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SPATIO-TEMPORAL DISTRIBUTION OF MORTALITY AMONG MOTORCYCLISTS: AN ECOLOGICAL STUDY

*Distribuição espaço-temporal da mortalidade entre motociclistas: um estudo ecológico**Distribución espacio-temporal de la mortalidad de motociclistas: un estudio ecológico*Ilan de Araujo Carneiro¹ Andreza Moita Morais² Thalis Kennedy Azevedo de Araujo³ Adriano Flávio Santos Gonçalves Filho⁴ 

ABSTRACT

Objective: to analyze the spatial and temporal distribution of mortality from motorcycle accidents in Piauí from 2011 to 2021.**Method:** this is an ecological study in which deaths from motorcycle accidents in the state of Piauí were analyzed. Temporal regression analysis was carried out using Joinpoint software and spatial analysis using the QGI program. **Results:** 7,250 deaths from motorcycle accidents were recorded in Piauí during the study period. The average mortality rate was 23.81 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants. Spatial analysis showed high mortality rates in the Meio Norte health macro-region. **Conclusion:** although there is a downward trend in mortality rates in the state of Piauí, it is still a cause for concern, as it affects the young and economically active population. This study provides evidence that contributes to the implementation and reformulation of public health policies for traffic monitoring, enforcement and education.**DESCRIPTORS:** Accidents; Traffic; Epidemiology; Time series studies.^{1,3,4} State University of Piauí, Piauí, Parnaíba, Brazil² Federal University of Ceará, Ceará, Tianguá, Brazil

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RESUMO

Objetivo: analisar a distribuição espacial e temporal da mortalidade por acidentes motociclísticos no Piauí de 2011 a 2021. **Método:** trata-se de um estudo ecológico, em que foram analisados os óbitos por acidentes motociclísticos ocorridos no estado do Piauí. A análise de regressão temporal foi realizada por meio do software *Joinpoint* e a análise espacial utilizou-se o programa *QGIS*. **Resultados:** no período estudado foram registrados 7.250 óbitos por acidentes motociclísticos no Piauí. A taxa de mortalidade média foi de 23,81 óbitos por 100 mil habitantes. A análise espacial mostrou elevadas taxas de mortalidade na macrorregião de saúde do Meio Norte. **Conclusão:** embora haja uma tendência de queda nas taxas de mortalidade no estado piauiense, ainda é um agravo preocupante, pois atinge a população jovem e economicamente ativa. Este estudo fornece evidências que contribuem para implementação e reformulação de políticas públicas de saúde de monitorização, fiscalização e educação no trânsito.

DESCRIPTORES: Acidentes de trânsito; Epidemiologia; Estudos de séries temporais.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: analizar la distribución espacial y temporal de la mortalidad por accidentes de motocicleta en Piauí de 2011 a 2021. **Método:** trata de un estudio ecológico en el que se analizaron las muertes por accidentes de motocicleta en el estado de Piauí. Se realizó un análisis de regresión temporal con el programa *Joinpoint* y un análisis espacial con el programa *QGIS*. **Resultados:** registraron 7.250 muertes por accidentes de motocicleta en Piauí durante el período de estudio. La tasa media de mortalidad fue de 23,81 muertes por 100.000 habitantes. El análisis espacial mostró altas tasas de mortalidad en la macrorregión sanitaria Meio Norte. **Conclusión:** aunque haya una tendencia a la disminución de las tasas de mortalidad en el estado de Piauí, sigue siendo un problema preocupante, ya que afecta a la población joven y económicamente activa. Este estudio aporta evidencias que contribuyen a la implementación y reformulación de políticas de salud pública para la vigilancia, fiscalización y educación sobre el tránsito.

DESCRIPTORES: Accidentes de tránsito; Epidemiología; Estudios de series temporales.

