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The mediating role of the scope of justice in prejudice against minoritized groups in Brazil

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Abstract

The general aim of this research was to analyze the mediating role of the scope of justice as a justification for the relationship between prejudice and discrimination against black people (specifically) and against ethnic and minoritized groups together (black people, indigenous people, gypsies, and black immigrants). Two quantitative studies were conducted through an online questionnaire on prejudice against these groups: the scope of justice (two factors), and perceptions of discrimination/support for discriminatory policies (SDP). These measures were adapted to the Brazilian context. In Study 1, 146 people from all over Brazil participated, aged 18 to 65, mostly women, self-declared white, and with a family income of three minimum wages. In Study 2, 94 people from different Brazilian cities participated, aged 18 to 64, of whom 50% identified as white, with an average monthly family income of BRL 4,479.98. Data analysis was performed using descriptive, factorial, and inferential analyses using the SPSS statistical package. Results showed that participants used the justification of restricting the scope of justice to the ingroup in both studies to legitimize the exclusion of ethnic and minoritized groups, disguising the expression of prejudice. In this sense, the way people perceive the application of justice across different groups (scope of justice) can be altered by prejudice, and it can also be used to justify, in a veiled way, social exclusion. This research corroborates studies on how discrimination is legitimized and perpetuated through the guise of justice.

Keywords: prejudice, discrimination, justice, minoritized groups, social exclusion

O PAPEL MEDIADOR DO ESCOPO DE JUSTIÇA NO PRECONCEITO CONTRA GRUPOS MINORIZADOS NO BRASIL

O papel mediador do escopo de justiça

Resumo

A presente pesquisa teve como objetivo geral analisar o papel mediador do escopo de justiça como uma justificativa para a relação entre preconceito e a discriminação contra negros (específico) e contra grupos étnicos e minoritários (em conjunto; negros, indígenas, ciganos e imigrantes negros). Dois estudos quantitativos foram realizados através de questionário online relacionando preconceito contra esses grupos, escopo da justiça (dois fatores) e percepção de discriminação/suporte a políticas discriminatórias (SPD). Estas medidas foram adaptadas para o contexto brasileiro. No Estudo 1, 146 pessoas de todo o Brasil participaram do estudo com idades entre 18 e 65 anos, em sua maioria mulheres, autodeclarados brancos, e com renda familiar de três salários mínimos. No Estudo 2, 94 pessoas participaram de diferentes cidades brasileiras, com idades entre 18 e 64 anos, onde 50% se identificaram como brancos, com renda mensal familiar média de R\$4.479,98. A análise de dados se deu através de análise descritiva, fatorial e inferencial com uso do pacote estatístico SPSS. Os resultados mostraram que os participantes utilizaram a justificativa de restrição do escopo de justiça para o endogrupo nos dois estudos a fim de legitimar a exclusão dos grupos étnicos e minoritários, disfarçando a expressão preconceito. Nesse sentido, a forma como as pessoas percebem a aplicação da justiça para diferentes grupos (escopo de justiça) pode ser alterada com base no preconceito, bem como ser utilizada para justificar, de forma velada, a exclusão social. Esta pesquisa corrobora com estudos sobre como a discriminação é legitimada e perpetuada utilizando a justiça.

Palavras-chave: preconceito, discriminação, justiça, grupos minoritários, exclusão social

EL PAPEL DEL ÁMBITO DE JUSTICIA EN LOS PREJUICIOS CONTRA GRUPOS MINIMIZADOS EN BRASIL

El papel mediador del ámbito de la justicia

Resumen

La presente investigación tuvo como objetivo general analizar el papel del ámbito de justicia como justificación de la relación entre el prejuicio y la discriminación contra las personas negras (específicamente) y contra los grupos minoritarios (en conjunto; personas negras, indígenas, gitanos e inmigrantes negros). Se realizaron dos estudios cuantitativos a través de cuestionario online que relacionaba el prejuicio hacia estos grupos, el ámbito de justicia (dos factores) y la percepción de SPD. Estas medidas fueron adaptadas al contexto brasileño. En el Estudio 1 participaron 146 brasileños con edad entre 18 y 65 años, siendo

mayoría mujeres, autodeclaradas blancas y con renta familiar de tres salarios mínimos. En el Estudio 2 participaron 94 personas de diferentes ciudades brasileñas con edad entre 18 y 64 años, donde el 50% se identificó como blanca, con un ingreso familiar mensual promedio de R\$ 4.479,98. El análisis de datos se realizó mediante análisis descriptivo, factorial e inferencial utilizando el paquete estadístico SPSS. Resultados mostraron que en ambos estudios los participantes utilizaron la justificación de restringir el ámbito de justicia para el endogrupo con el fin de legitimar la exclusión de grupos minoritarios, disfrazando la expresión de prejuicio. En este sentido, la forma como las personas perciben la aplicación de justicia para los distintos grupos (ámbito de la justicia) puede verse alterada en función de los prejuicios, así como ser utilizada para justificar, de forma velada, la exclusión social. Esta investigación corrobora estudios sobre cómo se legitima y perpetúa la discriminación a través de la justicia.

