023) conducted an integrative review to organize and synthesize findings from studies that adopted the General Strain Theory (GST) as a theoretical framework. According to this theory, certain situations or circumstances that generate strain trigger negative emotions, which, in turn, can lead adolescents to adopt antisocial or delinquent behaviors as coping strategies or as a means of relieving accumulated tension. The most frequently identified circumstances include social factors (such as injustices, discrimination, and structural racism), community factors (community violence), school factors (unsafe school environments), and family factors (particularly maltreatment and neglect).

Social injustices and discrimination, along with socially constructed stereotypes, affect vulnerable groups, exposing them to various forms of deprivation and violence, which increases the likelihood of engaging in delinquent acts. Among these groups, migrants (Li & Xia, 2018) and Indigenous youth (Hautala & Sittner, 2019) stand out. The literature also highlights structural racism as a factor linked to violence and deprivation of opportunities, including racial microaggressions as a source of emotional strain that may lead to delinquent behavior (Coster & Thompson, 2017). Moreover, adolescents

subjected to racial discrimination face greater exposure to police violence and excessive judicialization, reflecting structural racism (Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, 2020; ONU, 2021).

Community violence is another contributing factor to adolescent delinquency. Victimization, both direct and indirect, increases the probability of engaging in offenses, paralleling the impact of being a crime victim (Lee & Kim, 2018). An unsafe school environment is associated with weapon possession and involvement in physical aggression, a relationship that may be mediated by affiliations with delinquent peers (Guo, 2021). In the family context, adverse experiences, including childhood and adolescent maltreatment, correlate with delinquent behavior and recidivism (Wolff & Baglivio, 2016; Yao et al., 2022). Additionally, polyvictimization, characterized by exposure to multiple forms of violence, is prevalent during adolescence and is linked to negative emotions and delinquent behavior (Cudmore et al., 2015). Such behaviors may manifest as expressions of resentment (Park & Metcalfe, 2019; Teijón-Alcalá & Birkbeck, 2019), as highlighted in Barbieri et al.'s (2019) systematic review, which evidences the strong relationship between experiencing violence and committing offenses.

Despite these factors, the Ministry of Justice (Congresso em Foco, 2014) reports that individuals under 18 account for only 0.9% of all crimes in Brazil, with homicide-related offenses dropping to 0.5%.

### **Socio-Educational Measures**

Socio-educational measures are the State's response to offenses by minors under 18, characterized as impositive, sanctioning, and retributive, aimed at preventing recidivism and fostering educational development (Liberati, 2006). Implemented in 2004 through the National Social Assistance Policy (*Política Nacional de Assistência Social* -

*PNAS*) (Brasil, 2005), these measures fall under the responsibility of the Unified Social Assistance System (*Sistema Unico de Assistência Social - SUAS*) and serve both punitive and reintegrative functions, blending coercive and educational elements (Volpi, 2011). Their application is judicially determined, with a focus on punishment (Volpi, 2011).

The measures take into account the offense's severity, the adolescent's social and family background, and the availability of local programs (Volpi, 2015). The Statute of the Child and Adolescent (*Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente – ECA*) (Brasil, 1990, Art. 112, I-VI) defines six types of measures: Warning, Obligation to Repair Damage, Community Service, Assisted Liberty, Semi-Liberty, and Institutionalization. The National System of Socio-Educational Assistance (*Sistema Nacional de Atendimento Socioeducativo*) (CONANDA, 2006) aims to hold adolescents accountable, support their social reintegration, and ensure that legal limits are respected in the deprivation of liberty.

## **Conceptualizing Social Representations**

Assessing the effectiveness of socio-educational measures through the Social Representation Theory (SRT) first requires an understanding of this concept. Moscovici (1978), the founder of SRT, defines social representations as a shared body of knowledge and mental activities that enable individuals to comprehend physical and social reality and integrate into groups through daily interactions.

Jodelet (2001) reinforces this idea, stating that social representations are collectively organized and shared forms of knowledge. Villas-Boas (2014) adds that their purpose is to construct a common reality for a given group and that every social representation is anchored in an object – real or imaginary – and in a group that gives it meaning.

