

YOUTH, PROTESTS AND COLLECTIVE ACTION:
AN PROTEST EVENT ANALYSIS IN BRAZIL

*JUVENTUDES, PROTESTOS E AÇÃO COLETIVA:
UMA ANÁLISE DOS EVENTOS DE
PROTESTOS RECENTES NO BRASIL*

*JUVENTUD, PROTESTAS Y ACCIÓN COLECTIVA:
UN ANÁLISIS DE EVENTOS DE
PROTESTA EN BRASIL*

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to contribute to studies on collective action, youth, and social movements, by analyzing the protests and mobilizations employed by youth organized in movements, organizations, and political parties, but also the actions carried out by youth not included in these groups. To do this, we used the Protest Event Analysis (PEA) methodology to understand the tactics used, the main demands of these protests, the organizations and movements present, and where these protests are most concentrated. We used a database built from media reports on youth demonstrations and protests between January 2022 and January 2024. We found that the southeast was the region with the highest number of youth protests, most of them involving education. We also highlight that the demands are related to specific policies, with the state as the main actor.

KEYWORDS: *Youth. Protests. Social movements. Collective action.*

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RESUMO: *O presente artigo visa contribuir com os estudos acerca da ação coletiva, juventudes e movimentos sociais, analisando os protestos e mobilizações empregadas pelas juventudes organizadas em movimentos, organizações, partidos políticos, mas também as ações realizadas pelas juventudes não inseridas nesses grupos. Para isso, utilizamos a metodologia de Análise de Evento de Protesto (AEP) a fim de compreendermos as táticas utilizadas, as principais demandas desses protestos, as organizações e movimentos presentes e onde esses protestos mais se concentram. Utilizamos um banco de dados construído a partir de notícias veiculadas na mídia sobre as manifestações e protestos das juventudes entre janeiro de 2022 e janeiro de 2024. Observamos que a região sudeste foi onde mais teve registros de protestos das juventudes, sendo, em sua maioria, protestos envolvendo o tema da educação. Destacamos ainda que as demandas se relacionam às políticas específicas, portanto, tendo o Estado como o principal ator reivindicado.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Juventude. Protestos. Movimentos sociais. Ação coletiva.*

RESUMEN: *Este artículo pretende contribuir a los estudios sobre acción colectiva, a los jóvenes y movimientos sociales, tomando como fuente de análisis las protestas y movilizaciones llevadas a cabo por jóvenes organizados en movimientos, organizaciones y partidos políticos, como también, las acciones realizadas por jóvenes que no forman parte de estos grupos. Para ello, utilizamos la metodología Análisis de Eventos de Protesta (PEA) para conocer las tácticas utilizadas, las principales reivindicaciones de estas protestas, las organizaciones y movimientos presentes y dónde se concentran más estas protestas. Utilizamos una base de datos construida a partir de informes de los medios de comunicación sobre manifestaciones y protestas juveniles entre enero de 2022 y enero de 2024. Observamos que el sudeste fue la región con mayor número de protestas juveniles, la mayoría de ellas relacionadas con la educación. También, destacamos que las reivindicaciones se refieren a políticas específicas, con el Estado como principal actor.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Juventud. Protestas. Movimientos Sociales. Acción colectiva.*

Introduction

In light of the social and political changes experienced by Brazilian society in recent years and considering the emergence of new issues in the political arena, youth have played a prominent role in protest mobilizations on various issues,

including environmental concerns, labor, education, human rights, and others. The various dimensions of political action taken by young people engaged in social movements and organizations constitute a vast field for analysis, providing insight into how youth have positioned themselves in relation to the most pressing issues in society.

In Brazil, youth as a social category gained significance during the repression of the military regime by leading mobilizations and resistance efforts against the dictatorship, which became nationally recognized. During this period, the student movement emerged as a primary unifier of these mobilizations, broadening its issues beyond education-related concerns. With the democratization process of the 1980s, youth continued mobilizing, and the 1990s saw a significant increase in young people participating in unions, associations, social movements, and other organized groups. Mische (1997) termed this phenomenon “multiple militancy,” defined as the simultaneous participation of young people from the student movement in more than one organization, forming personal and organizational networks that shaped the youth political culture in Brazil.

Simultaneously, the 2000s witnessed a visible presence of youth within the formal political institutions of the executive branch (national secretariats, ministries, councils, etc.) (Moura; Silva Júnior, Silva, 2021), while youth also took a leading role in social movements, driving collective actions primarily aimed at demanding specific public policies for young people. Whether through street protests, student occupations, or the integration of movements within the state apparatus, youth social movements have diversified their repertoires based on the social, political, and contextual transformations of recent years. This factor aligns with the concept of multipositioned militancy (Marques, 2023), understood as a reflexive approach by activists toward the functioning of institutions, through a relational perspective, that is, the ability of individuals to position themselves within institutional spaces based on structural and temporal contexts and conditions that afford them a certain degree of agency.

When discussing the idea of participation in Brazil, Gohn (2019) highlights how participation has materialized at different moments in the country and emphasizes youth activism during the June 2013 protests. These protests appear to have redefined youth participation in the country’s political landscape, further amplifying the visibility of youth issues while strengthening tactics of direct action and street protests. Additionally, the generational and territorial diffusion of social networks appears to be a driving force in new mobilizations (Gerbaudo, 2021), whether in rallying protests or in reorganizing tactical approaches, facilitating campaigns and protests beyond traditional street demonstrations.