INTRODUCTION

The incidence and mortality from traffic accidents has increased significantly in recent years across the globe. The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified Brazil as the country with the third highest number of deaths from traffic accidents, surpassed only by India and China.¹ It is estimated that 145,920 individuals were hospitalized in the country as a result of these accidents, with an estimated cost of approximately 187 million reais to the public coffers, financed through the Unified Health System (SUS).²

As reported by WHO, road traffic accidents were responsible for over 1.9 million deaths and injuries to between 20 and 50 million individuals in 2021 alone.¹ Notably, there has been an increasing emphasis on motorcycle accidents. The challenge of urban mobility and the limited availability of mass transportation in the country, coupled with the low acquisition and maintenance costs associated with motorcycles, has contributed to a notable rise in their use for Brazilians' daily activities.³

A motorcycle is a vehicle that provides a lower level of safety than a car, due to the absence of the structural and protective devices that are present in cars. This results in an increased risk of fatal injuries for motorcycle occupants. Additionally, high speed, alcohol consumption, inattention, fatigue and drowsiness are

identified as significant factors contributing to the rise in accidents and the severity of injuries sustained in such incidents.⁴⁻⁵

The consequence of this situation is an increase in the number of deaths from motorcycle accidents in Brazil and Piauí. Therefore, in order to gain a more detailed understanding of this problem, it is first necessary to describe how it occurs and to characterise the population at risk. It is of fundamental importance to obtain as much information as possible in order to systematically gather data on the extent, characteristics and consequences of this problem for the country's public health.⁵⁻⁶

Moreover, data released by the Ministry of Health indicate that the state of Piauí has the highest mortality and hospitalization rates in the country due to motorcycle accidents. In 2021, the state exhibited a mortality rate of 17.6 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants and a hospitalization rate of 17.4 inpatients per 10,000 inhabitants. This figure is approximately four times higher than the average rate in Brazil.⁷ Consequently, this study is justified by the growing incidence of deaths in Piauí, as well as the dearth of research analysing the spatial and temporal occurrence of mortality in motorcycle accidents.

In this context, geoprocessing techniques, which facilitate the identification, visualisation and spatial organisation of territories, can be employed to map mortality rates and assess the risk factors associated with motorcycle accidents. This

enables the planning of intervention and prevention actions.⁸ The results will provide insight into the spatio-temporal distribution of mortality among motorcyclists and inform the development of effective strategies and interventions to prevent and reduce mortality.

METHOD

This is an epidemiological and ecological study focused on the Brazilian state of Piauí. With a population of approximately 3.2 million, Piauí is the eighth most populous state in the northeast region of the country. It covers an area of approximately 251,577 km², comprising four distinct health macro-regions: Litoral, Meio Norte, Semiárido and Cerrado.⁹

Secondary data from the Ministry of Health's Information Systems (IS) was utilised. The data was obtained electronically from the portal of the Information Technology Department of the Unified Health System (DATASUS), which collates data from a range of IS. DATASUS provides information on deaths registered in the Mortality Information System, which is fed by the Death Certificate.¹⁰

The objective of this study is to examine the circumstances surrounding the deaths of motorcyclists in the state of Piauí between 2011 and 2021. In addition to the circumstances of these deaths, the study will also analyse the sociodemographic characteristics of the victims, the year in which the deaths occurred, and the underlying causes of death. Consequently, the deaths in question were selected on the basis of the codes V20, V21, V22, V23, V24, V25, V26, V27, V28 and V29, as defined by the 10th International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10).

The Tabwin software was employed to calculate the crude mortality rates from motorcycle accidents for each year and the standardised average rate. The numerator of the formula was the number of deaths, while the denominator was the population of motorcyclists in the state of Piauí, as reported in the 2022 Demographic Census¹¹, multiplied by 100,000 inhabitants.

In order to illustrate the sociodemographic profile of the injured individuals, a series of univariate categorical analyses were conducted, employing a range of variables, including gender, race/colour, marital status, age group, level of education, health macro-region and level of education. These variables were

described in terms of both their absolute and relative frequencies, and the resulting data were presented in tabular form.