### Studies on Social Representations of Socio-Educational Measures

Studies on social representations of socio-educational measures primarily focus on the perceptions of professionals responsible for their implementation, often revealing skepticism regarding their effectiveness (Cella & Camargo, 2009; Valente & Oliveira, 2015). Some research also explores adolescents' perspectives, typically showing that they view these measures more as punishment than socializing actions, although they acknowledge potential positive effects for the future (Aranzedo & Souza, 2007; Costa & Alberto, 2021; Coutinho et al., 2011; Germano & Bessa, 2010).

Coelho and Rosa (2013) found that while adolescents see these measures as potentially beneficial for learning and behavioral change, they are unable to evaluate long-term impacts during the process. Additionally, some adolescents, despite negative experiences, manage to develop future plans and view these measures as rehabilitative opportunities to escape social exclusion (Aranzedo & Souza, 2007; Costa & Alberto, 2021; Coutinho et al., 2011; Germano & Bessa, 2010). However, infrastructure deficiencies in institutions often hinder these plans (Costa, 2017; Silveira et al., 2015).

Conversely, other studies highlight the negative psychosocial challenges of institutionalization, such as social isolation, loss of privacy, and rigid routines that limit autonomy (Andrade & Barros, 2018). Many young people return to environments that contributed to their unlawful behavior without systematic follow-up or support for reintegration into school, work, or family life (Andrade & Barros, 2018; Evangelista, 2008; Nardi & Dell'Aglio, 2014).

Aiming to contribute to this body of research, this article investigates social representations regarding the effectiveness of socio-educational measures from the perspective of former participants in Porto Seguro, Bahia. It is derived from a doctoral research project titled "Socio-Educational Measures: Effectiveness in a Comparative Study of Social Representations of Former Service Participants and Their Families,"

conducted in the Graduate Program in State and Society at the Federal University of Southern Bahia, Brazil.

#### Methods

# Type of Research

This study is qualitative in nature, with exploratory and descriptive objectives.

### **Participants**

Minayo (1999) suggests that the number of interviews in a study should allow for data saturation, meaning the point at which new interviews do not add novel information. At the CREAS of Porto Seguro, between 2014 and 2016, 96 adolescents served socioeducational measures, and saturation was achieved after conducting individual interviews with seven former participants.

For participant selection, non-probabilistic convenience sampling was used, which selects subjects who are more accessible to the researcher and is suitable for qualitative research (Flick, 2009). CREAS provided lists of former participants at different times, but challenges such as changes of address, lack of contact, and disinterest led to the use of the snowball sampling technique, in which one participant refers another potential research subject (Flick, 2009).

The inclusion criteria required participants to be adults (≥18 years old), of both sexes, who had completed socio-educational measures within the last three years at the CREAS of Porto Seguro. Individuals still serving socio-educational measures or who were incarcerated during the research period were excluded.

The study followed the ethical guidelines established by Resolution 466 (2012) and Resolution 510 (2016) of the National Health Council and was approved by the Research Ethics Committee on Human Subjects (CAAE: 72217517.5.0000.5526), as well as by the responsible authority at the research site – CREAS of Porto Seguro.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Socioeconomic and Demographic Questionnaire

To outline the socioeconomic profile of participants, a demographic questionnaire with closed-ended questions was used, including inquiries about recidivism in criminal offenses. The instrument was developed based on the guidelines of Pavão et al. (2006) and covered indicators such as family economic situation (income and expenses), family composition and relationships, education level, housing conditions, employment status, and recurrence of conflicts with the law.

## Free Word Association Technique

To assess the effectiveness of socio-educational measures and identify core elements of Social Representations, the Free Word Association Technique (FWT) was applied. This method is recognized as effective for identifying the central core and peripheral system in studies on Social Representations, as highlighted by Sá (2002), Wachelke and Wolter (2011). According to Abric (1998), this technique allows for understanding the structure of concepts by identifying central elements and enabling comparisons between representations.