The wave of protests led by youth in the early 2010s on a global scale relates to generational struggles for economic, social, and political autonomy (Honwana,

2014). According to Honwana (2014), the protests led by young people also reflect the political marginalization faced by this demographic, prompting youth to move beyond individual and isolated social and political acts of protest and instead focus efforts on collective protest actions.

In analyzing cycles of protest in Brazil, Tatagiba (2014, p. 39) states that the protests of June 2013, Diretas Já, and Fora Collor, predominantly comprised of young people, revealed “a new configuration between institutional and contentious politics, forged in turn in the wake of profound changes in patterns of interaction between social movements, the State, and political parties over the past 30 years.” In other words, for Tatagiba (2014), these protest movements in Brazil, and their forms, are linked to the political contexts that shaped the relationship between movements, the State, and political parties, even though they do not share the same historical events or formative processes.

Protests have become the dominant language of popular participation in the 21st century, and particularly over the past four years, there has been a notable rise in “massive protests.” This explosion of mass protests has been observed across various countries and has become the new norm in political participation (Alvarez, 2022). Despite the pandemic and social restrictions, protest activity remained vibrant in the political sphere, as evidenced by major protests against police violence that began in the United States and spread globally in 2020. Street protests (marches, rallies, demonstrations) not only persisted throughout the health crisis but have continued as the primary approach of social movements (Alvarez, 2022).

The aim of this article is to provide an overview of recent youth protests in Brazil, as well as to illustrate the tactics and strategies of these mobilizations, the key organizations and movements driving them, their principal demands and targets, and, secondarily, to observe the spatial dimensions of these protests. In an effort to contribute to the research agenda investigating collective action, protests, and youth in Brazil, we methodologically anchor our work in Protest Event Analysis (PEA), a quantitative methodology that systematically maps protest events within a spatial and temporal framework, taking into account political context changes that influence protest patterns. We introduce our developing database by analyzing two years of protests, totaling 121 events occurring between January 2022 and January 2024.

The article is divided into three sections, alongside this introduction and the final considerations. In the first section, we detail the research’s methodological approach; in the second, we introduce the theoretical framework concerning studies on protest and collective action; and in the third, we present our research findings in dialogue with the current literature.

Methodological Procedures

This article examines protests organized by Brazilian youth, whether within social movements or independently. To achieve this objective, we employ Protest Event Analysis (PEA) as our methodology. PEA enables researchers to systematically map protests in a given spatial-temporal frame, allowing for an understanding of the broader dynamics of collective actions. Developed within the Political Contention approach (McAdam; Tarrow; Tilly, 2009), PEA originated in the 1960s and has since evolved through four generations of studies, which have theoretically and empirically refined the method (Hutter, 2014).

According to Hutter (2014), PEA is a quantitative form of content analysis that converts words into numbers. It was conceived within the political process theory framework. PEA allows for the mapping of protest occurrences and characteristics, taking into account geographical aspects (from local to multinational levels), demands, movements, and temporal factors (Hutter, 2014).

In Brazil, a greater number of studies utilizing this methodology emerged in the 2000s (Silva; Araújo; Pereira, 2016). PEA (Protest Event Analysis) has gained traction in the field of social movement studies as it enables the creation of protest event catalogs based on variables relevant to the specific research employing it. For this methodology, a protest event is characterized by the participation of two or more individuals in disruptive actions, must have a specific demand or a target at whom the protest is directed, and is recorded from the moment it is called.

The database supporting this study was populated using news articles from newspaper and magazine websites collected through the Google Alerts tool, with the following keywords: *i) youth social movements; ii) youth protest; iii) youth mobilization*. This methodological choice, to capture news from a range of newspapers and sites rather than from a single newspaper, was motivated by the need to overcome one of the limitations of the methodology, namely, the selectivity and bias of sources from one or a few media outlets (Hutter, 2014).

By expanding the range of news sources to include a wide variety of portals and sites, including local newspapers, the research aims to address the issue of editorial and regional bias, also noted by Tatagiba and Galvão (2019), by capturing news published across various formats (mainstream media, regional/local newspapers, large traditional media outlets, amateur newspapers, etc.) and in multiple locations throughout the country.

The identified news articles are organized in the database using the following variables: *i) headline (news title), ii) date of action (covariates: year and month), iii) location (covariates: region, state, and municipality), iv) type of protest, v) theme, vi) claimants, vii) targets, viii) source, and ix) access link*. Currently, the database (still under construction) includes articles published from December 2021 onward.

These articles are related to actions undertaken by organized youth, whether in social movements or organizations, or in mobilizations without mention of specific movements.

In the “claimant” variable, the following social groups were identified: youth movement, student movement, Indigenous youth, rural youth, partisan youth, environmentalist youth, labor movement, Black movement, Quilombola youth, and Palestinian youth. Notably, some considerations should be made regarding the categories of actors involved in the protests (claimants): we understand “youth movement” to include organizations, movements, and collectives of young people with a pre-existing organizational structure around the protest event and containing general agendas, such as the *Levante Popular da Juventude*. Protest events without a reported organizing movement were categorized as “no movement presence” (NMP).

For the “type of protest” variable, the established categories were: march/demonstration, graffiti, roadblock, encampment, occupation, petition, verbal protest, fare-dodging, solidarity actions, visual protest, online campaign, public statement, vigil, and strike/work stoppage.

Only news articles in which youth played a central role—whether in the calling of the protest, its organization, or as claimants—were selected. Duplicate articles, articles from paid portals and sites, and those lacking detailed information on the protest event were excluded. For this article’s purposes, 121 protest events were recorded, covering the period from January 2022 to January 2024. It is noteworthy that this time frame also includes all five regions of the country in the territorial scope.

