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## THE REALITY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN OR ADOLESCENTS IN BRAZIL

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**Abstract:** This study aims to highlight violence against children and adolescents as a contemporary and palpable concern in Brazil, a topic of global relevance. In addition to a descriptive analysis of this category of domestic violence, the multilevel logistic model, also referred to as a hierarchical model, was used to predict the probability of occurrence of domestic violence against minors in different Brazilian states, as well as to identify patterns of types of violence that have been reported. It was revealed that a significant number of complaints are made by the aggressors themselves, as well as by the affected children or adolescents. It was possible to identify the ethnicities that most report this type of violence and the gender that suffers most from such acts. Furthermore, the prevalent types of domestic violence were categorized. These findings are fundamental for the formulation of strategic interventions and public policies aimed at the effective protection of young people.

**Keywords:** Domestic violence, Child, Adolescent, Brazil, Multilevel logistic model, Descriptive analysis.

## INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence manifests itself in different forms and affects different vulnerable groups, including children, adolescents, women and the elderly. This problem is not restricted to a single aggressor profile; Contrary to the common perception that men are typically the perpetrators, it is observed that women can also play the role of aggressors (Alves, 2005). This dynamic highlights the complexity of domestic relationships and the need for multidimensional approaches to understanding and effective intervention in this type of violence.

Domestic violence within the family is often veiled by the denial and silence of the victims, which represents a challenge

for the judicial system, which depends on being called to intervene, and for the health system, which contributes to the registration of cases (Peres, 2003). Violence is defined as the intentional use of physical force or power, actual or threatened, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that results in injury, psychological harm, deprivation, developmental disabilities, or death (“Mortality from violence against women before and during the COVID-19 pandemic”). The relevance of the topic is widely recognized and discussed in various media.

Violence against children and adolescents is not a recent phenomenon, but it was only since the 19th century that records of social concern about parental abuse and neglect have been observed (Heywood, 2004). In Brazil, the discussion on the topic gained prominence from the 1970s onwards, consolidating itself in the 1990s (Ferriani et al., 2001). The World Health Organization classifies child violence as a global public health problem, affecting a significant number of individuals annually and raising social concerns.

According to the Prevention and Infection and Health Magazine (Dos Anjos Almeida, L. A., Sousa, L. S., & de Sousa, K. A. A., 2017), there are four categories of child abuse perpetrated by caregivers: physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect. The impacts of this violence are multifaceted, including social, emotional, psychological and cognitive consequences that profoundly affect the individual's biopsychosocial development.

Therefore, the present study aims to investigate, through a multilevel approach, the impact of the pandemic on the increase in domestic violence against children and adolescents and analyze how the vaccination campaign influences the variation in the rates of these types of violence.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

To achieve the objectives proposed by the research, the database provided by the Brazilian Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights was used. The records analyzed correspond to the second half of 2020, a period marked by significant social changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data for the subsequent years 2021 and 2022, although available, were presented exclusively in graphic format, which restricted the possibility of export for detailed statistical analysis. A formal request for access to data in textual format was made through the Access to Information Law (protocol no. 00105.000675/2022-02); However, the request was not met favorably.

The initial database comprised 409,878 complaints registered through the Ministry's service channels, from August 1 to December 31, 2020. A rigorous data cleaning process was conducted, resulting in the exclusion of incorrect or incomplete records, leaving a total of 327,444 complaints valid for analysis. The distribution of these reports, classified by vulnerability group, is detailed in Table 1.

Analysis of the data presented in Table 1 reveals that 25% of registered complaints are categorized as violence against children or adolescents, a proportion remarkably close to that of domestic and family violence against women. This study focused specifically on discerning the factors that influence the incidence of violence against minors, adopting a multi-level logistical approach. In this model, violence against children or adolescents was coded as '1', while the other categories of violence were coded as '0'.

The multilevel logistic model, also known as the Hierarchical Linear Model (HLM) or Linear Mixed Model (LMM), allows the analysis of data that has a hierarchical or nested structure. Several statistical packages support LMM, including R, SAS, and SPSS, each with

its own methodological particularities (Brady T. West, Kathleen B. Welch, and Andrzej T. Gatecki, 2014). To illustrate in a didactic way, an MLM can be exemplified in the educational context, where students (1st level) are inserted in schools (2nd level), which in turn are located in neighborhoods (3rd level), which are part of regions administrative (4th level).