Palabras clave: prejuicio, discriminación, justicia, grupos minoritarios, exclusión social

The impact of a prejudiced society is a burden that Western countries must address together to achieve a healthier social environment. In Brazil, data from the “More Data, Better Health” report (Ministry of Racial Equity, 2025) showed the everyday discrimination experienced by the racial groups in the Brazilian population. Its results demonstrated the harsh consequences of historical racism in health conditions, employability, access to resources, and quality of life. Additionally, the intersectionality was found, in which Black women are more affected by this systematic discrimination against the Black population, which includes Black and Brown people. These data ensure the need to continuously search for empirical aspects of the discrimination against different racial groups in Brazil.

In this historical scenario, racial prejudice was initially identified as a veiled attitude (Camino et al., 2001; Lima Nunes & Camino, 2011) based on miscegenation, “racial whitening” and colorism (e.g., Lima & Vala, 2004; Lima, 2024) and has been observed as openly, institutionalized and structurally maintained (e.g., Bento, 2002). This reality is the result of mechanisms for perpetuating discrimination, based on prejudice, as a way of maintaining the status quo of the dominant, white group of European descents.

Given the complexity of defining prejudice in Social Psychology, Lima (2020) indicates that “the most sensible thing to do is to adopt an operational definition, more specific and contextualized, that considers the type of interest involved in the relationship and the minoritized targeted by the process” (p. 26). Therefore, in this work, prejudice can be defined as a negative affective positioning towards an individual or a group of individuals based on their belonging to a certain social group (Allport, 1954; Lima Nunes & Camino, 2011; Modesto et al., 2017), and as a psychosociological phenomenon, it can be understood as a specific form of intergroup relationship, and that this relationship arises from the asymmetry of power (Camino et al., 2001; Lima-Nunes et al., 2010).

Whether prejudice is perceived as a generalized phenomenon for different minoritized groups or as different types of prejudice, its logic meets an attitudinal process, which needs to be complete and expressed through discriminatory behavior, that is, the attitude ends up being represented through behavior, regardless of the form, but dependent on the target group. In this sense, the very nature of prejudice tends to be contextual, i.e., the same dynamics that affect discrimination identified in a specific context must be repeated in other contexts in a similar manner (Bergh et al., 2016).

Similar to what happens with black people in Brazil, ethnic and minoritized groups such as indigenous people, gypsies, immigrants, or black refugees, i.e., Haitians and/or PALOPs (Portuguese-speaking African countries), are also vulnerable to the consequences of social inequality, where their rights are denied and fought based on various justifying discourses. Somehow, despite the historical and cultural differences among the groups identified, the consequences seem predetermined by the effective differentiation in how they are treated. Thus, the question is: can prejudice and discrimination against ethnic and minoritized groups in Brazil be made viable by justifying arguments? Have recent social movements, such as “black lives

matter,” reinforced the need to justify racial discrimination and discrimination against other minoritized groups?

Thus, the present research had as its general objective to analyze the relationship between prejudice against ethnic and minoritized groups in Brazil (blacks, indigenous people, gypsies, and black immigrants) and the discrimination that these groups face, and the role of justice perceptions (i.e., restriction of the scope of justice) in this relationship. Specifically, to verify the mediating role of the restriction of the scope of justice in the relationship between prejudice and discrimination against (a) blacks (a specific group) and against (b) ethnic and minoritized groups (a set of groups) in Brazil.

Prejudice against minoritized groups in Brazil

In the book “Contributions of Social Psychology to the Understanding of Racism in Brazil”, Lima (2024) revisits theories and models of racism developed at different levels of analysis, as well as their applications to the racism experienced in Brazil. The author demonstrates that systematic and integrated analyses of the different levels are crucial for understanding racism in Brazil, since “o racismo nacional é peculiar, mas, teorias ambientadas em outros contextos têm enorme potencial explicativo para compreendê-lo e enfrentá-lo no Brasil” (p. 161).

For instance, Lima et al. (2025) investigated how Brazilians use justice discourses to justify the social exclusion of ethnic and minoritized groups. The rationale of the study was to show how the dynamics underlying discrimination against minoritized groups were legitimized similarly despite the differences (ethnic-racial, cultural, and origin) between the target groups.

In his study, participants answered open-ended questions about sociocultural similarities and differences, values and beliefs between the groups, and ranked the groups perceived as more and less excluded. Results showed that participants justified social exclusion by the positive discrimination effected by affirmative actions, as “um privilégio que afetaria negativamente o restante da população” (Lima et al., 2025, p. 19). Furthermore, they used arguments of justice to justify social exclusion from a meritocratic perspective and to appear to adhere to the belief in a just world, i.e., since groups are historically excluded and all citizens are equal, those who remain excluded deserve to be in that situation.

Based on these results, it became possible to analyze the role of justice perceptions in justifying discrimination against these ethnic and minoritized groups in Brazil. In fact, there is a psychological mechanism of justification that maintains people's self-perception that they are in accordance with their principles and values, and that they will not be judged negatively for this type of behavior because they are justified. It is called the legitimization of discrimination (Costa-Lopes et al., 2013; Pereira et al., 2003).