In the procedure, following Vieira (2018), participants were given a stimulus term and responded with the first words that came to mind. Silva and Viveiros (2017) explain that the technique involves listing words associated with the stimulus term—in this case, "socio-educational measure" – with three responses for oral applications and up to five or six for written responses. Participants were initially asked to list five words related to the prompt "For you, a socio-educational measure is" and then rank them in descending order of importance. The same procedure was subsequently applied with the prompt "For you, an effective socio-educational measure is".

The words were organized into spreadsheets using Microsoft Excel and analyzed using the *Ensemble de Programmes permettant l'analyse des évocations* (EVOC) software, version 2005, developed by Pierre Vergès. Oliveira et al. (2005) emphasize that this program enables statistical analysis and co-occurrence marking, serving as the basis for constructing the four-quadrant categorization of responses.

Individual Semi-Structured Interviews

Since the free word association technique identifies elements of the content of representations but does not encompass their full meaning (Silva & Viveiros, 2017), individual semi-structured interviews were used as a complementary tool to deepen the analysis.

### **Results and Discussion**

### **Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants**

Among the seven participants, five identified as male, and except for one, all were single. The designated period for fulfilling the socio-educational measures (SEM) was six months, with the majority (71.4%) completing them in 2019.

Regarding education, three participants had completed high school, three had finished lower secondary education (*Ensino Fundamental* II), and one had not completed this level. Concerning parental education, four reported that their parents had completed primary education (*Ensino Fundamental* I or II), one stated that their father had finished high school, one never attended school, and another could not provide information. For their mothers, the results were similar, but two former participants were unable to report their mother's educational level. According to the participants, none of their caregivers had obtained higher education.

In terms of employment, four participants were unemployed, and the three who were employed did not have formal work contracts. Four participants reported a family income of up to one minimum brazilian wage.

After completing the socio-educational measures, five participants stated that they had not encountered further issues with the police. This low recidivism rate supports the findings of Aguiar (2019), who, while questioning the effectiveness of socio-educational measures, highlights that open-environment measures show lower rates of reoffending.

# Prototypical Analysis of the Central Core and Peripheral System of Social Representations on Socio-Educational Measures

When applying the Free Word Association Technique (FWAT) to the seven former participants of socio-educational measures in this study, they listed 35 words in response to the stimulus phrase "For you, SEM is".

Due to the high lexical variability in the collected data, a word categorization process was conducted, following the criterion that words with the same root were replaced by the most frequently occurring term. This approach is outlined in the EVOC Software Manual. After this processing, it was found that the initial corpus used in the prototypical analysis consisted of 35 words.

Analysis using the EVOC Software revealed that out of the 35 listed words, 21 were unique, representing 60% of the total, indicating high data variability given the small number of former SEM participants in the study. The three most frequently mentioned words were "Education" (5), "Responsibility" (4), and "Good" (4). Figure 1 presents the results of the stimulus phrase "A Socio-Educational Measure is" obtained from the former SEM participants.

Figure 1

Central Nucleus and Peripheral System "A Socio-Educational Measure is"

	Ordem média de evocação (OME) < 3			Ordem média de evocação (OME) ≥ 3		
Frequência	Education	OME 2.200	F 5	Good	OME 4.500	F 4.5
≥ 4	Responsibility	2.250	4		1.500	
Frequência ≥2 e <3	Learning Improvement	1.667	3 2	Help	4.000	2

According to Scano et al. (2006), EVOC analysis allows for understanding evocations and identifying possible elements of the central core, which are located in the upper-left quadrant. Bertoni and Galinkin (2017) explain that this quadrant contains the most frequently and initially evoked terms, while quadrants 2 and 3 include words of lower frequency but still relevant to the organization of Social Representation, forming the peripheral system. The fourth quadrant, in turn, presents less frequent and more individualized terms, configuring the distant periphery.