In this study, a level 2 multilevel logistical model was applied, where the second level corresponds to the states of Brazil (Karin Tamura, 2007). This approach allows us to investigate the influence of the state context on the prevalence of violence against minors.

Data collected by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in the second half of 2020 (08/01/2020 to 12/31/2020) indicate that violence against children and adolescents constitutes 25% of the total cases of domestic violence reported in Brazil. These findings suggest the need for increased attention from public authorities to this category of violence, given its significant representation.

class	amount	%
0	246920	75%
1	80524	25%
Total	327444	

Table 2 – Classification of the dependent variable for the logistic multilevel model

Source: survey data

In addition to the variables described in the previous table, Table 3 presents the explanatory variables used in this study. Explanatory variables, also known as independent variables, are those that are manipulated or observed to determine the effects on the dependent variable. In mathematical terms, the explanatory variable is commonly represented by X, while the response or dependent variable is represented by Y.

Vulnerable Group	Amount	%
01. OTHER VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	19166	6%
02. DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN	106465	33%
03. VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN OR ADOLESCENTS	80524	25%
04. VIOLENCE AGAINST ELDERLY PERSONS	97254	30%
05. VIOLENCE AGAINST SOCIALLY VULNERABLE PERSONS	4925	2%
06. VIOLENCE AGAINST PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES	11635	4%
07. VIOLENCE AGAINST A PERSON IN RESTRICTION OF FREEDOM	3291	1%
08. VIOLENCE AGAINST LGBT POPULATION	1600	0%
09. VIOLENCE AGAINST PEOPLE IN A STREET SITUATION	740	0%
10. VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS	1844	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>327444</b>	

Table 1 – Number of complaints according to each group  
Source: Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights (2022)

UF	n	0	n	1	n	Total
*(N/D)	399	(0.2%)	312	(0.4%)	711	(0.2%)
AC	476	(0.2%)	241	(0.3%)	717	(0.2%)
AL	3154	(1.3%)	1225	(1.5%)	4379	(1.3%)
AM	4499	(1.8%)	2112	(2.6%)	6611	(2.0%)
AP	721	(0.3%)	162	(0.2%)	883	(0.3%)
BA	12940	(5.2%)	3982	(4.9%)	16922	(5.2%)
CE	7778	(3.2%)	3068	(3.8%)	10846	(3.3%)
DF	5679	(2.3%)	1586	(2.0%)	7265	(2.2%)
ES	4955	(2.0%)	1564	(1.9%)	6519	(2.0%)
GO	8120	(3.3%)	2175	(2.7%)	10295	(3.1%)
MA	4561	(1.8%)	1780	(2.2%)	6341	(1.9%)
MG	29172	(11.8%)	10539	(13.1%)	39711	(12.1%)
MS	4815	(2.0%)	1317	(1.6%)	6132	(1.9%)
MT	2189	(0.9%)	696	(0.9%)	2885	(0.9%)
PA	5090	(2.1%)	1986	(2.5%)	7076	(2.2%)
PB	3601	(1.5%)	1285	(1.6%)	4886	(1.5%)
PE	7980	(3.2%)	2943	(3.7%)	10923	(3.3%)
PI	3598	(1.5%)	934	(1.2%)	4532	(1.4%)
PR	8620	(3.5%)	3091	(3.8%)	11711	(3.6%)
RJ	44808	(18.1%)	9774	(12.1%)	54582	(16.7%)
RN	4676	(1.9%)	1905	(2.4%)	6581	(2.0%)
RO	1275	(0.5%)	634	(0.8%)	1909	(0.6%)
RR	392	(0.2%)	191	(0.2%)	583	(0.2%)
RS	12539	(5.1%)	3011	(3.7%)	15550	(4.7%)
SC	7192	(2.9%)	2166	(2.7%)	9358	(2.9%)
SE	2207	(0.9%)	937	(1.2%)	3144	(1.0%)
SP	53916	(21.8%)	20637	(25.6%)	74553	(22.8%)
TO	1568	(0.6%)	271	(0.3%)	1839	(0.6%)

Table 4 - Reports of violence by state

Observations: 1 represents a report of violence against a child or adolescent; 0 represents other types of reports of violence; \*(N/A) means not disclosed

Source: work results

In the context of the present research, the independent variables listed in Table 3 were selected with the aim of determining their effects on the dependent variable, which in this case is the incidence of violence against children and adolescents. The analysis of these variables allows a more in-depth understanding of the factors that can influence the occurrence of such acts of violence.