In this sense, the legitimization process could be a result of a psychological tension that needs to be resolved to enable contact with minoritized groups. Researchers have proposed possible explanations that could resolve this tension and allow the perpetuation of discrimination

(Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005; Katz & Hass, 1988; Pereira, 2012). For example, Crandall and Eshleman (2003) proposed a model to explain it. In the justification-suppression model, individuals experience tension in interracial relations as a conflict between the need to express genuine prejudice and the (psychological and social) pressure to suppress it, in response to the antiprejudice norm. Despite this proposal, the individuals need to resolve motivational conflicts using socio-psychological strategies when interaction with minoritized groups cannot be prevented.

For instance, these strategies have been operationalized by the Justified Discrimination Model (JDM) (Pereira et al., 2009, 2010). This model postulates that individuals actively seek justifications to disguise their discrimination based on existing prejudice and legitimize this practice, maintaining the perception that they acted in accordance with justice and without prejudice (Souza et al., 2016). Although it may seem contradictory, the psychological mechanism of legitimization resolves the dilemma that could arise for the individual. Therefore, the legitimization of discrimination exposed by the JDM has been analyzed using different justifications, and the dynamics of mediation in the prejudice-discrimination relationship have been maintained throughout the studies (e.g., Lima-Nunes et al., 2013).

In Brazil, Modesto et al. (2017) tested the JDM in an experimental study, using the perception of real threat as a justification to legitimize discrimination against university students who entered through racial quotas. Results showed that, in fact, the perception of affirmative action policies as a real threat to the quality of education acted as a plausible justification, mediating the relationship between prejudice and discrimination against quota students. That is, participants with higher levels of prejudice perceived that the admission of students through the quota policy would decrease the quality of education at the university and, consequently, bring more discrimination against quota students.

Hence, the legitimization dynamics postulated by the JDM remain, but are facilitated by a justification that apparently lacks a prejudiced basis, such as concern about the decline in the quality of teaching at the university. In addition to the perception of threat as an element justifying the JDM, arguments based on justice are relevant as potential legitimizers in the prejudice-discrimination relationship. Studies on the role of justice perceptions in the relationship between prejudice and discrimination have identified how people apply an ideal of justice in their daily lives to the most diverse situations, where people who 'follow the rules' tend to obtain benefits and privileges and people who 'break the rules' tend to be punished (Clayton & Opatow, 2003; Hafer et al., 2012). Some studies have explored the scope of justice (and its restriction dynamics) as a type of justice perception that acts as a mediator in the process of moral exclusion and intergroup discrimination in different contexts (Coryn & Borshuk, 2006; Deustch, 1990; Hadarics & Kende, 2018; Hafer et al., 2012; Lima-Nunes et al., 2013; Opatow, 1990, 2012, 2018; Passini & Villano, 2018; Staub, 1989).

The concept of scope of justice (Opatow, 1990) is based on a set of norms, concerns, and moral rules about rights and the application of justice, distinguishing ingroup and outgroup

behaviors. In this sense, its application can be restricted to the ingroup or expanded to other groups depending on the intergroup relationship being analyzed. Despite having been appropriately theorized and discussed in Social Psychology, this hypothesis still needs to be systematically analyzed in this way, as has been done more recently.

Studies have identified that restricting the scope of justice can act as a non-prejudiced justification to legitimize discrimination (Lima-Nunes et al., 2013; Hadarics & Kende, 2018) and that the way people perceive and apply justice can be strategically biased through justifying discourses (Lima-Nunes & Farias, 2019). Consequently, groups considered outside the scope of justice (e.g., ethnic and minoritized groups in Brazil) may be denied access to rights and goods when the scope of justice is restricted to the ingroup (e.g., the dominant group, white, of European origin).

The study by Lima-Nunes et al. (2013) showed how the JDM, with justice as its justification, proved effective in the relationship between prejudice and support for discriminatory policies against Brazilian immigrants, making it difficult for these immigrants to access rights that other citizens had. That is, by restricting the application of rights to nationals, participants (who were Portuguese) felt justified in this restricted perception of the scope of justice, and thus supported discriminatory policies as legitimized by justice. Therefore, the perception of the application of justice criteria could be adjusted to justify a differentiation in the allocation of rights and goods to groups considered excluded from society, by restricting the observer's justice to nationals only.

In the same vein, Hadarics and Kende (2018) analyzed Hungarians' predisposition to promote or restrict the interests of Muslim immigrants, based on their moral intuitions and the possible mediation by moral exclusion. Results showed that the moral exclusion of Muslim immigrants influenced the discrimination against them by restricting the scope of justice, i.e., arguments based on moral principles and values of the outgroup were perceived as incompatible with those of the ingroup, transforming them into threats to the stability of the country. In this way, the authors showed how people participate in the process of justifying prejudice and negative attitudes through a "double standard", depending on who the outgroup is or on the level of intergroup conflict in the situation.