Figure 1 suggests that the central core of Social Representations regarding Socio-Educational Measures (SEM) among former participants is composed of the terms "Education" and "Responsibility," which were recurrent in individual interviews. Based on Moscovici's (1978) perspective, Social Representation is collectively constructed knowledge that serves as a lens through which individuals interpret reality. Thus, for these former offenders, SEM is understood as an experience that promotes learning and responsibility.

Aranzedo (2015), in investigating the perceptions of adolescent females regarding the socio-educational measure of Assisted Freedom (|AF), identified similar representations, where SEM was viewed as an opportunity for learning and reflection. This finding aligns with Abric's (2001) concept that the central core is determined by the nature of the represented object and the group's relationship with it. In this way, the

former participants appear to establish a connection with SEM as learners, associating it with education.

Beyond the central core, in the first quadrant, the peripheral elements include the qualification of SEM as "Good," suggesting a positive perception of the experience. In the lower-left quadrant, which contains contrast representations (Pullin & Pryjma, 2011), the terms "Learning" and "Improvement" appear. In the lower-right quadrant, forming the second periphery of social representations, the term "Help" stands out, indicating a view of SEM as support for former participants.

Still using the Free Word Association Technique (FWAT), once again the participants were asked to list five expressions that came to mind when reading the second stimulus phrase: "For you, an effective Socio-Educational Measure is". Subsequently, they were requested to rank these responses in order to approximate the Average Order of Importance (AOI), as done with the first phrase. The stimulus phrase "For you, an effective Socio-Educational Measure is" allows access to elements that help assess SEM effectiveness based on participants' expectations of what constitutes a successful SEM.

Of the 35 words listed and ranked by former participants in response to the second stimulus phrase, 25 were unique (71.4%), and 21 (60%) appeared only once. The most frequently repeated word was "Education" (6), followed by "Responsibility" (4), with "Respect" and "Help" each appearing twice.

Following the same methodological procedures highlighted by Wachelke and Wolter (2011) in the previous analysis, the software calculated an Average Order of Importance (AOI) of 3 and an Average Evocation Frequency (AEF) of 4. Figure 2 again identifies "Education" as the probable central core of Social Representations regarding an effective SEM.

Figure 2

Central Nucleus and Peripheral System "For you, an effective Socio-Educational Measure is"

	Ordem média de evocação (OME) < 3			Ordem média de evocação (OME) $\geq 3$		
Frequência ≥ 4	Education	OME 2.333	F 6	Responsibility	OME 3.500	F 4
Frequência ≥2 e <3	Respect	2.500	2	Help	4.000	2

According to Abric (2001), the central core of social representations is influenced by historical, ideological, and sociological factors, strongly marked by collective memory and resistance to change. In the context of Socio-Educational Measures (SEM), this core reflects historical conceptions of the State's role in rehabilitating adolescents in conflict with the law.

Luz (2008) highlights that popular imagination and theories on youth behavior emphasize the role of educational institutions in shaping young people, including those subjected to SEM, preparing them for life in society. This aspect is reflected in the first peripheral zone of the analysis, where the word "Responsibility" appears prominently, reinforcing its centrality in the effective execution of SEM (Marchese & Pullin, 2012; Polido & Pullin, 2014). Meanwhile, the terms "Respect" and "Help" appear in the contrast zone and the second periphery, respectively, shaping the meaning attributed by former participants to the expression "An effective SEM is".

The relationship between SEM and social reintegration aligns with the historical dimensions proposed by Volpi (2015), who highlights the expectation of rehabilitating these adolescents. The term "Education", present in the central core, carries this historical aspect (Abric, 2001). Lírio (2012) notes that since ancient cultures, young people have been seen as incapable of acting correctly without adult guidance, undergoing both formal

and informal educational processes. In Brazil, Pedroso (2003) points out that during the Colonial period, the State persecuted deviant youth, justifying their "civilization" through catechesis. By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, public policies prioritized hygienist and eugenic measures, institutionalizing juvenile offenders and, in some cases, employing violent methods (Rodrigues & Henningen, 2014).