Collective Actions and Repertoires of Confrontation

We understand collective confrontational action as the result of ordinary people organizing collectively and, with their resources, challenging political institutions (Tarrow, 2009). By understanding conflict as the primary mediator of collective action, proponents of political confrontation theory (Mcadam; Tarrow; Tilly, 2009) consider political opportunity structures, changes in government, structural political processes, and the involvement of political parties as central to collective confrontational action.

The authors of this approach view the repertoire of collective action as one of the core elements for understanding the forms and dynamics of mobilization. The repertoire is a form of social learning built through memories, social relations, and meanings, but it also has a historical character, emerging as the political outcome and accumulation of the movement itself (Mcadam; Tarrow; Tilly, 2009). The repertoire, therefore, consists of a limited set of actions historically established in the political field.

According to this theory, political confrontation is “larger” than social movements because it directly involves the State. Generally, the main authors of political confrontation theory regard social movements as only one form of collective action, focusing their efforts on studying political confrontation as they believe it is the mode of collective action that could bring substantial changes to the political field through “contentious” actions that alter political systems or influence government/ State structures.

Drawing from the experience of the French Revolution, Charles Tilly (2006) seeks to create a historical synthesis of political confrontation, concentrating more on the causes of collective actions. In this regard, this theory emphasizes the causality of mobilizations, highlighting mechanisms and processes as the pillars of mobilizations. These mechanisms include: *a) mediators, which are external agents like political parties, unions, intellectuals, etc.; b) certification, which ensures the authenticity of mediation, as in scientific studies; c) diffusion, understood as the spread of agendas; and finally, d) coalitions, which are groupings of actors, whether institutional or non-institutional.*

Regarding processes, these involve the formation of agent actors, meaning the shift from an individual scale to a collective level. Social movements are comprised of actors challenging the political system, individuals who gather around a challenging perspective, as they are outsiders to the formal political system. According to Tatagiba (2014), the structuralist approach of this theory requires a detailed analysis that considers the relationship between the various actors within the field of contentious politics, situated in contexts imbued with opportunities and threats to collective action.

Teixeira (2018) analyzes two analytical lenses for studying social movements: collective action and social reproduction actions. Collective action can be understood as the ways in which movements act publicly to express their claims and achieve their goals. Examples of these forms of collective action include marches, rallies, strikes, institutional participation, and others. Social reproduction actions, on the other hand, are activities and actions that build the conditions for collective actions and for the very existence and consolidation of social movements in the political arena.

Within the field of collective action, Alvarez (2022) views protest not merely as a tactic or repertoire of social movements, as posited by political confrontation theory, and argues for a greater theoretical focus on protests, especially on the particularities surrounding them, such as practices and discourses.

Protest is, therefore, much more than a repertoire, more than a spontaneous response to crises or the opening of political opportunities. Protests enact power, disrupt processes, renew both politics and the political sphere, and, in the words of

feminist theorist Barbara Cruikshank, protest makes history—and not only history makes protest. For all these reasons, I believe that protest itself, not subsumed within the study of social movements, certainly deserves more analytical attention and theoretical elaboration than it has received thus far (Alvarez, 2022, p. 114, our translation).

Alvarez (2022) draws attention to the performances and emotions, particularly the sense of belonging, within social movements. For the author, the discursive field represents a linguistic dimension of performances. This discursive dimension is shaped by shared and contested discourses, which reveal the asymmetries and power relations present within movements. Alvarez (2014) also views the social movement as a process embedded in a diverse and heterogeneous intersectional field, marked primarily by a wide array of individual and collective actors.

People are not merely ideas; they are interests (Latour *et al.*, 2018). Thus, the author urges us to focus more on “how and what” movements do and less on the “why.” In this regard, Latour *et al.* (2018) view social movements as producing effects and associations that provide the rationale, or the means, for mobilization, thereby structuring people for struggle and positioning them within the political arena.

When discussing the tactics and repertoires of movements, Pereira and Silva (2020) argue that activists build their identities from both their life paths and the movement itself, as well as through the tactics they employ. Thus, we understand that tactics, laden with meanings, emotions, and subjectivities, constitute a central element in the tactical organization of movements and protests, while also attracting new supporters and retaining longstanding ones.

In analyzing the protest events of African youth, Honwana (2014, p. 406) advocates for social sciences to pay more attention to “the silences of young people’s daily struggles outside formal political channels.” In the Brazilian context, it is also essential to capture protests beyond the non-institutional factor, which deviates from established and familiar protest forms, such as marches and rallies. In our database, for example, we have categorized certain protests as “visual protests” and “verbal protests,” which did not adhere to widely disseminated tactics in mobilizations but nonetheless encompassed collective protest actions. Examining this diversity of tactics and types of protest is both essential and a significant challenge.

Studies on collective action in Brazil have aimed, through specific concepts, to analyze this process and its analytical developments. The term “activism” was not significantly present in the literature until recently and relates to action in support of a particular cause, replacing the previously common term “militancy.” “Militant engagement” can be understood as any form of sustained participation in collective

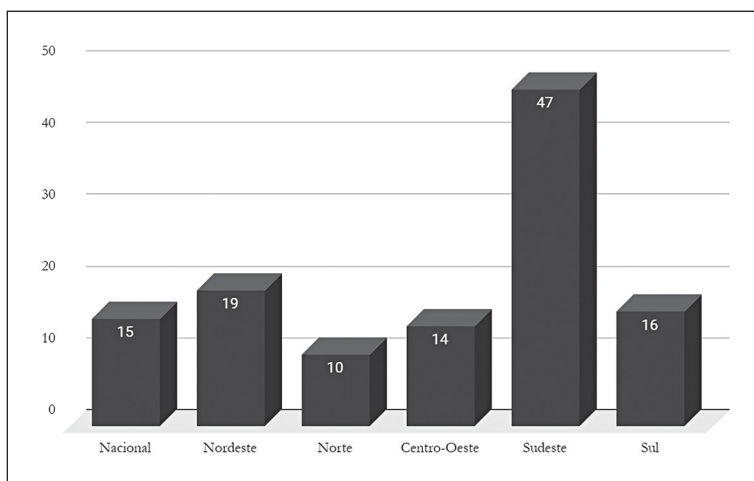
action for a cause. However, activism, militancy, and engagement represent the same phenomenon: participation in promoting a cause (Silva, 2022)¹.