To analyse the temporal evolution of mortality, the raw data on motorcycle accidents recorded each year was tabulated using a Microsoft Office Excel spreadsheet and sent to Tabwin software. The resulting data set was then used to generate a linear regression line with its respective coefficient of determination, which demonstrated the evolution or temporal regression of deaths for each year.¹²

Subsequently, the data was imported into the Joinpoint Regression Program software, which was used to calculate the Annual Percentage Change (APC) with a 95% confidence interval (CI95%). A significance level of 5% was set to test the null hypothesis that the APC of the series is equal to zero. Consequently, for the APC analysis, results with $p < 0.05$ or a positive CI95% (increasing trend) or only negative (decreasing trend) are indicative of a statistically significant outcome.¹³

The analysis of the spatial statistics of deaths from motorcycle accidents was based on the mortality rate. This approach enabled the graphic map of Piauí to be divided by municipality and connected to the database containing information on the rates for each of Brazil's 5,570 municipalities. The tabular data was linked to the geographic layer table using codes standardised (geocodes) by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) common to both files, using the QGIS software.¹²

In accordance with Resolution No. 510 of 7 April 2016, approved by the National Health Council, research utilising information in the public domain is exempt from evaluation and registration by the Research Ethics Committees and National Research Ethics Committee system. However, all ethical and legal aspects of health research were duly respected.

RESULTS

In the Brazilian state of Piauí, between the years 2011 and 2021, a total of 7,250 deaths resulting from motorcycle accidents were recorded. The mean number of cases per year was 659.1, with the highest number of cases occurring in 2014 ($n=761$; 10.5%) and the lowest in 2021 ($n=575$; 8.0%). Nevertheless, despite 2021 exhibiting the lowest number of cases, the lowest

mortality rate was identified during the time series in 2019 (19.88 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants) (Table 1).

Table 1 - Distribution of deaths from motorcycle accidents in Piauí between 2011 and 2021, by year of death. Parnaíba, PI, Brazil, 2024

| Year of Death | n | % | Mortality Rate |
|----------------------|-------|-------|----------------|
| 2011 | 588 | 8.1 | 20.89 |
| 2012 | 688 | 9.5 | 25.99 |
| 2013 | 647 | 8.9 | 23.82 |
| 2014 | 761 | 10.5 | 28.85 |
| 2015 | 717 | 9.9 | 24.73 |
| 2016 | 730 | 10.1 | 27.21 |
| 2017 | 667 | 9.2 | 23.96 |
| 2018 | 639 | 8.8 | 22.48 |
| 2019 | 604 | 8.3 | 19.88 |
| 2020 | 635 | 8.7 | 22.79 |
| 2021 | 574 | 8.0 | 21.35 |
| Total/Average | 7,250 | 100.0 | 23.81 |

Source: DATASUS, 2024.

Table 2 presents the sociodemographic characteristics of deaths from motorcycle accidents in Piauí. The majority of deaths were among males (n=6,188; 89.50%), of parda race/colour (n=4,647; 76.5%), single (n=3,266; 49.4%) and between

20 and 29 years old (n=2,041; 29.5%). Furthermore, the data revealed a prevalence of fatalities among individuals with an educational background spanning between one and three years (n=1,982; 31.7%), residents of the Meio Norte health macro-region (n=3,377; 46.6%), and the primary location of these incidents was on public roads (n=3,780; 55.0%).

Table 2 - Sociodemographic characterization of deaths from motorcycle accidents in Piauí between 2011 and 2021. Parnaíba, PI, Brazil, 2024

| Variable | Total | |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|
| | n | % |
| Gender† | | |
| Male | 6,188 | 89.5 |
| Female | 722 | 10.5 |
| Total | 6,910 | 100.0 |
| Race/Color‡ | | |
| Parda | 4,647 | 76.5 |
| White | 902 | 14.8 |
| Black | 511 | 8.4 |
| Asian | 15 | 0.3 |
| Indigenous | 3 | 0.1 |
| Total | 6,079 | 100.0 |