In Brazil, Lima-Nunes and Farias (2019) analyzed how people perceive justice in intergroup conflict situations, depending on their group membership. A qualitative experimental study was conducted with the aim of identifying how the group membership of participants in the relationship between the ingroup (dominant group) and the outgroup (dominated group) would alter the justification for the situation of the group analyzed. Thus, participants had to justify the situation of the dominant or the dominated group, depending on the experimental condition (restriction of the scope of justice vs. control) to which they were assigned.

The experimental scenario was a hypothetical situation in an imaginary country with dominant and dominated groups, without specifying which groups were dominant or dominated. Participants in the restriction of the scope of justice condition had to justify their position as a

dominant group, whereas participants in the control condition had to justify only the situation of intergroup conflict as a neutral party. Results showed that participants used different justifying discourses in the two conditions, i.e., people in the dominant group condition justified their position with a greater number of arguments that restricted the application of rights and goods to the dominated group, as well as meritocratic discourses, and people allocated to the control condition highlighted social inequality in intergroup conflict and used arguments in favor of expanding the scope of justice, so that everyone has the same rights, not only those who are part of the dominant group.

In this sense, the flexible and strategic nature of restricting the scope of justice in situations of intergroup conflict does not concern a specific target group, but rather a dynamic that depends on adherence to ideologies that derogate certain groups and, consequently, on the prejudiced attitudes expressed by individuals.

For example, Nariman et al. (2020) identified the mediating role of restricting the scope of justice (or moral exclusion) in the relationship between right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and social dominance orientation (SDO) in the discrimination of Hungarian Roma and Jewish minorities. These are very distinct target groups, minoritized from different scenarios, where Roma suffer from explicit prejudice, but Jewish minorities do not. The authors argue that minoritized groups marked by greater cultural differences may be more susceptible to moral exclusion due to both the perception of intergroup threat generated and the psychological distance between them and the ingroup.

Thus, a body of studies (e.g., Lima-Nunes et al., 2013; Hadarics & Kende, 2018; Passini & Villano, 2018) has emerged on how discrimination can be justified through the strategic restriction of the scope of justice when intergroup conflict is salient. However, most of these studies were conducted in European countries, focusing on minoritized groups specific to those socio-cultural contexts. Therefore, it was necessary to continue the analysis of the role of the scope of justice in the processes of social exclusion in Brazil as well, applying the JDM to discrimination against habitually excluded groups such as Blacks, Indigenous people, Gypsies, and Black immigrants in Brazil (e.g., Haitians and Africans or PALOPs).

It was expected that the relationship between prejudice and discrimination against the target groups would occur based on the dynamics of justifying discrimination through moral exclusion, that is, through the mediation of the restriction of the scope of justice, and that this dynamic would not be different for a specific group (Blacks) or the set of minorities and minoritized groups.

Method

To address the specific objectives of this research, two correlational studies were designed to examine psychosocial variables. The quantitative surveys were conducted digitally. Data collection for both studies was carried out between 2020 and 2021 and proved feasible even during the COVID-19 pandemic through the use of online questionnaires disseminated via the

social networks Facebook and Instagram on official university channels, targeting people residing in Brazil over 18 years of age. Brazilian scales adapted for the target group(s) were used, along with measures adapted from European Portuguese to Brazilian Portuguese. The studies proved necessary due to the urgency of seeking possible answers to how discrimination is accepted and legitimized in Brazil, as well as exploring how the scope of justice measure and its function in the Justified Discrimination Model (JDM) operate in the Brazilian context.

Study 1

This study aimed to analyze the justifying role of the scope of justice in the relationship between prejudice and discrimination against black people in Brazil. Specifically: (a) the relationship between prejudice and racial discrimination; and (b) the mediating role of the scope of justice in the relationship between prejudice against black people and racial discrimination in Brazil.

Participants

The sample consisted of 146 Brazilians aged between 18 and 65 ($M = 25.90$, $SD = 7.769$), the majority of whom were female (63.7%), followed by males (32.2%), and the remainder (4.1%) did not wish to provide information or selected the 'other' option. Regarding the group to which they belonged, 56.8% identified as White, 32.9% as mixed-race, 8.9% as Black, and 1.4% selected the Indigenous option. The approximate family income is one to three minimum wages per family, so that the majority said their financial situation was similar to the average for people in the country (49.3%). Residents from the five regions of Brazil were present, most from the Northeast, specifically the state of Paraíba (30.1%), with São Paulo, in the Southeast region of the country, also standing out (21.9%). The sample loss was ten participants, considering outliers, or who failed to respond to all of the study measures. Data collection was conducted via an online questionnaire on the Google Forms platform, using a non-probabilistic convenience sample.

Instruments

The online questionnaire presented the measures related to the study variables in this order, followed by the sociodemographic questions.

Prejudice. The measure of blatant and subtle prejudice (Meertens & Pettigrew, 1997; Vala et al., 2008) adapted to Brazilian Portuguese and for the target group of this study, containing 18 items, was used. The question asks the degree of agreement with statements such as "Most of the country's leaders care too much about black people and not enough about Brazilians in general". Participants responded using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree). This measure was analyzed using an exploratory factor analysis with Varimax rotation, yielding a total prejudice score ($\alpha = .88$) distributed into two factors: Blatant Prejudice ($\alpha = .83$) and Subtle Prejudice ($\alpha = .78$). Factor loadings ranged from 0.34 to 0.78.