Thus, youth militancy brings new issues to contemporary political debate and prompts fresh perspectives on the potential for innovations in repertoires and tactics, particularly by incorporating cultural and symbolic aspects into their performances. In the next section, we will present these mobilizations and their characteristics.

Recent Youth Protests in Brazil

In analyzing the protests from our database, we cataloged 121 protest events for the purposes of this article, spanning the period from January 2022 to January 2024. In 2022, 58 protests were recorded, followed by 59 in 2023, and 4 in the first month of 2024. These 121 events, when mapped spatially, reveal a predominance in the southeastern region, totaling 47 protests. Next is the northeastern region with 19 protests, followed by the southern region with 16, the central-west with 14, and finally, the northern region with 10 protests. Protests that took place in multiple cities and/or states were categorized as “national” protests, amounting to 15 events during this period.

Graph 1 – Number of Protests by Region²



Source: Compiled by the authors based on research data, 2024.

¹ Discussion held by Marcelo Kunrath Silva at the round table “Activism and protests today” at the 5th International Meeting on Participation, Democracy and Public Policies, held on April 24, 2022.

² Translation from left to right: National; Northeast; North; Midwest; Southeast; South.

In the southeastern region, the state of São Paulo held 24 protests, Minas Gerais 14, Rio de Janeiro 13, and Espírito Santo 4. One protest took place in *Poços de Caldas*, Minas Gerais, in February 2022, with the headline: “Protest against bus fare hike to take place this Tuesday” (Negrini, 2022), where the tactic used was a march/demonstration.

In the northeastern region, protests were held in 8 out of the 9 states, with Paraíba being the only exception. Bahia led with 6 protests, followed by Ceará with 4, Rio Grande do Norte with 3, Piauí with 2, and Alagoas, Maranhão, Pernambuco, and Sergipe with 1. One protest in the Northeast had the headline: “School students protest, claiming young people were victims of teacher harassment in Fortaleza” (G1, 2022). This protest took place in March 2022 in Fortaleza, Ceará, in the form of a march/demonstration.

The central-western region saw 7 protests in the Federal District, 4 in Mato Grosso do Sul, and 3 in Mato Grosso. The predominance of protests in the Federal District is due to its status as the federal capital, but the number of protests was not significantly higher than in other states in the region, such as Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul. In Cuiabá, Mato Grosso, there was an occupation protest in March 2023: “Students occupy gatehouse at UFMT demanding budget restoration” (Pistori; Rafael, 2023).

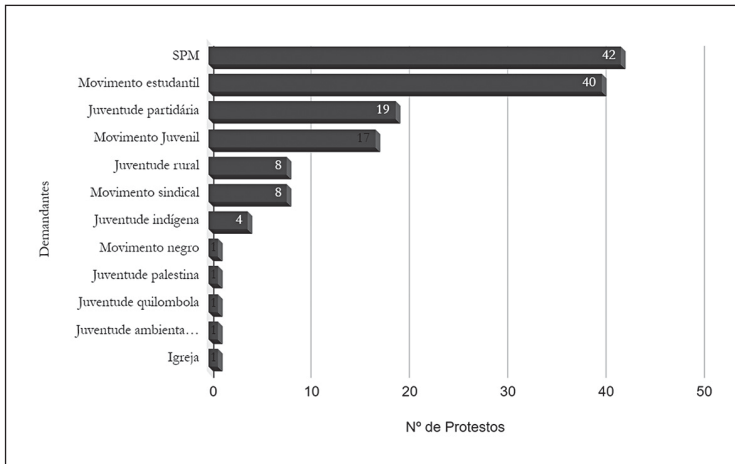
In the southern region, Paraná led with 7 protests, followed by Rio Grande do Sul with 6 and Santa Catarina with 4. One protest involved graffiti as a tactic, held in a public square in Jaraguá do Sul, Santa Catarina, in April 2022. Graffiti is a commonly used form of expression by young people to voice opposition to certain causes or to articulate their demands and grievances through art.

In the northern region, the distribution was as follows: Pará had 4 protests, Tocantins 2, and Amazonas 2. In Belém, Pará, students used road blockades as a protest tactic to address school infrastructure issues in May 2023: “Protest in Belém: public school students block a section of Almirante Barroso Avenue” (O Liberal, 2023). Blocking public roads is a widely used tactic by various social movements, as it enhances visibility before the public and authorities. In this context, youth movements also adopt this strategy to advance their demands.

Actors Involved

This subsection will analyze all actors involved in the protests: the claimants, the respondents, and the organizations/movements most active in the two years of cataloged protests.

Graph 2 – Number of Protests by Claimants³



Source: Compiled by the authors based on research data, 2024.

The chart reveals a new insight: the majority of protests during this period were categorized as SMP (Social Movement Protest). However, it is important to note that as we work with news sources, the absence of a social movement explicitly identified in the article does not necessarily mean that no mediating movement was involved. Nevertheless, the high number of protests in this category is noteworthy.