| Variable | Total | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| | n | % |
| Marital Status§ | | |
| Single | 3,266 | 49.9 |
| Married | 1,825 | 27.6 |
| Other | 1,130 | 17.1 |
| Widowed | 218 | 3.3 |
| Separated | 172 | 2.6 |
| Total | 6,079 | 100.0 |
| Age Group†† | | |
| 0 to 9 years | 38 | 0.6 |
| 10 to 19 years | 692 | 10.1 |
| 20 to 29 years | 2,041 | 29.5 |
| 30 to 39 years | 1,671 | 24.2 |
| 40 to 49 years | 1,149 | 16.6 |
| 50 to 59 years | 721 | 10.4 |
| 60 to 69 years | 419 | 6.1 |
| 70 years and over | 174 | 2.5 |
| Total | 6,905 | 100.0 |
| Education‡‡ | | |
| None | 696 | 11.1 |
| 1 to 3 years of study | 1,982 | 31.7 |
| 4 to 7 years of study | 1,747 | 27.9 |
| 8 to 11 years of study | 1,580 | 25.3 |
| 12 or more years of study | 249 | 4.0 |
| Total | 6,254 | 100.0 |
| Health Macroregion§§ | | |
| Meio Norte | 3,377 | 46.6 |
| Semiárido | 1,392 | 19.2 |
| Cerrados | 1,261 | 17.4 |
| Litoral | 1,218 | 16.8 |
| Total | 7,248 | 100.0 |
| Place of Occurrence††† | | |
| Public Roads | 3,780 | 55.0 |
| Hospitals | 2,749 | 39.9 |
| Others | 344 | 5.1 |
| Total | 6,872 | 100.0 |

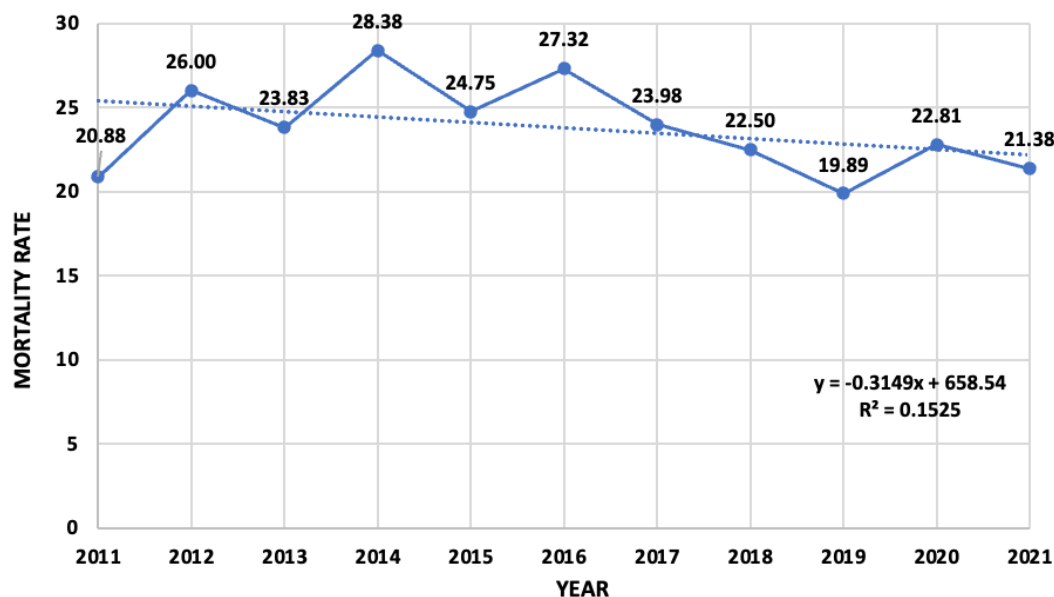
Source: DATASUS, 2024.

†340 deaths were excluded because Gender was entered as “Unknown”. ‡1,171 deaths were excluded because Race/Color was entered as “Unknown/Not filled in”. §638 deaths were excluded because Marital Status was entered as “Unknown/Not filled in”. ¶345 deaths were excluded because the Age Group was “Unknown”. ‡‡Ninety-six deaths were excluded due to Education being “Unknown/Not filled in”. §§2 deaths were excluded because the Health Macroregion was “Unknown”. †††378 deaths were excluded because the Place of Occurrence was “Unknown”.

Figure 1 illustrates the temporal evolution of mortality from motorcycle accidents in Piauí. It is evident that there are considerable fluctuations in the rates between the years 2011 and 2016, which are followed by a decline in the rates between 2016 and 2019. Subsequently, there is a gradual increase in the

rates between 2019 and 2021. The average mortality rate for the period under analysis was 23.81 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants, with 2014 exhibiting the highest rate (28.38 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants). The coefficient of determination (R^2) explains 15.25% of the variability in the linear regression model.