Variable	Description
Month	Month of registration of the complaint (August/2020 to December/2020)
Whistleblower	Person who made contact
Gender	Victim's gender
Color	Color/race of victim
Weekend	Binary variable (1) weekend (0) weekday
Day	Categorical variable that represents the day of the report

Table 3 – Explanatory variables

Source: work data

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The subsequent descriptive tables were prepared using the explanatory variables selected for this study. By crossing these variables with the dependent variable, it was possible to identify the contribution of each factor in reports of violence against children and adolescents (coded as 1) in comparison with other types of violence (coded as 0).

Data analysis indicated that the states of São Paulo (SP), Minas Gerais (MG) and Rio de Janeiro (RJ) record the highest number of reports of violence against children and adolescents, together representing 50.80% of the total number of reports. in this category across the country. It is important to consider the population proportion of these states in relation to the rest of Brazil when interpreting these numbers.

However, when adjusting the complaints by the population of the states, a different panorama is observed. The states of Acre

(AC), Rondônia (RO) and Roraima (RR) have the highest proportional rates of domestic violence against children and adolescents.

For example, in São Paulo, with an estimated population of around 46 million inhabitants (IBGE, 2021), 74,553 complaints were registered, of which 20,637 were against children or adolescents. This corresponds to a rate of 0.16% of complaints in relation to the total population of the state, with 27.7% of these relating to violence against minors.

In contrast, in Acre, with a population of approximately 903 thousand inhabitants (IBGE, 2021), 717 complaints were made, 241 of which were related to domestic violence against children or adolescents, which represents 33.6% of the total complaints.

These data highlight a worrying reality: despite the large population difference, the proportion of reports of violence against children and adolescents is higher in states with smaller populations. This finding highlights the need for a more in-depth analysis of the factors that contribute to this disparity.

Although the state of São Paulo has the largest population in Brazil, it is notable that the state of Acre has a higher proportion of cases of violence against children or adolescents. This suggests that the population density of minors in Acre may be a significant variable in the high incidence of such cases of violence.

Additionally, it is observed that the majority of victims of violence are female. Although São Paulo has a larger female population than Acre, it does not lead in proportional terms of violence against minors. This phenomenon can be partially explained by a lower rate of reported occurrences or by socioeconomic factors, such as education level or per capita income. Socioeconomic factors are recognized as influencing patterns of violence and must be considered in analyzes of domestic violence.

The North region, where Acre is located,

is one of the neediest in the country. The economic discrepancy is evident when comparing the nominal monthly household income per capita: in São Paulo, the value is R\$1,836.00, while in Acre it is R\$888.00 (IBGE, 2021), indicating a greater difference to a thousand reais. This economic disparity may have implications for the prevalence of domestic violence.

The question of whether violence against children and adolescents is mostly perpetrated by men, especially considering the higher proportion of men in Acre and the high rate of violence against minors, requires more detailed investigation. The complexity of the topic requires an analysis that considers multiple variables, including, but not limited to, the aggressor's gender, socioeconomic conditions and access to support and educational services.

Data Type	São Paulo	Acre
<b>Gender</b>		
Masculine	48,70%	50,20%
<b>Brazil Ranking</b>	19°	7°
Feminine	51,30%	49,80%
<b>Brazil Ranking</b>	7°	21°
<b>Age Range</b>		
0 to 5 years old	7,90%	12,80%
<b>Brazil Ranking</b>	23°	2°
6 to 14 years old	13,60%	20,90%
<b>Brazil Ranking</b>	26°	1°

Table 5 – Difference in gender and age group between the states of SP and AC

Source: IBGE/2021

When we view the monthly data, we can see an exponential and significant increase between the month of August and the other four months, September, October, November, December.