We also observed that many of these protests, without the involvement of social movements, took place in schools. For example, in the news piece titled “School students protest, claiming young people were victims of teacher harassment in Fortaleza” (G1, 2022), there was reportedly no presence of organized student movements—only the mobilization of the school’s students. Generally, these protests emerged from a specific demand or issue, such as cases of harassment in schools, localized infrastructure concerns, and specific local incidents, without necessarily leading to broader mobilizations.

Among the protests organized by youth organizations, the student movement was the largest mobilizer, with 40 protests convened by at least minimally organized groups prior to the protest, such as Central Student Directories (DCEs), academic centers, and student unions. Under “youth movement,” we classified the 14 protests primarily led by youth groups and organizations with broader agendas, such as the Popular Youth Uprising and *Fridays for Future Brasil*.

Collective action theory introduces the analytical challenge of considering activism that develops outside of associations/organizations yet remains connected

³ Translation from top to bottom: SPM; Student movement; Party youth; Youth movement; Rural youth; Trade union movement; Indigenous youth; Black movement; Palestinian youth; Quilomba youth; Environmental youth; Church.

to actors that form these movement networks. In this sense, it is also important to consider “spontaneous” protests, likely organized by individuals outside the traditional social movement, party, or organizational frameworks. In most cases of SMP protests, these were events driven by emerging, specific issues, as seen in the news titled “In protest, residents of Residential Dr. Humberto demand the regularization of school transportation for municipal students” (RedeGN, 2023). Here, the protest participants were young people demanding improvements in school transportation without intermediary organizations.

Youth movements can be seen as marked by a focus on education and/or age-specific public policies, yet are also involved in diverse social struggles such as territory, mobility, rural, and racial issues, supporting the notion of multi-positional activism (Marques, 2023). Thus, the networks youth movements have woven in recent years encompass other organizations: teacher unions, urban movements (e.g., the Homeless Workers’ Movement, Neighborhood Struggle Movement), and racial justice movements. This is evidenced in our database, where, on numerous occasions, the same protest was jointly organized by a youth movement and one of the aforementioned movements.

Offe (1996) sought to understand the objectives of mobilizations at the time, examining negotiations and forms of collective action—such as strikes and marches—while also introducing into the discussion the various spaces in which politics occurs, including non-institutional spaces like political parties and unions. Among the 19 “youth party” protests are those organized by collectives or movements affiliated with political parties, for example, the PT⁴ Youth and Juntos (affiliated with PSOL⁵).

In the table below, we list all organizations that participated in more than one protest. The substantial presence of a diversity of movements (youth, party-affiliated, student) with a left-leaning orientation is not new to youth protests, yet the notable absence of movements with a more right-leaning orientation, which has emerged and gained strength in recent years, is noteworthy.

Table 1 – Organizations and Movements Involved in Protests

Organization	No. of Protests	Type of movement
<i>Centro Acadêmico</i>	6	Student
<i>Diretório Central dos Estudantes</i>	13	Student
<i>Friday For Future Brasil</i>	2	Socio-environmental
<i>Grêmio Estudantil</i>	2	Student
<i>Juntos</i>	5	Partisan (PSOL)
<i>Levante Popular da Juventude</i>	9	Popular

⁴ Labour Party.

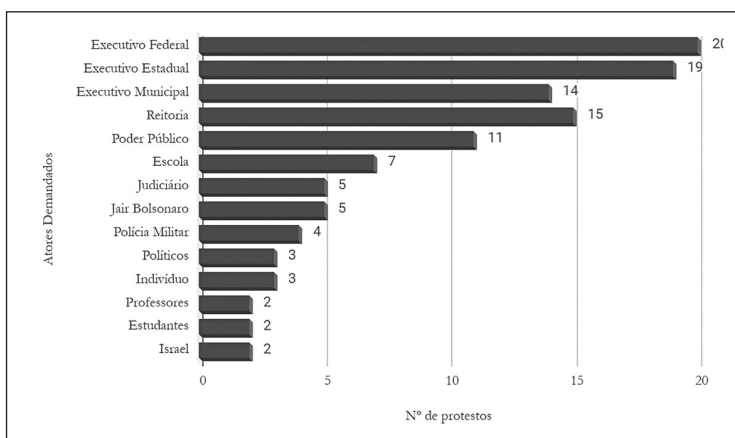
⁵ Socialism and Freedom Party.

Organization	No. of Protests	Type of movement
<i>Movimento Correnteza</i>	3	Partisan (PCR)
<i>Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra</i>	6	Rural
<i>Movimento Luta de Classes</i>	2	Trade union
<i>Movimento Tarifa Zero</i>	2	Urban mobility
<i>União Brasileira dos Estudantes Secundaristas</i>	4	Student
<i>União da Juventude Comunista</i>	5	Partisan (PCB)
<i>União da Juventude Rebelião</i>	7	Partisan (PCR)
<i>União da Juventude Socialista</i>	8	Partisan (PCdoB)
<i>União Nacional dos Estudantes</i>	2	Student
<i>Unidade Popular pelo Socialismo</i>	4	Partisan (UP)

Source: Data compiled by the authors, based on research findings, 2024.

The chart below illustrates the demand targets—those actors and institutions at whom the protests were directed, that appeared two or more times. Other targets were the focus of only a single protest. We distinguished “Jair Bolsonaro” from the “Federal Executive” category for the year 2022 in cases where the protest was explicitly directed at the former president. In the “public authorities” category, we grouped protests where it was not specified which government entity the demand addressed, as in the report titled “Brazilian Youth Call for Global Climate Strike.”