Figure 1 - Temporal evolution of mortality rates from motorcycle accidents in Piauí per 100,000 inhabitants from 2011 to 2021. Parnaíba, PI, Brazil, 2024

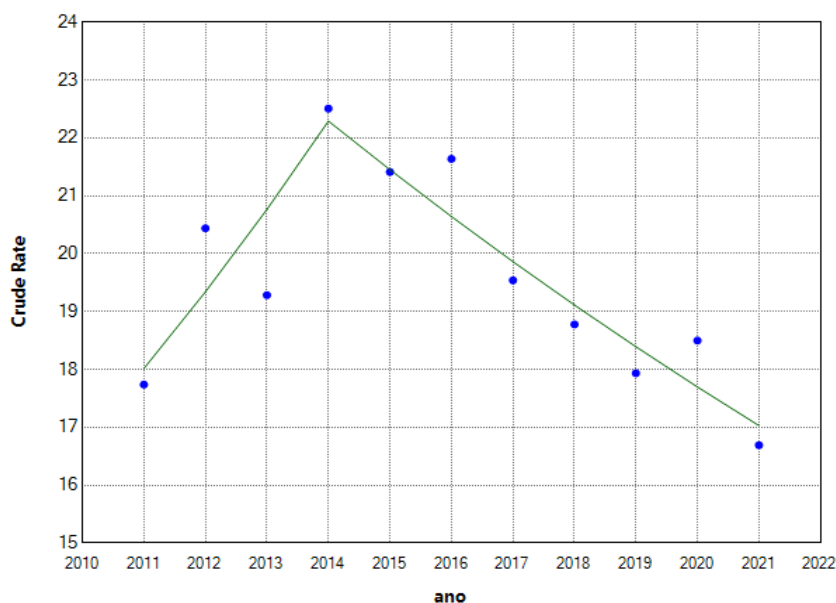


Source: Authors, 2024.

The Joinpoint time analysis of motorcycle accident mortality in Piauí revealed the presence of two straight line segments with an inflection point in 2014, indicating a change in trend from initially increasing to decreasing until the last year analysed.

From 2011 to 2014, there was a notable increase ($p < 0.05$) of 7.4% (CI95%: 1.8-9.2) annually. From 2014 to 2021, there was a notable decline in mortality from motorcycle accidents, with a reduction of -3.8% (CI95%: -5.1 to -0.4) per year (Figure 2).

Figure 2 - Joinpoint analysis of mortality from motorcycle accidents in Piauí between 2011 and 2021. Parnaíba, PI, Brazil, 2024