Starting in 1926, the *Código de Menores* (Minor's Code) (Brasil, 1927) sought to institutionalize juvenile offenders under 14 years old in educational homes (Oliveira, 2003). Between 1941 and 1942, the creation of the Child Assistance Service (*Serviço de Assistência ao Menor*) reinforced this logic, linking it to the Ministry of Justice to oversee institutions dedicated to these adolescents (Alberton, 2005). The emphasis on education as a means of correction persisted with Municipal Foundation for the Well-Being of Children (*Fundação Municipal de Bem-Estar do Menor – FUNABEM*), established in 1964, which viewed antisocial behavior as an issue to be addressed through pedagogical and therapeutic actions (Cruz & Guareschi, 2014).

Finally, Marino (2013) and Liberati (2006) argue that SEM has a socioeducational and pedagogical-educational nature, reinforcing the idea that education for responsibility is a key element in the effectiveness of these measures. Since the Free Word Association Technique (FWAT) captures elements of social representations but does not fully encompass their meaning (Silva & Viveiros, 2017), semi-structured individual interviews were conducted to deepen the analysis.

## **Experience of Having Served a Socio-Educational Measure**

The participants' individual interviews reveal that, when analyzing representations of Socio-Educational Measures (SEM), a positive evaluation of this experience emerges. The acquisition of responsibility stands out as the main benefit mentioned by former participants, as reflected in their statements about serving the SEM

Man, like... I had never been on probation, right?! I felt responsible. [...] Yes, responsible for having to wake up early, arrive on time, this and that, and it was fun because of the warmth of the people here at the CRAS (the place where he completed a Community Service measure) who were really great. They arrived here and welcomed me very well. Man, I can say... I stayed here for a short time. I think... it was fun. I think it was fun. I felt... I felt safe here. (Ex-offender 1)

Man, it was (...), I learned a lot of things, right?! I learned what responsibility is, respect, right?! [...] I came here twice a week. [...] Man! I don't know, I liked the time, right?! [...] A bit embarrassing, but I was enjoying it, you know? It was really good. (Ex-offender 3)

So, yeah... in my opinion, the beginning was really calm, man, I did... I learned a lot of things, yeah... like, I also made new friends, right, yeah... the work experience, I learned too, things that nowadays... how can I put it? Nowadays I have a job that I couldn't have had before, right?! Now I'm a gardener too, and stuff, I learned a lot from this time doing the... the MSE. (Ex-offender 6)

This result corroborates the previous analysis, in which the term responsibility is highlighted as part of the Core of the subjects' representations about the MSE. The interpretation of this data is aligned with what is proposed by Craidy (2014), who suggests that, in its coercive and pedagogical dimension, the MSE should promote the learning of responsibility.

## **Objectives of the MSE**

The process of evaluating the effectiveness of a service, according to Cohen and Franco (1998), involves a systematic action of observing the impact of activities in light of their objectives. In the interviews with the ex-offenders, they were asked about the objectives of the MSE, and most of them brought up statements and narratives related to

the Core of representations about the MSE. The educational dimension emerged in this context, represented by an education focused on collective and social living, and not on formal content. Although most of the ex-offenders stated that they had not been informed about the objectives of the MSE, all of them felt empowered to assess whether the objectives they believed to be those of the MSE had been achieved.

The main objective? For me, it was to educate myself. Educate to... I don't know how to explain! ...I think it was to become a better person. I don't know!

Better than I was before. I think that's how I can tell you. (Ex-offender 1)

"First, it was to improve the person I am... [...] Oh, what is the CRAS for? For education, to improve, right? So, I went there for that. This is my point of view." (Exoffender 5)

For me, it was to learn, right, because... not just because of the things I was doing, because there wasn't just that to do, right?! These things... I could do much better things too, right?! Instead of doing that, I could be doing other things, I could be helping others. [...] Good things. (Ex-offender 6)