Graph 3 – Targeted Actors⁶



Source: Data compiled by the authors, based on research findings, 2024.

⁶ Translation from top to bottom: Federal executive; State executive; Municipal executive; Rector; Public power; School; Judiciary; Jair Bolsonaro; Military police; Politicians; Individuals; Teachers; Students; Israel.

It is observed that most protests were directed toward federal, state, and municipal executive administrations, including various state and municipal departments and ministries within these categories.

Main Demands

Collective action in social movements can be understood as a process of agenda-setting, mobilization, and repertoire development, characterized by tensions, heterogeneity, and disputes, as individuals' experiences are not the same. Analyzing how problems and demands gain strength in the political field and the role of movements in this process, Cefaï (2009) emphasizes the cultural dimension as a fundamental element of mobilization, viewing it as a set of factors that aid in the constitution of the movement and the consolidation of demands within the political arena. It is essential to consider movements as both processes and constructions of their demands; they are not merely reflections of problems, but parallel factors—meaning that the issues for which movements organize only exist, or only remain contested, because the movements exist.

Regarding the issues of youth protests, Honwana (2014) argues that young people are more united and organized around what they oppose than around the issues they aspire to. In this sense, young people face the challenge of creating or expanding participatory and social spaces that allow them to be part of political and governance construction. Following this logic, our study captured reports where protest actions occurred, but without a specific target (categories: public authorities, politicians, etc.), although with clearly defined agendas.

The table below highlights the main demands that motivated youth protests in recent periods. Other demands⁷ appeared in only one protest.

Table 2 – Themes of the Demands in the Protests

Theme	Number of Protests
Work and income	5
Education	32
Mobility	17
Political situation	11
Territory	7
Police violence	4
Youth mortality	11

⁷ Pesticides, bullying, corruption, culture, youth rights, oil exploration, drug decriminalization, denialism, and violence in schools.

Theme	Number of Protests
Sexual harassment	3
Racism	5
Climate change	3
Student assistance	20
LGBTphobia	2
Sports and leisure	3
Security	3
Elections	3
Democracy	6
Rural succession	2
Environment	2
Moral harassment	2
Agrarian reform	2

Source: Data compiled by the authors, based on research findings, 2024.

Scalon (2013) highlights that the catalyst for the protests that spread throughout Brazil in 2013 was the increase in urban and collective transportation fares. Urban mobility, which can be understood as the occupation of city spaces, represented the majority of the demands in 2013, relating to the holding of mega-events (Confederations Cup and FIFA World Cup) and their aftermaths. In our database, we categorized protests that had the occupation of the city, demands for public transportation, etc., as “mobility.”

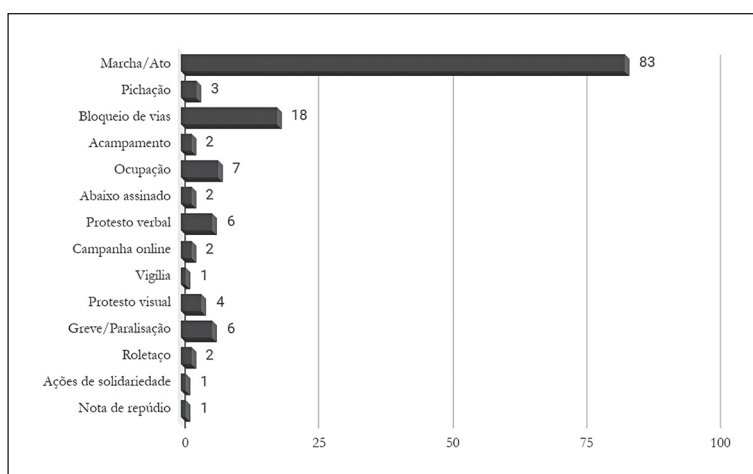
Despite the significant prominence of urban mobility in the protests of 2013 and 2014, we observe that this demand, although it had a substantial representation in the mobilizations, has lost ground to issues such as education and student assistance. Even more striking is the fact that the topic of “corruption,” one of the primary motivations for youth protests at the national level between 2013 and 2015, only appeared in one protest, where students denounced an internal corruption case at an educational institution.

The large number of protests related to education and student assistance (52) can be interpreted as a response to the dissatisfaction of students and education professionals regarding the dismantling policies, particularly in public universities, during the Bolsonaro administration. Beyond the protests in 2022, the repercussions of these dismantling efforts resonated in a significant number of protests early in 2023. Protests against federal cuts in education were recorded across all regions of the country.

Tactics Employed

Here, we understand tactics as the types of protests. Confrontation repertoires represent a limited set of tactics historically used, mobilized in clashes influenced by political contexts and situations (Tilly, 2006). In alignment with the previously presented idea by Pereira and Silva (2020) regarding the importance of tactics in the study of protests and social movements, this subsection will analyze the means employed to implement the captured protests. In the graph below, we present the quantitative data for each tactic/type of protest.

Graph 4 – Types of Protest⁸



Source: Own elaboration based on research data, 2024.

The predominance of the category “march/action” is not new; large marches have a long history in the protest scene both in Brazil and worldwide, and they were reinforced as a tactic in youth protests starting in June 2013. We grouped within this same category: parades, walks, stationary actions, and protests that combined both elements: starting with a march and concluding with stationary actions. The blockades of roads also had a significant presence in the protests.