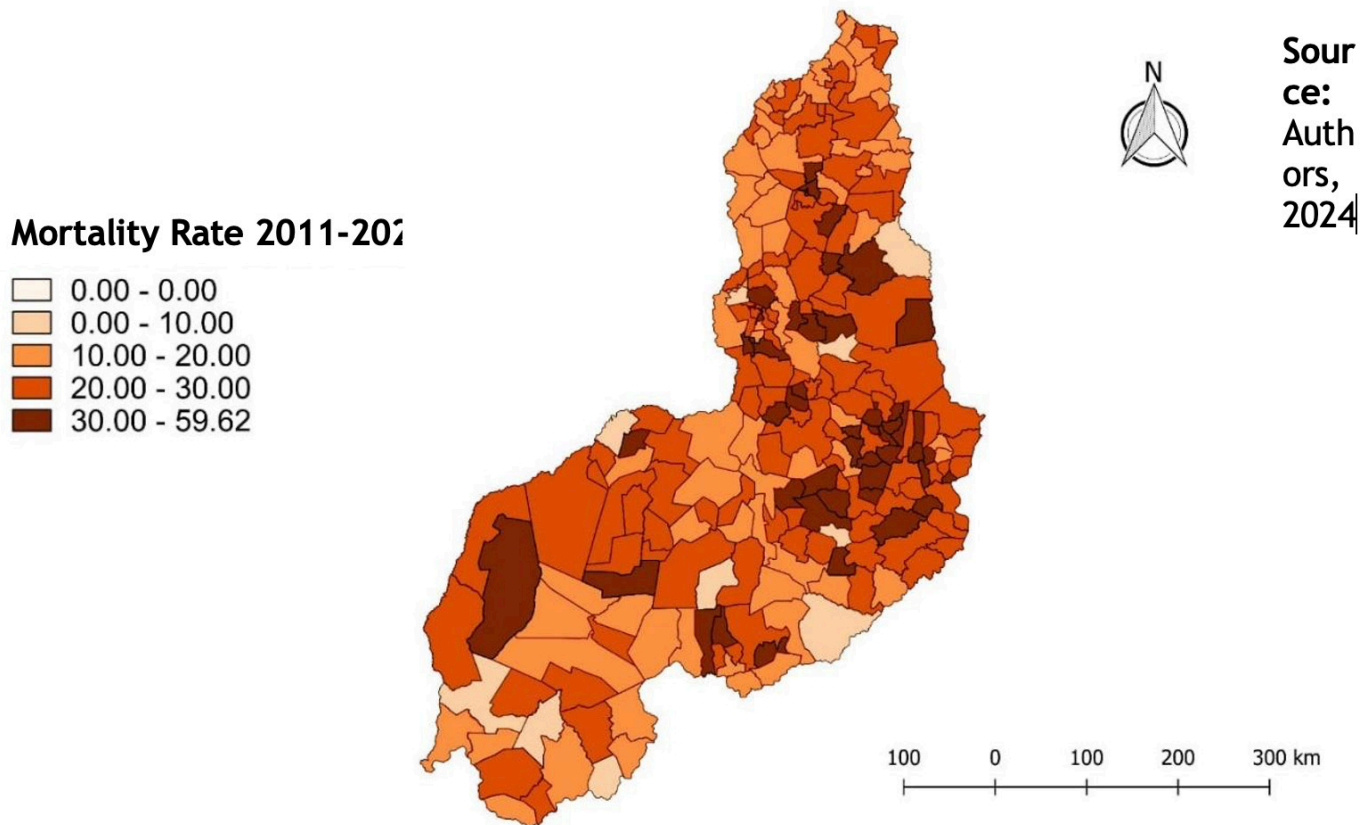
Source: Authors, 2024.

† $p < 0.05$; APC: Annual Percentage Change.

Figure 3 presents a map of the standardised average mortality rate from motorcycle accidents in Piauí. A greater concentration of deaths is observable in the state's central municipalities, with the highest rates located in the Meio Norte health region. Moreover, the spatial analysis revealed that 27 municipalities

exhibited elevated mortality rates. However, it is noteworthy that the territory of Piauí demonstrated a relatively balanced distribution of rates, with the majority displaying a mortality rate between 20.00 and 30.00 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants within the state.

Figure 3 - Mortality rate from motorcycle accidents in Piauí between 2011 and 2021. Parnaíba, PI, Brazil, 2024



Source: Authors, 2024.

DISCUSSION

The present study revealed an oscillating pattern in mortality data from motorbike accidents in the municipalities of Piauí, which is consistent with the findings of the Ministry of Health. Furthermore, when compared to the figures for Brazil and the Northeast region during the same period, the mortality rates in Piauí were approximately five times higher than those observed in the aforementioned locations.⁷ These findings are in line with the results of several national studies, which also observed an oscillating pattern in the number of deaths during the years analysed.^{6,14}

The findings of this research demonstrated that men are the primary victims of this issue, which corroborates a study conducted in Teresina that identified a significant proportion of victims as male.¹⁵ It is crucial to emphasise that historical prejudices and resistance to male self-care contribute to the prevalence of this problem, as many accidents could be prevented through reduced exposure to danger and greater social acceptance of personal care. Consequently, a considerable number of men are inclined to undertake greater risks, despite the fact that a significant proportion of these are unwarranted and detrimental.¹⁶

In this study, the *parda* race/colour was identified as the predominant category, a finding that aligns with the results of another study conducted in Piauí.¹⁷ Additionally, the IBGE data indicates that the majority of the population in Piauí self-identifies as *parda*.¹⁸ Conversely, the majority of individuals who sustained this injury were single. This finding may be justified by the fact that these individuals, most of whom are young, are inclined to seek out adventures and thrills in traffic, which may render them more susceptible to engaging in reckless actions that could potentially lead to life-threatening incidents.¹⁹