Scope of Justice. The measure developed in Portugal (Lima-Nunes et al., 2013) was used, adapted for the target group of this study, containing 5 items. Requesting the degree of agreement with statements such as “whites and blacks form a single moral community in Brazil”, participants responded using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree). This measure was analyzed using the exploratory factor analysis method, with Varimax rotation. It was divided into two factors: Perception of different application of justice ($\alpha = .65$) and Exclusion ($\alpha = .18$). Based on the Cronbach's alpha value of the Exclusion factor, it was excluded from subsequent analyses. Factor loadings ranged from 0.70 to 0.85.

Perception of Discrimination. The measure developed by Gondim et al. (2013) was adapted to examine how Brazilians, in general, behave towards black people, the focus of this study. The measure comprises 21 items and has two dimensions. One concerns behaviors of intergroup rapprochement (Amiability) and the other concerns behaviors of distancing and lack of intergroup cordiality (Hostility).

An example of an item in the Agreeableness dimension is “Try to work on the same team as them,” and an example of the Hostility dimension is “Avoid greeting them”. Thus, participants responded using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Brazilians definitely do not act like this) to 7 (Brazilians definitely act like this). This measure underwent exploratory factor analysis with Varimax rotation, generating two factors that explained 62% of the variance of the items, namely: Hostility Factor ($\alpha = .96$) and Agreeableness ($\alpha = .88$). The factor loadings of the items ranged from 0.36 to 0.85.

Sociodemographic questions. Participants answered questions about gender, age, city and state of residence, color/race, position/function, approximate monthly family income, and financial situation in relation to the national average.

Procedures

The questionnaires underwent statistical verification of responses to the scales to identify outliers, that is, those with answers different from the majority or all of the responses (Ghosh & Vogt, 2012). Thus, the quantitative data were entered into the database using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 25, to perform descriptive, factorial, and inferential analyses.

All ethical aspects related to research involving human beings were respected, in accordance with Resolution No. 466 of December 12, 2012 (Brazil, 2012) of the National Health Council of the Ministry of Health. The research project approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Campina Grande covered the design of the two studies presented in this manuscript under the same number (protocol CAAE: 40928620.1.0000.5182).

The confidentiality and anonymity of the information provided by the interviewees were ensured through the use of the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF), presented to participants on the home page of the online questionnaire, where, upon continuing, they were informed that they accepted to participate in the research. On the home page presented to the participants, the

FICF contained all relevant information about the study, such as identification of the researchers, objectives, security of consent of voluntary and free participation, risks and benefits, establishing that at any time, the subject may withdraw from the research, without prejudice to his/her person.

Study 2

This study aimed to analyze the relationship between prejudice and discrimination against ethnic and minoritized groups, to determine whether this relationship is similar across groups, and to examine the mediating role of the restriction of the scope of justice in this relationship. To this end, the Support for Discriminatory Policies (SDP) (Lima-Nunes et al., 2013) measure was used, adapted for the target groups, to examine whether the intention to discriminate, driven by this support, would facilitate the expression of prejudice against ethnic and minoritized groups.

Participants

The sample consisted of 94 Brazilians aged from 18 to 64 ($M=29.33$; $SD=9.422$), the majority of whom were female (69.1%). Regarding the group they belonged to, 47 declared themselves White (50%), 38 were Mixed-race (40.4%), six were Black (6.4%) and three said they were Yellow (3.2%). The approximate family income ranges from BRL 800.00 to BRL 15,000.00 ($M=4479.98$; $SD=3349.845$). Residents from the five regions of Brazil were present, with the majority from the Northeast, specifically the state of Paraíba. The sample loss was six participants who were considered outliers or failed to respond to all study measures. Data collection was conducted via an online questionnaire on the Google Forms platform, using a non-probabilistic convenience sample.

Instruments

Prejudice. The same measure of blatant and subtle prejudice used in Study 1 (Meertens & Pettigrew, 1997; Vala et al., 2008) was used, adapted for Portuguese and for the ethnic and minoritized groups that were the focus of this study, containing 27 items. The question asked for the degree of agreement with statements such as “Most of the country’s leaders are very concerned about ethnic and minoritized groups (Blacks, Indigenous people, Gypsies, and Black immigrants) and not enough about Brazilians in general”. Thus, a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 7 (totally agree) was used. This measure was analyzed using the exploratory factor analysis method, with Varimax rotation, and was computed as a single factor ($\alpha = .94$).

Scope of Justice. A measure developed in Portugal (Lima-Nunes et al., 2013) was used, adapted for the target groups in this study, and contained 12 items. It asked participants to rate their level of agreement with statements such as “Whites, Blacks, Indigenous people, Gypsies, and Black immigrants form a single moral community in Brazil”. Thus, a 7-point Likert scale was used, ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree). This measure was analyzed

using an exploratory factor analysis with Varimax rotation, yielding two factors: “Perception of inequalities” ($\alpha = .42$) and “Restriction of the scope of justice” ($\alpha = .85$).