It is evident that contemporary protests have opted to maintain traditional tactics by employing the already familiar marches, actions, and road blockades as primary forms of protest. However, new forms of protest, or non-traditional forms, have emerged, albeit to a lesser extent, corroborating the idea of repertoire modulation (Tarrow, 2009).

⁸ Translation from top to bottom: March/Act; Graffiti; Roadblock; Encampment; Occupation; Undersigned; Verbal protest; Online campaign; Vigil; Visual protest; Strike/Paralysis; Roulette; Solidarity actions; Note of repudiation.

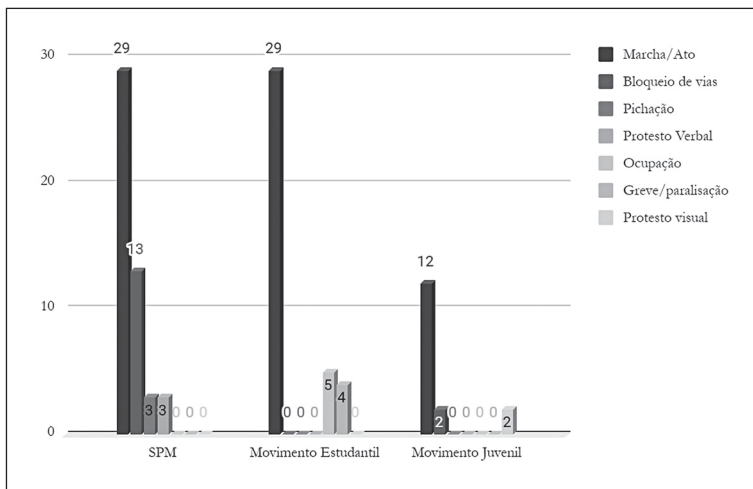
Alvarez (2022) states that protest performances have recently extended to social networks, intertwining online and offline spaces in a new reordering of the (virtual) mobilization of protests and their continuation online, reverberating the agendas and prolonging mobilizations. One noteworthy factor is the fundamental role of digital tools (internet, social networks, etc.) in the cataloged protests. Beyond certain types of online protests, we captured (petitions, online campaigns, dissemination of protest notes, etc.), the online aspect played a significant role in offline protests at three stages: at the beginning, through calls via social networks; during the protests, through the recording of photos, videos, organizational matters, and live broadcasts; and finally, in the dissemination and promotion of the protest/agenda. According to Simões and Campos (2016), the use of digital media has been essential for publicizing demands, organizing protests, and contributing to the emergence of new informal practices of political action.

In this sense, the virtual has the capacity to expand the public space by enabling a realm that transcends formal institutions and creates relationships and networks by disseminating information and constructing identifications (Reguillo, 2017). Regarding protests, the communicative strategies employed on social networks have a very high circulation rate and help publicize and stimulate protests, for instance, through the circulation of images (Reguillo, 2017).

When analyzing the role of digital media in youth protest cycles in Portugal and how movements and activists utilize social networks, Simões and Campos (2016) argue that the protest space must be considered a hybrid space, with the internet and the streets acting in an interconnected manner; thus, it becomes impossible to conceptualize current forms of mobilization without highlighting the use of digital tools. Optimistic perspectives tend to view the use of networks as a potential enhancer of democracy and an emancipator of youth action, while critical perspectives question whether internet use generates more participation (Simões; Campos, 2016). However, for these authors, this polarization overlooks the fact that digital technologies serve both roles, sometimes creating channels and alternative spaces for participation and, at other times, producing derogatory discourses regarding protests and collective action.

In the following graph, we cross-reference data related to the demanders and the main types of protest:

Graph 5 – Main Demanders and Types of Protest⁹



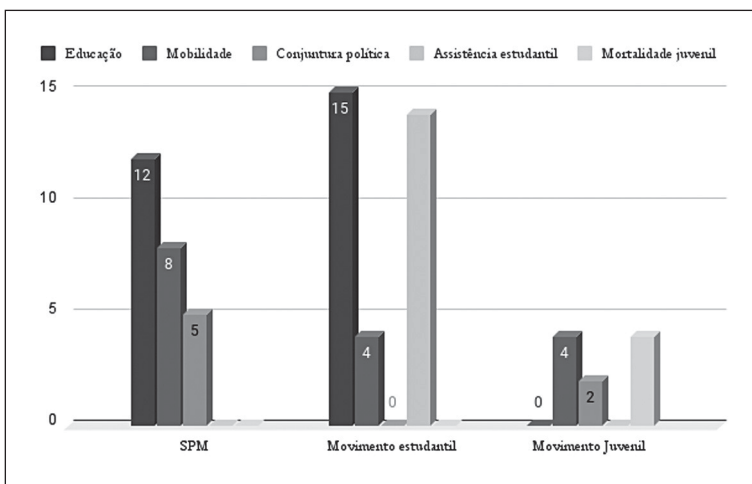
Source: Own elaboration based on research data, 2024.

Among the three groups that conducted the most protests, the march/action was the most frequently employed type of protest. However, other notable tactics emerged: the SPM protests included road blockades significantly more than any other group; this type of protest is commonly employed by mobilizations of residents and family members, meaning other groups that also lack organized movement representation. Within the student movement, the tactic of occupation appears in some protests. Due to the organized nature of these movements, their experience allows them to employ other types of protest beyond marches and actions, which require a certain level of organization, such as the occupation of university rectories, which minimally necessitate considerations of structure and logistics.

In the context of student assistance, the tactic known as “*roletaço*”, related to issues of food availability in university cafeterias, was more prevalent than the more traditional road blockades. In the following graph, we cross-reference data regarding the main demanders and the themes they protest most frequently.