A study conducted by the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA) revealed that individuals between the ages of 15 and 29 represent approximately 44% of fatalities resulting from motorcycle accidents.²⁰ This phenomenon is observed consistently across the North, Northeast, Southeast, South, and Center-West regions of the country.¹⁴ In the state of Piauí, the population between the ages of 20 and 29 is identified as the most vulnerable to this issue. However, these episodes necessitate disparate forms of care, as they result in elevated rates of hospitalisation, premature retirement, and financial assistance, in addition to a diminished quality of life for survivors and their families.¹⁶

With regard to the issue of education, a high percentage of deaths from motorbike accidents was found among people who had between one and three years of schooling. Another study carried out in the state of Ceará also found similar results, reporting a higher frequency of deaths among individuals with low levels of schooling.²¹ Therefore, it can be concluded that poor education and low levels of schooling are directly related to a lack of understanding about the importance of making cautious and preventative decisions.^{4,22}

The time analysis of mortality from motorbike accidents in Piauí indicated that there was variability in rates from 2011 to 2021. There was an increase in mortality until 2014, followed by a gradual decline in rates, which remained constant from 2015 to 2021. According to official statistics, the Brazilian Northeast showed similar temporal trends of increases and decreases.^{5,7} Moreover, the analysis carried out using the Joinpoint method indicated trends of mortality reduction in Piauí in recent years.

These findings are consistent with a study conducted in the state of Pernambuco, which demonstrated a decline in motorbike-related fatalities between 2015 and 2019.¹⁶ The observed reductions may be attributed to enhanced signage and enforcement on public roads, expanded traffic education initiatives, and the introduction of safer and more comfortable vehicles. Additionally, the pandemic has resulted in a reduction in vehicle traffic, which has contributed to a decrease in fatal motorbike accidents.²³

One potential explanation for this phenomenon is that the Brazilian Traffic Code (CTB), in conjunction with the Dry Law,

has led to a decline in traffic-related fatalities nationwide, thereby making it a viable strategy for addressing this issue.²⁴ To this end, enhancing and intensifying enforcement actions and continuing education initiatives with the objective of promoting traffic safety represents a promising avenue for further investigation.²⁵

However, when these rates are analysed in relation to the health macro-regions of the state of Piauí, significant prevalence is observed in certain locations. For instance, the Meio Norte health macro-region exhibits high mortality rates from motorbike accidents, while the Litorânea displays lower rates. The inequality caused by the centralisation of financial and technological resources in large urban centres may explain these phenomena.^{19,22}

Therefore, it can be posited that as an individual's socioeconomic status declines, the probability of their selecting a motorbike as a mode of transportation over a car increases. This is due to the relatively low costs associated with the purchase, maintenance and regulation of vehicles.⁴ In contrast, a study conducted in Teresina revealed that the city is the epicentre of motorbike accidents within the state. Furthermore, the capital's high population density, in comparison to other cities in Piauí, is a contributing factor to the elevated mortality rates.²⁶

The enhanced mobility afforded by motorbikes has prompted a transformation in their design, creating new employment opportunities in the delivery and passenger transportation sectors. However, these drivers frequently encounter challenging working conditions, including extended hours due to increased productivity demands and heightened risk exposure due to their adoption of high speeds to meet delivery targets.²⁷

This study is subject to certain limitations, including the use of secondary data from an IS that is susceptible to inconsistencies in the quality of its data, due to the presence of incorrect and/or inadequate data entries. Therefore, it is possible that a greater number of deaths may be obscured by the exclusion of relevant variables or erroneous categorisation, particularly in the case of the race/colour variable, which exhibited a considerable degree of underreporting. Nevertheless, despite these constraints, the study could still be conducted and its findings remain significant.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that mortality from motorbike accidents in Piauí represents a significant public health concern that requires further investigation. The results of this research contribute to the development of intervention strategies aimed at reducing the incidence of fatalities. Additionally, the evidence provided by this study can inform the implementation and reformulation of public health policies, particularly through the implementation of

continuous monitoring, rigorous inspection, and more effective traffic education initiatives.

Furthermore, this research contributes to an understanding of the distribution of the phenomenon within the state of Piauí, thereby facilitating the guidance of educational actions. It does so by sensitising and raising awareness among the population, with the objective of promoting safe actions in traffic, avoiding acts of recklessness, malpractice and negligence. This ultimately contributes to a reduction in the risk factors for motorbike accidents.

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