When the ex-offenders of the MSE indicate the achievement of objectives based on their social representations, highlighting the positive change in their behavior and the perception of inappropriate behaviors as occurring before the measure, they align with what is proposed by SINASE (CONANDA, 2006, p. 45), which aims to enable the exoffender to "relate better to themselves, with others, and with everything that integrates their circumstances, without recidivating in the practice of unlawful acts." This objective also aligns with the disapproval of unlawful conduct, as per the SINASE Law 12,594 of January 18, 2012. In the interviewees' statements, the achievements of the objectives manifest in various ways:

I achieved the objectives. [...] Because today I feel like a better person. I am a better person! Man, today I work more, I help my dad every day, I'm a Levite at church, and I think that's it. [...] I don't have negative thoughts, I don't steal. I don't think about trafficking. I don't think about any of those things I used to do. [...] I don't have thoughts of... hatred, of anger towards others, of wanting to steal, of wanting to do wrong. (Ex-offender 1)

I think so. Yeah! Because today I'm a different person. I didn't do the things I do now. Today I'm more polite, I don't hang out with those boys I used to hang out with. I used to... I used drugs, I've smoked marijuana before. But I don't smoke anymore. I quit, it's been a while now. I think it's been about 5 months or more since I last smoked. And it was cool, it helped me a lot. Today I'm on a different path. (Ex-offender 2)

"CREAS served to educate me, to improve me. That's right!" (Ex-offender 5)

These data corroborate the research by Aranzedo (2015), in which adolescents in open-ended socio-educational measures see these measures as an opportunity for learning and reflection, similar to the study by Coelho and Rosa (2013), which points out that adolescents perceive the MSE as positive interventions, promoting learning and the possibility of behavior change.

Although the mentioned dimensions make up the majority of the representations and their core, other objectives of the MSE, as per the SINASE Law 12,594 of January 18, 2012, also appear in the interviews, such as holding the adolescent accountable for the consequences of the unlawful act and encouraging reparation, social integration and the guarantee of rights, and disapproving of unlawful conduct. Based on the interviewees' statements, at least in part, the objectives of the law were achieved.

## Changes in life from complying with the MSE

The social representations that the ex-offenders have about the effectiveness of the MSE impact their lives through the evaluation they have of changes in their daily lives after completing the measure. Again, we see the perception of positive changes in their own behavior, especially the acquisition of responsibility, a constitutive element of the core of these individuals' social representations about the MSE. These social representations impact the way they perceive themselves, according to their statements.

"The responsibility I didn't have. Being on time at places. Knowing how to talk to people. Communicate, before I didn't have these responsibilities. I didn't even know how to communicate with people." (Ex-offender 1)

A lot has changed... let me think... my behavior... I wouldn't stay at home. I'd leave in the morning and only come back the next day. I used to go out with friends to drink. I'd only come back the next day. [...] Now I just leave work and go home. Rest. [...] What I used to do, I don't do anymore. (Ex-offender 2)

Oh, a lot has changed... It changed... Man, my life back then was completely different from what it is today, you know?! Back then, there was no respect. [...] Now I... Ah, now I've changed a lot, my mindset is different, it's not the same as before. [...] Ah... before I didn't care about anything, I was getting involved with certain bad friendships, you know?! Bam. And today, those friendships I was involved in, today they're dead, maybe I could be dead too, and that's it. (Ex-offender 3)

Such data corroborates the studies by Aranzedo and Souza (2007), Germano and Bessa (2010), and Coelho and Rosa (2013), which point to perceptions of adolescents

who have completed MSE, marked by beliefs that socio-educational measures have the potential for learning and behavior change.

# Positive aspects of complying with the MSE

The analysis of the responses about the positive aspects of complying with the MSE reinforces the assessment of its effectiveness, according to the subjects participating in the research. The positive evaluation of the MSE, highlighted by the ex-offenders, is again related to the educational dimension, present in the core of the social representations about the MSE and its effectiveness. Furthermore, the good relationship with the CREAS staff emerges as a positive element of complying with the MSE. "It served as a learning experience for me not to make the same mistakes I made before." (Ex-offender 1). "I learned a lot of things... like having responsibility." (Ex-offender 3). "I got to know the people at the CRAS and... did the activities together with the older people. [...] Because they (the CRAS staff) were... receptive with me [...] They treated me like I was just... a normal person." (Ex-offender 4). "I liked the service from the woman there (the psychologist), Mrs. L., her conversations. She always gave me good advice, and that's it." (Ex-offender 5).