A notable aspect of this study is that when a child or adolescent is the complainant, there is an 83% probability that they are the victim of the reported domestic violence. In contrast, reports made anonymously are

significantly less likely, with only 34% of them relating to domestic violence against minors, representing a 49% reduction compared to reports made by victims.

Furthermore, it was observed that in 56% of cases of domestic violence against children or adolescents, the aggressor himself is the one who reports it. This data may indicate the presence of remorse or subsequent concern about the victim's well-being or the consequences of the act.

On the other hand, the majority of anonymous reports (78.4%) refer to domestic violence against minors. When the complaint is made by the victim themselves, this proportion drops drastically to 6.2%. This discrepancy may reflect the level of threat, fear, or trauma experienced by the victim, influencing their willingness or ability to report the perpetrator.

The gender analysis of victims reveals that, within the set of complaints related to each gender, male victims represent a higher proportion of cases of domestic violence against children or adolescents, with 43% of complaints, compared to 19% for the female gender. However, in absolute terms, the number of reports involving female victims is higher, with a difference of 17,144 more incidents than those registered for males.

This pattern is intriguing: although the total volume of reports involving female victims is higher, the proportion of these reports in relation to the total number of reports for females is lower than that observed for males. This observation suggests that, while women are more frequently the target of reports of violence in general, men are proportionally more represented in reports of domestic violence against children or adolescents.

Another piece of information found was that most of these complaints were made by white people (33.3%), followed by brown people (30.8%). Only 7.8% of reported cases



Month	0		1		Total	
August	14991	(6.1%)	5911	(7.3%)	20902	(6.4%)
September	57272	(23.2%)	19776	(24.6%)	77048	(23.5%)
October	57948	(23.5%)	18696	(23.2%)	76644	(23.4%)
November	56029	(22.7%)	17381	(21.6%)	73410	(22.4%)
December	60680	(24.6%)	18760	(23.3%)	79440	(24.3%)

Table 6 - Complaints per month (2020)

Observations: 1 represents a report of violence against a child or adolescent; 0 represents other types of reports of violence.

Source: work results

Whistleblower	0		1		Total	
THE VICTIM HIMSELF	104998	(42.5%)	5011	(6.2%)	110009	(33.6%)
ANONYMOUS	121446	(49.2%)	63171	(78.4%)	184617	(56.4%)
CHILD/ADOLESCENT	141	(0.1%)	721	(0.9%)	862	(0.3%)
THE AGGRESSOR HIMSELF	168	(0.1%)	215	(0.3%)	383	(0.1%)
PERSON WITH MENTAL DISABILITIES	572	(0.2%)	18	(0.0%)	590	(0.2%)
PERSON IN PSYCHIC SUFFERING	1182	(0.5%)	20	(0.0%)	1202	(0.4%)
THIRD	18413	(7.5%)	11368	(14.1%)	29781	(9.1%)

Table 7 - Complaints by whistleblower

Observations: 1 represents a report of violence against a child or adolescent; 0 represents other types of reports of violence.

Source: work results

Victim's gender	0		1		Total	
FEMININE	205719	(83.3%)	48834	(60.6%)	254553	(77.7%)
MASCULINE	41201	(16.7%)	31690	(39.4%)	72891	(22.3%)

Table 8 - Complaints by victim's gender

Observations: 1 represents a report of violence against a child or adolescent; 0 represents other types of reports of violence.

Source: work results

Victim's race/color	0		1		Total	
*(N/D)	57265	(23.2%)	22156	(27.5%)	79421	(24.3%)
YELLOW	1291	(0.5%)	288	(0.4%)	1579	(0.5%)
WHITE	83430	(33.8%)	26793	(33.3%)	110223	(33.7%)
INDIGENOUS	639	(0.3%)	186	(0.2%)	825	(0.3%)
BROWN	77502	(31.4%)	24811	(30.8%)	102313	(31.2%)
BLACK	26793	(10.9%)	6290	(7.8%)	33083	(10.1%)

Table 9 - Reports by race/color of victim

Observations: 1 represents a report of violence against a child or adolescent; 0 represents other types of reports of violence; \*(N/A) means not disclosed.