Support for Discriminatory Policies. A measure developed in Portugal to identify support for discriminatory policies against Brazilian immigrants (Lima-Nunes et al., 2013) was used. This measure was adapted for three of the four target groups of this study (Indigenous people, Gypsies, and Black immigrants), containing 5 items. An example of the item is “the SUS should charge fees to Indigenous people, Gypsies, and Black immigrants who do not pay taxes so that they can receive care in hospitals”. A 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree) was applied. This measure was analyzed using the exploratory factor analysis method, with Varimax rotation, and was computed as a single factor ($\alpha = .77$).

Procedures

The same procedure as in Study 1 was followed. Data were entered into the database using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 25, to perform descriptive, factorial, and inferential analyses. The study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Campina Grande (CAAE: 40928620.1.0000.5182), as reported in Study 1.

Results

Study 1

Initially, it was performed an exploratory factor analysis of the scales used, obtaining good results for the adaptations of scales and items developed in this study (see Instruments). Then, the Mediation Test was carried out using two multiple linear regression models (Muller et al., 2005; Pestana & Gageiro, 2005). Next, a Mediation Test, using the Enter method, was carried out between the Prejudice (blatant and subtle as one), the Different Application of Justice factor (scope of justice) and the Hostility factor (perception of discrimination), to verify the justifying role of the scope of justice in the relationship between racial prejudice and the perception that Whites behave in a hostile manner towards Blacks (Figure 1).

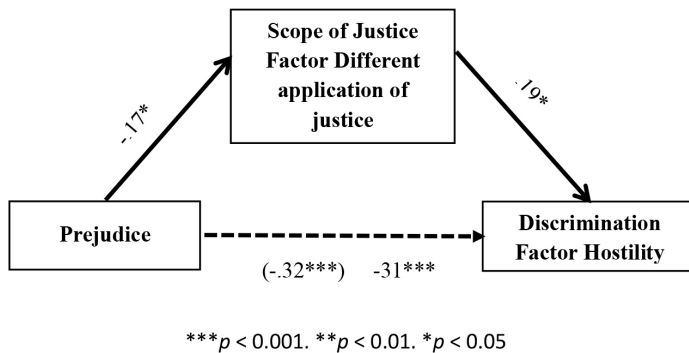
In step 1, prejudice (IV) and the perception of hostile discrimination (DV) were regressed, so that it was observed that this relationship was negative and significant; that is, the more the participants expressed prejudice, the lower the perception that Whites are hostile towards Blacks. In step 2, it was verified that prejudice (IV) was related to the factor different application of justice (DV). The relationship was negative and significant because the greater the prejudice, the less the participants perceived difference in the application of justice for Whites and Blacks.

During step 3, when regressing prejudice (IV), the different application of justice factor (IV) and the perception of hostile discrimination (DV), it was observed that the relationship between total prejudice and the perception of discrimination due to hostility remained negative and significant. However, when adding the scope of justice factor (different applications of the law to Whites and Blacks), the relationship weakened, suggesting partial mediation. Therefore,

the lower the perception of different application of justice, the lower the perception that Whites act in a discriminatory (hostile) way against Blacks, partially justifying the relationship between prejudice and the perception of discrimination due to hostility, that is, using the discourse of justice as a legitimizer of the exclusion processes against Blacks.

Figure 1

Influence of prejudice on the perception of discrimination, hostility factor, mediated by the scope of justice factor, different application of justice.



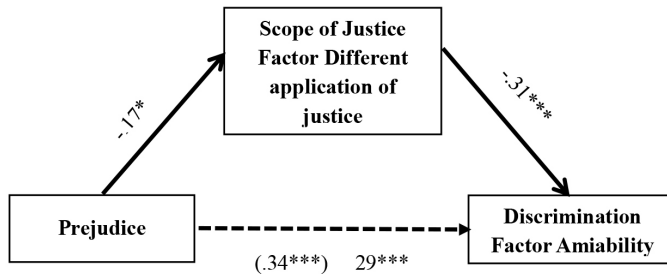
Another perspective in the analysis of the mediation results is the possibility of an anti-racist response. Thus, from the anti-racist perspective, the less prejudice participants expressed, the greater the perception that whites are hostile towards Blacks (step 1), and the less racial prejudice presented, the greater the perception of the difference in the application of justice for Whites and Blacks (step 2). Therefore, the more participants perceived the difference in the application of justice for whites and Blacks, the greater the perception that Whites use hostile attitudes to treat blacks (step 3).

Finally, another multiple linear regression model was performed to investigate whether the relationship between prejudice (IV) and the perception of discrimination factor amiability (DV) was mediated by the scope of justice (different application for Whites and Blacks) (IV) (see Figure 2). Results obtained in the first step showed that the more participants expressed racial prejudice, the greater the perception that Whites are amiable to Blacks, since there is no recognition that they are being racist.