⁹ Translation from top to bottom: March/Act; Roadblock; Graffiti; Verbal protest; Occupation; Strike/Paralysis; Verbal protest; Visual protest.

Graph 6 – Main Demanders by Themes¹⁰



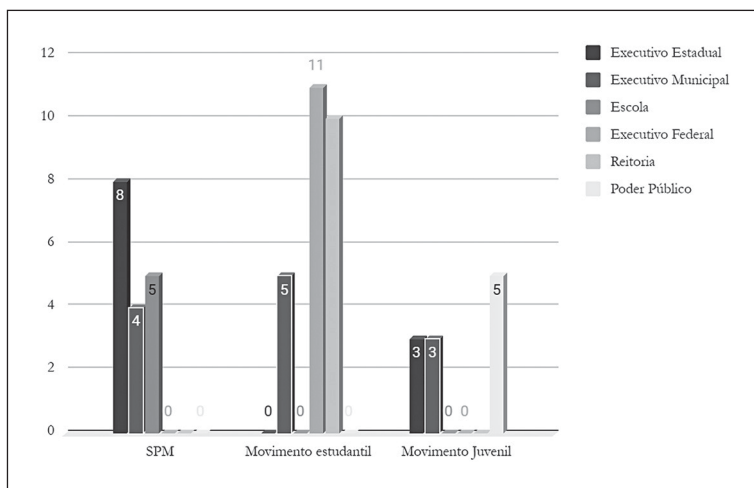
Source: Own elaboration based on the research database, 2024.

Protests related to education represent the vast majority, both among young people organized in movements, such as the student movement, and among those who are not part of any organizations. In turn, the youth movement has focused on demanding issues such as mobility, through movements like *Movimento Passe Livre and Levante Popular da Juventude*, as well as protesting against youth mortality and police violence.

Regarding the targets of these three groups' protests, the graph below shows that the SPM has directed their demands mainly to the state executive, with emphasis on state education departments, as well as municipal executives and schools (coordinators, principals, and teachers). The student movement, in turn, has predominantly protested against the federal executive, followed by university rectories and schools. Broader youth movements direct their mobilizations to the public authorities in general, particularly state and municipal governments.

¹⁰ Translation from left to right: Education; Mobility; Political climate; Student assistance; Youth mortality.

Graph 7 – Main Demanders and Main Targets¹¹



Source: Own elaboration based on the research database, 2024.

In this section, we aim to present, in general, the first data obtained from our database, illustrating how young people, both within and outside movements, are employing their protests as we capture their demands, the targets of these demands, the actors involved, the tactics employed, and the spatial aspects of the mobilizations.

Final considerations

This study aimed to provide an overview of recent youth protests in Brazil, illustrating the tactics and strategies of these mobilizations, the key organizations, and movements that have driven them, the main demands and targets, as well as observing, secondarily, the spatiality of these protests. In this sense, the initial overview we presented of the protests, along with their tactics, actors, and demands, reveals the heterogeneity of the claims that arise from the mobilization of youth. The multiple actors involved (diverse types of movements, demanders, and targets) demonstrate that youth have expanded not only their networks of cooperation but also the types of social struggles they employ in the political field, considering the diversity of demands and themes present in the protests.

We observe that education and student assistance are central and prominent in recent mobilizations, a result of government agendas that instituted a systematic dismantling of student assistance policies and education investments in recent years,

¹¹ Translation from left to right: State executive; Municipal executive; School; Federal executive; Rectory; Public authority.

under the administrations of Michel Temer and Jair Bolsonaro. On the other hand, the issue of corruption, which was heavily emphasized in mobilizations in Brazil and other Latin American countries between 2013 and 2015, has disappeared from the agenda in more recent protests. Therefore, it is essential to continue analyzing the mobilizations surrounding these issues, considering the changes in the Brazilian political context and their impact on the maintenance, increase, or decrease of these claims.

It became evident that young people were mobilizing, expanding the scope of their demands while maintaining traditional protest tactics, such as acts and marches. However, at the same time, they are also introducing new elements and strategies into their protests, reshaping and re-signifying old forms of protest.

One of the analytical gains of the research was highlighting the significant number of protests carried out by young people without organizational affiliation, or without movements identified in the news reports, whether they are new or traditional. This contributes to the discussion of new questions regarding the political dimension of youth culture in Brazil. It is well known that major protests in Brazil's history have mobilized non-activist youth around issues of political-institutional context, but in smaller and more sectorial protests, can the finding here represent a trend for future periods? What are the impacts of social media on this surge of mobilization among non-activist youth?

We highlight several points that warrant future investigation: the first is to consider the conjunctural factor in youth protests, that is, working with the idea that young people gather and mobilize more for what they dislike or disagree with than for what excites them. Another point is the need to focus on how the youth from the political right are protesting during this period and how newspapers and news websites label these groups. A third point is to think about the hybridity of protests, rather than analyzing them solely as in-person or online, understanding that the digital component is increasingly intrinsic to mobilizations, at least in some of their stages (call-outs, organization, realization, and publicization). A fourth and final point is to consider and understand how we deal with hermeneutics: what we, as researchers, choose to investigate, what newspapers decide to publish, and who is this social and political actor labeled as "youth."

As a possibility for future investigations, the methodology employed allows for expanding the analysis by considering the geographical distribution of protests, the emergence of new demands and involved actors, and, in the long term, incorporating the temporal factor into the cross-referencing of obtained data. Our study, therefore, aimed to contribute to the research agenda surrounding collective action among youth as a social category and the analysis of protest events. Continuing the analysis of youth mobilizations outside of movements and political parties presents a future challenge for research.

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