Source: work results

occurred with black people. It is also clear from Table 8 that people of the black race make fewer complaints against violence than other races.

Most categories related to days were not statistically significant and were therefore removed. The results of the final model are presented below.

It can be seen from the results of the model presented in Table 9 that for each report made, there is a four times greater odds ratio of it being a report made by the child or adolescent who suffers the act. Obviously, this result was already expected, since the data in Table 6, previously analyzed, already demonstrated this trend.

Analyzing the data in Table 11, it can be seen that a large part of the model's confidence interval is between 2.50% (lower limit) and 97.50% (upper limit), meaning that the confidence level of this model has high probability of being contained between both ranges.

The multilevel logistic model applied in this study achieved an accuracy of 75%, which indicates considerable statistical significance given the variables and data used. The accuracy of a statistical model is a measure of how well the model's predictions match the actual observed values. In other words, it reflects the degree of agreement between the estimates generated by the model and the true values of the estimated parameters.

Accuracy is, therefore, an indicator of the quality and reliability of the estimates produced by the model (Monico et al., 2009).

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Accuracy : 0.7582  
 Sensitivity : 0.17759  
 Specificity : 0.94755  
 Pos Pred Value : 0.52477  
 Neg Pred Value : 0.77940  
 Balanced Accuracy : 0.56257  
 'Positive' Class : TRUE

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Table 13 - Model statistics

Source: original research results

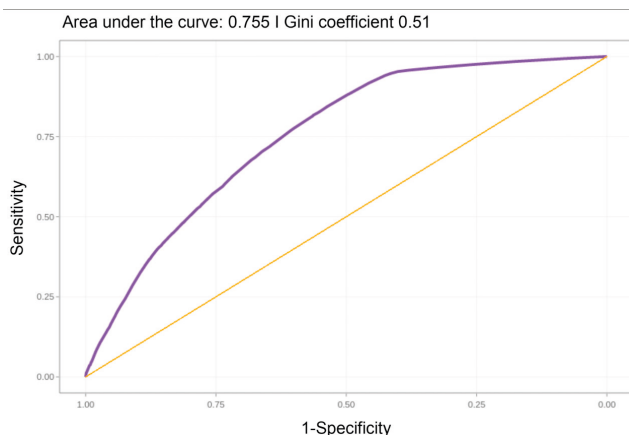


Figure 1 – ROC Curve

Source: original research results

The application of the multilevel logistic model revealed significant differences in the probability of violence against children or adolescents between the states of Acre and São Paulo. The model indicates a greater probability of new cases and an increasing trend in the incidence of violence against minors in the state of Acre. In contrast, the state of São Paulo presents a substantially lower probability of such occurrences, with a trend that points to a stabilization and possible decrease in these events over time.

UF	Intercept	UF	Intercept	UF	Intercept
*(N/D)	1,0387955	MA	0,018595	RJ	-0,176
AC	0,1889338	MG	-0,07675	RN	0,010128
AL	0,1953241	MS	-0,28221	RO	0,301382
AM	0,3334537	MT	-0,08087	RR	0,366687
AP	-0,170231	PA	0,093493	RS	-0,30847
BA	0,0122601	PB	-0,06561	SC	-0,16343
CE	-0,04275	PE	0,00988	SE	0,156673
DF	-0,176858	PI	-0,27631	SP	0,052746
ES	-0,079137	PR	0,006894	TO	-0,63581
GO	-0,250816				

Table 13 – Random intercepts of the model

Source: original research results

It can be seen, through Figure 3 below, that the state of São Paulo has a significant probability of stabilizing cases of violence