Similarly, the second step indicated that the greater the racial prejudice, the lower the participants' perception of the difference in the application of justice for Whites and Blacks. And, finally, the third step indicated that the lower the perception of different application of justice (scope of justice), the greater the perception that Whites are kind to Blacks, which partially justifies the relationship between prejudice and the perception of discrimination in the amiability factor.

Figure 2

Influence of prejudice on the perception of discrimination, amiability factor, mediated by the scope of justice (the different application of justice factor).



*** $p < 0.001$. ** $p < 0.01$. * $p < 0.05$

From an anti-racist perspective, results of the mediation showed that the lower the racial prejudice presented by the participants, the lower the degree of agreement with the idea that White people interacted kindly with Black people (step 1), and the less prejudice they expressed, the greater the perception that justice is applied differently for White and Black people (step 2). Thus, the more they perceived that justice is applied differently, the less they believed in the argument that White people are amiable to Black people, that is, the less they believed Whites and Blacks are treated equally in Brazilian society (step 3).

It should be noted that the exploratory factor analysis of the scope of justice scale generated two specific factors. The scope of justice exclusion factor did not demonstrate reliability, as results showed an alpha value below .20; therefore, the analyses were performed only with the different application of justice factor. Therefore, the items were organized into this factor, indicating that the scope of justice was not used as a restriction strategy but rather reflected a perception of a different application of justice for whites and blacks. In order to analyze whether this form of application of the scope of justice is maintained for minority groups (Indigenous and Gypsies) and minoritized groups (Blacks and Black immigrants), Study 2 was planned.

Study 2

Initially, an exploratory factor analysis of the scales used was performed, obtaining good results for the adaptations of scales and items developed in this study (see Instruments). In the subsequent stage, the Correlation Test was performed to assess whether variables were correlated using Pearson's r , enabling inferential analysis (multiple linear regression).

The correlations between prejudice and support for discriminatory policies ($r = .61$; $p < .01$); prejudice and the restriction of the scope of justice factor ($r = .46$; $p < .01$); support for discriminatory policies and the perception of inequalities factor ($r = -.21$; $p < .05$); and support for discriminatory

policies and the restriction of the scope of justice factor ($r=.44$; $p<.01$) were significant. At the same time, the correlation between prejudice and the perception of inequality factor ($r=-.14$; n.s.) was not significant.

Table 1
Correlation between variables: prejudice, factors related to the scope of justice, and support for discriminatory policies.

	PREJ	SJ-I	SJ-R	SDP
Variables				
PREJ	–			
SJ-D	-.14*	–		
SJ-R	.46**	.11	–	
SDP	.61**	-.21*	.44**	–

Note: Correlation coefficients. PREJ = Prejudice; SDP = Support for Discriminatory Policies; SJ-D = Inequality Perception Factor; SJ-R = Restricted Scope of Justice Factor. ** $p < 0.01$. * $p < 0.05$.

From this, it became possible to analyze the specific objectives of this research by restricting the scope of the justice factor. Then, we proceeded to the Mediation Test through three multiple linear regression models (Muller et al., 2005; Pestana & Gageiro, 2005), to test whether the relationship between prejudice and support for discriminatory policies is mediated by the restriction of the scope of justice factor (see Table 2).

In step 1, prejudice (IV) and support for discriminatory policies (DV) were regressed; that is, it was verified whether prejudice positively and significantly affects support for discriminatory policies (SDP). As expected, results showed that prejudice is positively related to SDP, so that the greater the prejudice against ethnic and minoritized groups, the greater the support for discriminatory policies against these groups. The opposite was also true: the lower the prejudice, the lower the support for discriminatory policies.

In step 2, the SDP (DV) was regressed with the restriction of the scope of justice factor (IV), since it was necessary to analyze whether the restriction of the scope of justice factor influenced the SDP significantly for mediation to be proven. Results obtained revealed that the more the scope of justice is restricted for minoritized groups, the greater the support for discriminatory policies against these groups. At the same time, the opposite also occurs: the more the scope of justice is expanded to include minoritized groups, the lower the support for discriminatory policies against them.

Table 2

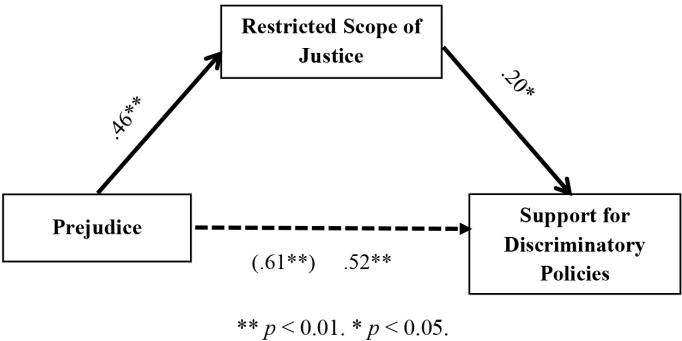
Estimated parameters according to regression models for analyzing the role of the Restricted Scope of Justice in the relationship between Prejudice and Support for Discriminatory Policies against ethnic and minoritized groups.