### Negative aspects and suggestions for improvement of the MSE

The evaluation process of the MSE involves understanding its objectives, positive aspects, and weaknesses. When the ex-offenders were asked about the negative aspects of the MSE, the following points emerged: few activities to be carried out during the measure, the MSE seen as a sanction, lack of opportunities to vent, inconvenient hours, inability to participate in other activities, and the feeling of injustice experienced by the ex-offenders.

When the participants were asked about aspects that should be improved in the execution of the MSE by the CREAS of Porto Seguro, it became clear the importance of

listening to these subjects, as their suggestions could enhance actions, especially for the ex-offenders. Most of the young interviewees proposed that the time dedicated to fulfilling the MSE should consist of more educational activities and professional training.

Man, I don't know, I think I don't know... computer, class, something, anything, I don't know, something to do. A drawing, some kind of art, I don't know, a guitar, I don't know, something like that. [...] Better? This issue of having more things to do. (Ex-offender 1)

There should be more activities. [...] Like... ah! More things for the person to do. Suggest more things, some work for the person to do, something else there... I think it could keep the person more occupied [...] Occupation, right? (Exoffender 2)

There should be more events, let's say. Ah... The lady used to do it with the adolescents, it was like a group of adolescents. Yeah, that! There should be more groups. [...] Sometimes, that's how I ended up with nothing to do. (Exoffender 3)

When they qualify what type of activities could take place, we see in this group the beliefs and expectations regarding the fulfillment of the MSE. Villas-Boas (2014) points out that the group establishes a relationship with an object represented by the construction of common reality, meaning that these young people expect from the MSE something that brings them closer to the world of work.

"[...] a job... job... school, a course." (Ex-offender 3). "For example, put to work, placed as a young apprentice. They take my free time and make me... make me a young apprentice, you know?! Something like that." (Ex-offender 4). "[...] them giving a fixed job." (Ex-offender 5).

### **Interpersonal relationships with the staff**

When asked about the relationships established between the participants of the research and the staff of the CREAS, the municipal space designated for the execution and management of open-ended MSE actions, as recommended by SINASE (CONANDA, 2006), we see the potential revealed in this relationship. It was unanimous among the ex-offenders that there were positive elements in this relationship, highlighted by good communication processes.

Everyone welcomed me very well, and I also welcomed them very well when they arrived. I think that's it, it was very good. [...] Because of the communication. [...] They wanted to talk to me all the time, always wanting to know how I was doing, it was always like that. They really welcomed me. (Exoffender 1)

"I didn't have to force anything, it was just me. [...] I liked being with them... Exactly because I didn't have to force anything, I was just myself." (Ex-offender 4). "It was good. Great!... with all of them." (Ex-offender 5)

It is important to note that the interpersonal relationships established between the CREAS professionals and the subjects fulfilling socioeducational measures are guided by the Technical Guidelines for Socioeducational Measures in Open Settings (Secretaria Nacional de Assistência Social, 2016), which highlight the importance of these relationships and emphasize that they require these staff members to overcome preestablished and one-dimensional views that lead to the construction of stereotypes, which can negatively affect the monitoring and relationship with these young people and their families.

### **Changes in family relationships**

In the interviewees' statements, perceptions of significant changes in their family relationships also emerge.

So, the responsibility changed, it changed as I told you, now I work more with my dad. The communication, I talk more with my parents. I didn't talk as much before, and I think it was more in these areas [...] After the MSE, he trusts me more. [...] I'm grateful because back then he mistrusted me a lot. He even judged me a lot because of the mistakes I made. And nowadays he trusts me. He treats me really well too. I have a huge affection for him nowadays. Back then, I barely talked to my dad properly. Nowadays, we have... we're closer, I can say that. [...] It changed the communication with my mom and brother. [...] The same thing I would say about my dad. I was like that with the whole family. I didn't talk to anyone, I didn't talk much. (Ex-offender 1)

"Oh, it changed because today I'm more attentive to my family, more affectionate, more close, and instead of spending a night on the street, I prefer to stay home with my family, with my mom and my dad." (Ex-offender 2).