Conditional model:					
	Estimate	Standard Error	z value	Pr(> z )	
(Intercept)	-3,019896	0,06189	-48,79	< 2e-16	***
month of september	-0,058391	0,019098	-3,06	0,00223	**
Month of october	-0,133968	0,019166	-6,99	2,75E-12	***
Month of november	-0,172811	0,019303	-8,95	< 2e-16	***
mid-december	-0,236324	0,019101	-12,37	< 2e-16	***
ANONYMOUS whistleblower	2,22388	0,015547	143,04	< 2e-16	***
CHILD/ADOLESCENT whistleblower	4,572233	0,094256	48,51	< 2e-16	***
Whistleblower - the aggressor himself	3,331303	0,10527	31,65	< 2e-16	***
Whistleblower - person with mental disabilities	-0,719054	0,240679	-2,99	0,00281	**
Whistleblower - person in psychic suffering	-1,068824	0,226326	-4,72	2,33E-06	***
Whistleblower - third	2,405067	0,019101	125,91	< 2e-16	***
Gender_of_the_victim (male)	0,842683	0,009554	88,2	< 2e-16	***
Race,color_of_victim (indigenous)	-0,144319	0,089368	-1,61	0,10633	
Race, Color_of_the_victim (brown)	0,16462	0,01124	14,65	< 2e-16	***
Race,color_of_the_victim (black)	-0,193949	0,017032	-11,39	< 2e-16	***
Race, Victim_Color (yellow)	-0,180543	0,071472	-2,53	0,01153	*
Race,Color_of_victim*(N/A)	0,161707	0,011518	14,04	< 2e-16	***
weekend	-0,044776	0,010576	-4,23	2,30E-05	***

Table 10 – model results

Observations: Significance. codes: 0 '\*\*\*' 0.001 '\*\*' 0.01 '\*' 0.05 '.' 0.1 ' ' 1;\*(N/A) means not disclosed.

Source: work results

	2,50%	97,50%	Estimate
(Intercept)	-3,14119764	-2,89859386	-3,01989575
month of september	-0,09582238	-0,02096045	-0,05839141
Month of october	-0,17153316	-0,09640249	-0,13396782
Month of november	-0,21064367	-0,13497889	-0,17281128
Month of december	-0,27376156	-0,19888557	-0,23632356
ANONYMOUS whistleblower	2,1934073	2,25435185	2,22387957
Whistleblower - child/adolescent	4,38749521	4,75697125	4,57223323
Whistleblower - the own aggressor	3,12497801	3,53762826	3,33130313
Whistleblower - person with mental disabilities	-1,19077594	-0,24733265	-0,7190543
Whistleblower - person in psychic suffering	-1,51241515	-0,62523221	-1,06882368
Whistleblower	2,36762889	2,44250474	2,40506682
Gender_of_the_victim (male)	0,82395751	0,86140905	0,84268328
Race,color_of_victim (indigenous)	-0,31947707	0,03083839	-0,14431934
Race, Color_of_the_victim (brown)	0,1425892	0,18665067	0,16461993
Race,color_of_the_victim (black)	-0,2273318	-0,16056578	-0,19394879
Race, Victim_Color (yellow)	-0,32062568	-0,04046076	-0,18054322
Race,Color_of_victim*(N/A)	0,13913262	0,18428099	0,1617068
weekend	-0,06550485	-0,02404767	-0,04477626
UF,cond,Std,Dev,(Intercept)	0,2267748	0,39906541	0,30082882