Predictors (IVs)	Variables (DVs)					
	Step 1: SDP		Step 2: SJ-R		Step 3: SDP	
	b	β	b	β	b	β
Constant	.19		1.61		-.10	
PREJ	.64	.61**	.53	.46**	.55	.52**
SJ-R					.18	.20*
Model information	R = .61 R ² _{Adjusted} = .37 F _(1,92) = 55.43 p < .001		R = .46 R ² _{Adjusted} = .20 F _(1,92) = 24.43 p < .001		R = .64 R ² _{Adjusted} = .39 F _(2,91) = 31.22 p < .001	

Note: b = Non-Standardized Coefficients; β = Standardized Coefficients; PREJ = Prejudice; SDP = Support for Discriminatory Policies; SJ-R = Restricted Scope of Justice Factor. ** p < .001; * p < .01.

Finally, in step 3, the prejudice variable is added to the scope of justice factor as an IV before the DV, to examine the role of prejudice in the relationship between the scope of justice factor and SDP. Results showed that prejudice positively and significantly influences support for discriminatory policies, and that the direct influence of prejudice (IV) on support for discriminatory policies (DV) decreased when the indirect influence of the restriction of the scope of justice (mediator) was taken into account.

Figure 3
Influence of prejudice on support for discriminatory policies mediated by restricting the scope of justice for minoritized groups.



Therefore, it was found that the relationship between prejudice and support for discriminatory policies was partially mediated by the restriction of the scope of justice for minoritized groups presented by Brazilians. Therefore, even if the direct relationship between prejudice and support for discriminatory policies is significant, it is weakened when the scope-restricting justice factor is added.

In this sense, the more prejudiced attitudes Brazilians present, the greater their support for discriminatory policies against ethnic and minoritized groups when they apply the restriction of the scope of justice, legitimizing differentiation through the perception of justice. The same happens with Brazilians who expand the scope of justice for ethnic and minoritized groups, discouraging support for discriminatory policies based on prejudice against these groups. These results corroborate previous studies on how discrimination is legitimized and perpetuated in Brazil (Camino et al., 2001; Pereira et al., 2003; Modesto et al., 2017; Lima Nunes & Camino, 2011; Lima-Nunes & Farias 2019).

Discussion

This research achieved its aims through two correlational studies, demonstrating the mediating role of the restricted scope of justice in the social exclusion in Brazil. Results of the studies indicate that a perception of flexible application of justice, different for the ingroup and the outgroup, can act as a legitimizer of the expression of prejudice against ethnic and minoritized groups in Brazil. Thus, the restriction of the scope of justice can be interpreted as a non-prejudicial justification of social exclusion, as well as a confirmation of how justice, whether in the legislative sphere or in social relations, is applied in Brazil.

Thus, results found in this work corroborate Lima-Nunes and Farias (2019) and Nariman et al. (2020) on the strategic use of the scope of justice in the legitimization of intergroup conflicts, and with results from Paiva and Pereira (2021) on the role of justice perceptions, such

as the scope of justice, and sexism in the Justified Discrimination Model (JDM), in the way university students socially support domestic violence.

However, there were some limitations regarding the measures used. The measures of perceived and intended discrimination differed across the two studies. In Study 1, we chose to use a measure of perceived discrimination, divided into two factors: hostility and amiability (Gondim et al., 2013). Results found for the hostility and amiability factors (perception of discrimination) could be interpreted from two different perspectives: racist and anti-racist. Despite using a different measure of intention to discriminate than in Study 2, the logic in the process of legitimizing racial discrimination was present as a mediator of the scope of justice, through the perception of different applications of justice for whites and blacks in Brazil. In Study 2, the measure of support for discriminatory policies against the target groups was chosen to better align with the studies by Lima-Nunes et al. (2013) which examined the legitimization of discrimination against Brazilian immigrants in Portugal.

The scope of the justice measure also changed during adaptation, with different numbers of items and factors in the two studies. Since this was the first time it was adapted from European to Brazilian Portuguese and for different target groups, this factor influenced how participants responded to the statements in the measure.

Final Considerations

In Brazil, prejudice persists as a veiled attitude when needed, which occurs due to the existence of justifying discourses that act as legitimizers of discrimination. Some of these discourses are based on perceptions of justice, such as the scope of justice. This study identified theoretical and practical implications, aiming to analyze this relationship, showing how prejudice persists in a society constantly updating itself to maintain and reproduce the exclusion and vulnerability experienced by these groups. Specifically, the practical implications of these studies reinforce the need to systematically understand how individuals reproduce discrimination against minoritized groups, which will facilitate the planning of interventions, as suggested by Lima (2024) and the Ministry of Racial Equity report (2025).

Although the studies did not aim to compare measures with different samples, it is expected that future studies will be conducted with the scope of justice measures, properly adapted and validated for the Brazilian context. Additionally, future studies should use the same model in their experimental designs to allow comparison. In view of this, it is understood that it is important to conduct future studies that investigate the legitimacy of discrimination by justice for each ethnic and/or minoritized group individually, rather than as a whole, in order to verify how the same measures respond to the groups differently.

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