I saw, right man, that after growing up, even then, my mom would call them (other adolescents who had fulfilled MSE and participated in the group with him), and they would answer: "I'm here at CREAS, phew," many times: "No, I'm... I'm arriving," phew. And that got into my mind, it got into my mind, and I was like, I looked and thought, 'Am I the only one who... is this way?' Phew. Then I started changing little by little. (Ex-offender 3).

"I said today I'm helping my mom a lot... I'm also closer to my family, it... helped a lot too, right?" (Ex-offender 6).

Considering that the strengthening of bonds within the family appears as a result of fulfilling the socioeducational measures for the majority of ex-offenders, it can be concluded that this aligns with the objectives of socioeducational measures, as proposed by the Technical Guidelines for Socioeducational Measures in Open Settings (Secretaria

Nacional de Assistência Social, 2016), since such actions should promote social work with these ex-offenders and their families with the goal of strengthening bonds and ensuring the family's role in care, protection, and socialization.

# **Changes in Community Relations**

Social integration, as established by Law No. 12.594/1, is one of the objectives of socio-educational measures (MSE), and the Individual Care Plan (PIA), developed between technicians, families, and adolescents, highlights the need for both family and general social integration, promoting a socialization process that extends beyond family relationships. Contact and interaction with the community are, therefore, essential for the effectiveness of MSE actions, as per the Technical Guidelines of 2016 (Secretaria Nacional de Assistência Social, 2016). However, when asked about changes in their relationships with their communities, the ex-offenders unanimously stated that nothing had changed, suggesting that no actions were taken to strengthen community bonds.

According to the Technical Guidelines for MSE in open settings (Secretaria Nacional de Assistência Social, 2016, p. 50), "the monitoring of the adolescent in the fulfillment of socio-educational measures in open settings presupposes a dual dimension for its execution: social protection and accountability." This proposal aims to provide experiences that allow individuals to understand their role in society, both through fulfilling duties and fully experiencing their rights. However, when asked about the impact of MSE on their perception of rights and duties, most of the ex-offenders reported that there were no significant changes. The lack of change in community relations can be attributed to the absence of specific actions aimed at strengthening community ties, which implies an insufficient implementation of the social integration objective as established by Law No. 12.594/1 and the Technical Guidelines of 2016.

### **Final Considerations**

The socio-educational measure (MSE), according to the ECA (1993), aims at punishment and the resocialization of adolescents, combining both a coercive and an educational dimension. The research reveals that, although ex-offenders may experience punitive moments, especially with law enforcement agents, upon engaging with CREAS, they perceive a pedagogical aspect aimed at preparing them for the future. The Social Representations of the ex-offenders regarding MSE have "Education" and "Responsibility" as their central themes, with MSE understood as an experience of learning that promotes responsibility and behavior change.

Although the ex-offenders were not informed about the objectives of MSE, they consider it effective, especially regarding the acquisition of responsibility and the approach to the world of work. However, they suggest improvements, such as more educational activities and professional qualification actions. The research highlights the importance of strengthening community ties, which is still lacking according to the expectations of SINASE (CONANDA, 2006), impacting the effectiveness of resocialization.

It is important to note that the fact that this research was applied to a small group of individuals weakens the process of generalizing these conclusions to all ex-offenders of MSE, as well as makes it impossible to state that the MSEs fulfilled were truly effective, since the evaluation tool used was the Social Representations of these individuals and not other legal instruments that could provide a more substantial and objective assessment of effectiveness.

Despite the noted weaknesses, the results suggest the need for future studies comparing social representations with documentary evaluations on the effectiveness of MSE, including public security professionals and CREAS staff. The research emphasizes

that, despite the challenges, MSE provides ex-offenders with the opportunity to reconfigure their lives and aspire to a better future.

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