Table 11 – model confidence intervals

Source: work results

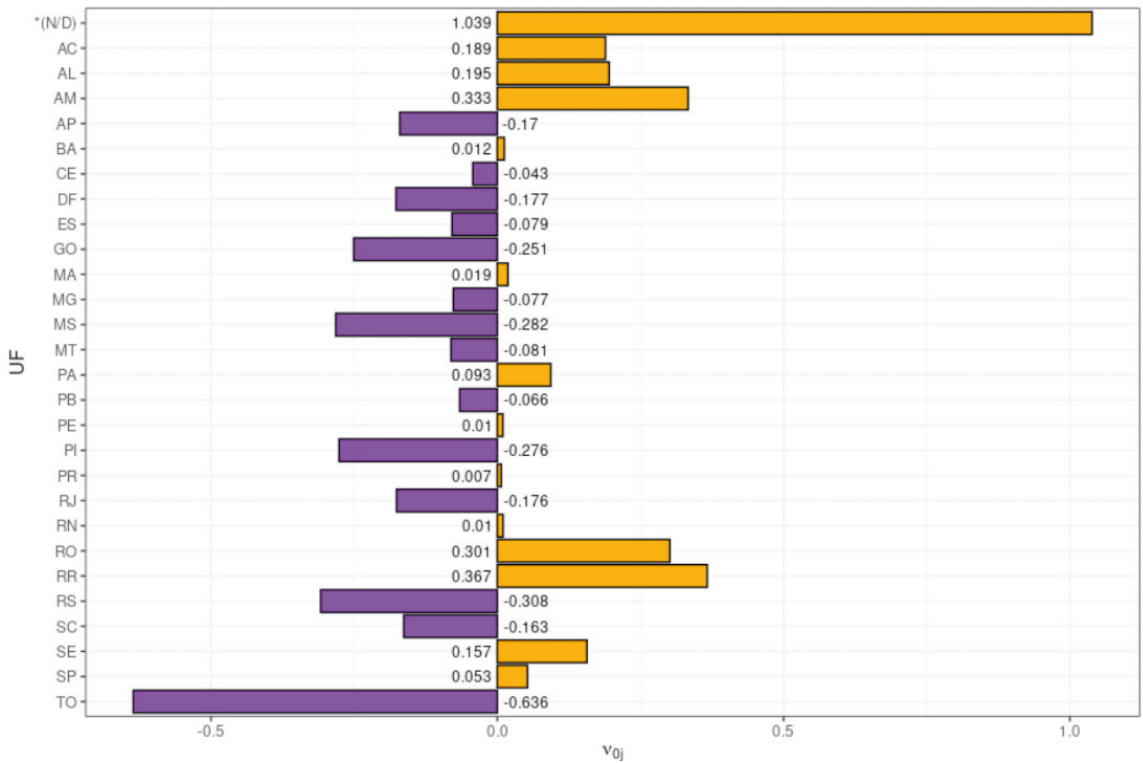


Figure 2- Intercepts presented graphically

Source: original research results

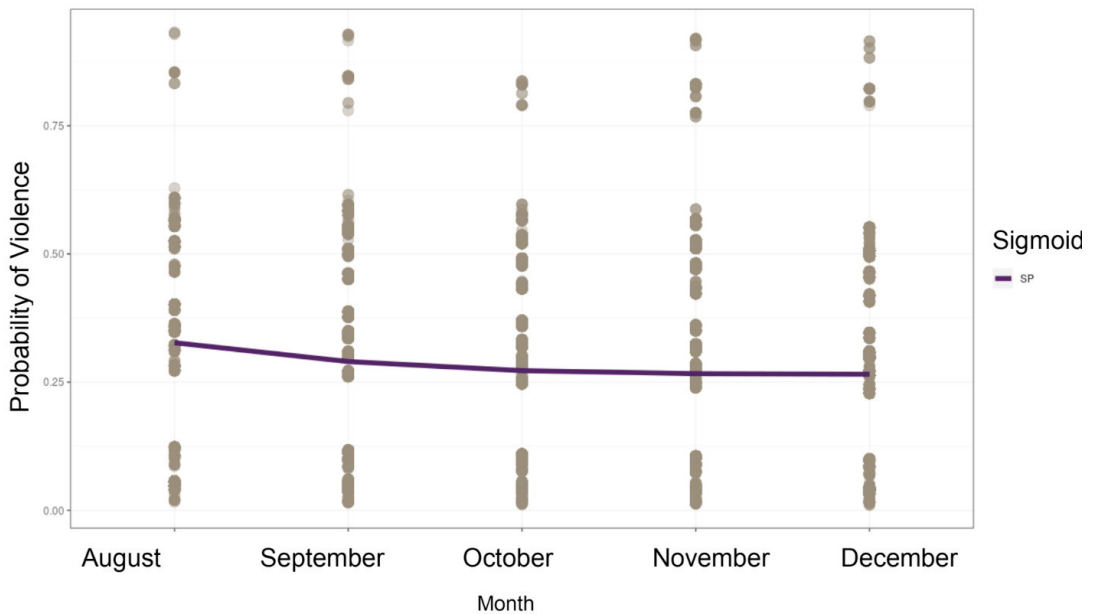


Figure 3 - Probability of violence - state of São Paulo

Source: original research results

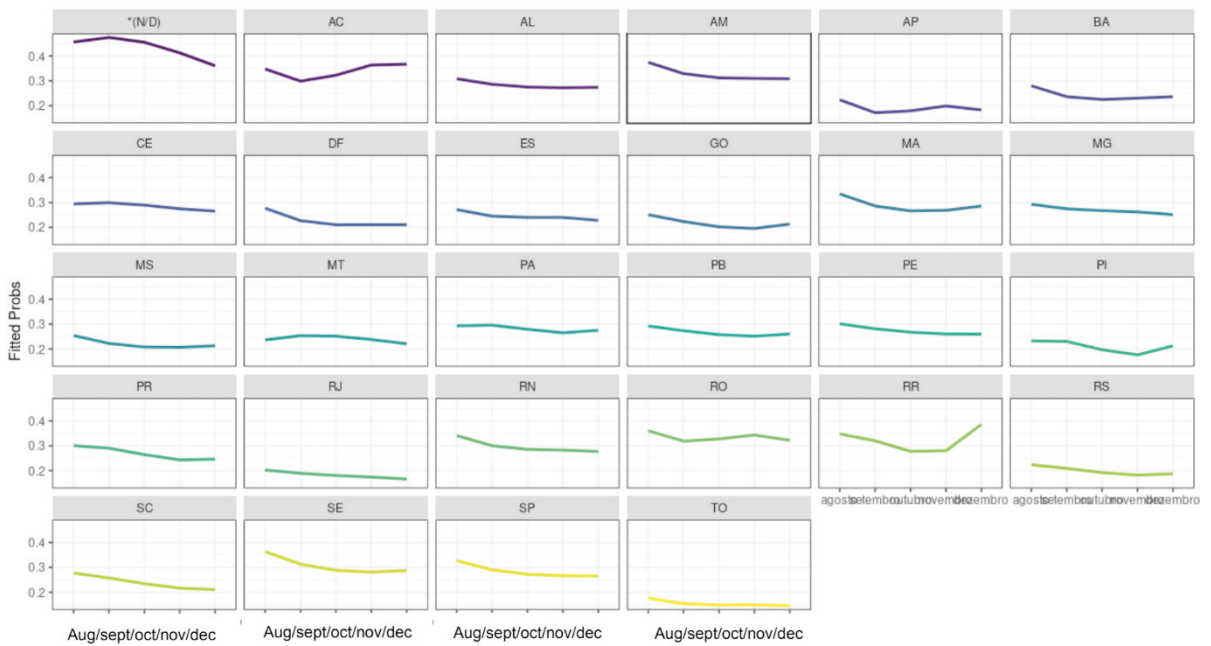


Figure 4 - Probabilities of all states  
Source: original research results

against children or adolescents.

As illustrated in Figure 4, trends in domestic violence against children or adolescents in all states included in this study were analyzed. The results of the multilevel logistic model indicate that the majority of states show a tendency towards stabilization or reduction in the incidence of these cases. This observation is statistically significant and suggests a positive direction in the fight against domestic violence against minors in most of the federative units analyzed.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that rates of violence against children and adolescents in Brazil remain at worrying levels. Predictive analysis conducted in the selected states revealed a trend of slight decrease followed by stabilization in some, while others demonstrated an increase in cases of violence against minors. The data suggests that, although there may be a reduction, cases are not completely eradicated, maintaining a persistent pattern of violence.

The state of São Paulo, for example, exhibits this trend of decline followed by stabilization over time.

Given these findings, it is imperative that the Public Administration, in all its spheres, intensify efforts to encourage victims to report such acts. Complaints are essential for public authorities to support more detailed studies with the aim of developing protection, education and intervention programs, in addition to identifying the underlying causes that contribute to the prevalence of violence in certain states.

The results of this study provide a solid foundation for governmental and non-governmental actions, private initiatives and public-private partnerships (PPPs). Furthermore, they serve as a warning to society about the seriousness of the situation of domestic violence against minors in the country. The dissemination of this information is crucial for mobilizing collective efforts aimed at mitigating and preventing violence against children and adolescents.

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