



Master Thesis in Holocaust and Genocide Studies

The Role of Victims' Self-Efficacy in
Perceptions of Blanket Amnesty and Engagement
in Transitional Justice Processes:

*May 27 Massacre, 1977, and
The Blank Amnesty in Angola*

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Introduction

How do victims of violence perceive blanket amnesties as part of transitional justice mechanisms in war-torn societies? The amnesty law is a critical instrument for conflict resolutions and in post-conflict reconciliation processes. Governments and third parties use amnesties as a transitional justice instrument to end the violence because it ensures that conflict leaders will accept to engage in peace talks. This law may take the form of a treaty or political agreement with jurisdiction over post-conflict societies in a transitional justice process (ICRC, 2017). In such circumstances, “an amnesty can halt imminent or ongoing prosecutions” (ICRC, 2017). There are two types of amnesties. They can be conditional or blanket. Amnesty is conditional to other transitional justice mechanisms such as truth-telling, economic compensations, or traditional dispute resolutions. In these processes, perpetrators are forgiven if they compensate the victims by admitting their crimes. While with the blanket amnesty law, perpetrators receive total clemency for their wrongdoings, discharging them from any penalties and any compensation for the victims because there is no acknowledgement for the onslaught of human lives. To this extent, a blanket amnesty restrains the victims’ narratives of past atrocities in the transitional justice process in exchange for peace. The amnesty in Angola illustrates this policy.

The Angolan government implemented a blanket amnesty after 27 years of war, seeking a political solution to violence and reconciliation to its people. As expected, this settlement conveys that offenders are forgiven unconditionally, making it easier to stop the killings and attract them to the negotiations table. In other words, the blanket amnesty law overlooked any kind of accountability for war crimes in return for peace between parties and halted the violence. The top-down settlement of a blanket amnesty promulgates total pardon to offenders and instructs victims to recognize the policy of “forgive and forget” all crimes committed as the uncontested arrangement to attain peace. But, inevitably, it interferes with the victims’ remembrances and narratives of past atrocities, promoting a culture of social amnesia while victims stand as mere observers in the transitional justice process. This attempt to balance past and future avoids the risks of too much truth-telling from breaking peace

negotiations. In a situation where peace and justice compete, this paper considers the victims as agents in the process.

Other transitional justice mechanisms either focus on the victims' needs or seek to punish the perpetrator. In the first case, the justice process still reserves amnesty as an instrument for reconciliation in exchange for truth-telling mechanisms, while in the second, amnesty is inaccessible. Unlike Angola, South Africa adopted *conditional amnesty* as the transitional justice instrument for the regime change from apartheid to democracy. This system attracts both offenders and victims in a joint reconciliation commitment through truth commissions. In addition, the process entails a *restorative justice* system involving repairing justice by reconciling and healing "conflictive relationships to end the vicious circle of crime, revenge, and recurring crime" (Brounéus, 2008, 8). Accordingly, in South Africa, perpetrators confessed crimes in exchange for amnesty, and occasionally, for light sentences making the pardon *conditional*, seeking to balance truth and justice instead of favouring peace over justice, as in the case of Angola's total amnesty (Villa-Vicencio, 2010, Brounéus, 2008).

Resisting this system and in total opposition to amnesty, there is *retributive justice* which Wenzel et al. (2008) define as essentially referring to "the repair of justice through the unilateral imposition of punishment" (2008, 376). Thus, there is no place for impunity, and the criminal trials target mainly the perpetrators. The outcome of the different justice systems is that in restorative justice, amnesty is not a process in itself but the result of a therapeutic compromise between victims and offenders in which describes both victims and perpetrators' narratives. Thus, amnesty is conditional to all or some instruments used to address the victims' abuses through truth-telling mechanisms. What concerns a *blanket amnesty* is the sole method that rests all past crime narratives off the radar of criminal trials and restorative justice processes. To this end, I enquire whether blanket amnesties can provide victims with experiences that will lead to reconciliation. Therefore, I explore the victims' perceptions of the blanket amnesty in Angola and their engagement in transitional justice processes.

Previous research shows that whatever the transitional justice mechanism adopted for the sake of peace, justice and reconciliation after a protracted civil conflict, it always has a tremendous impact on the victims of mass violence (Brounéus, 2010; Bloomfield et al., 2003; Joe Edet; B. E. Kooffreh, 2018; Blaauw, 2002; Karstedt, 2010; Carlson, 2012; Hodzic, 2010; Heynes, 2010; Mallinder, 2009; Villa-Vicencio, 2010; Haldemann, 2011). Survivors suffer trauma from the past and either see their narratives exposed or suppressed, affecting either positively or negatively reconciliation processes. Although this is true, the literature assumes that whatever mechanism helps victims of violence to overcome pain from past events

benefits processes of peacebuilding and reconciliation because they are the core of these processes (Joe Edet; B. E. Kooffreh, 2018; Wenzel et al. 2007; Blaauw, 2002; Karstedt, 2010; Carlson, 2012; Hodzic, 2010; Heynes, 2010; Mallinder, 2009; Villa-Vicencio, 2010; Haldemann, 2011). Therefore, it is crucial to address the victims' needs to reach sustainable peace. For its accuracy, this study considers it is paramount to acknowledge the victims' perceptions of transitional justice processes at the individual level.

It is argued that amnesties can constrain other *restorative* and *retributive* justice processes such as respectively, restoration and reparation of the harm suffered by the victim as much as possible and prosecution to punish offenders for their crimes. The underlying logic of amnesty is that whatever the type, it entails the perpetrator going free in return for peace or a confession which still might affect victims of violence. Offenders go unpunished after heinous crimes, as the classic example of the South African amnesty, which covered horrific atrocities (Joe Edet; B. E. Kooffreh, 2018). Still, conditional amnesty covers the victims' narratives. In contrast, total amnesty promotes specific understandings of the past while excluding the victims' incidents of violence. Therefore, this paper wants to evaluate the victims' viewpoints (perceptions) of total amnesty through their *self-awareness*, specifically how they apprehend their capabilities and social-political environment opportunities to make a change, a micro-level interdisciplinary perspective overlooked in transitional justice literature.

The civilian population represents a substantial number of victims affected by war violence with overwhelming consequences for themselves and for a damaged society (Edet, Kooffreh, 2018, 54). The victimization acts consist mainly of torture, amputation, rape, hostage, death, and forced disappearance (Bloomfield et al., 2003, 54). All these conditions extend beyond the physical pain to other psychological and social effects such as “the loss of self-worth, [forced] displacement from families and loved ones, extermination of one's community and destruction of property” (Edet, Kooffreh, 2018). In this consideration, victims are the object of post-war transitional justice processes; however, total amnesty excludes them entirely. Meanwhile, the victims undergo devastating circumstances resulting from severe harm inflicted on them and family members that can endure for generations (Bloomfield et al., 2003, 54). This condition leaves one to wonder about the victims' views of transitional justice mechanisms to deal with past crimes considering their *consciousness* of capabilities and of the social-political environment structures. After all and unfolding further, how do they manage the circumstances as agents in this process? That is, how do they regard the social-political environment surrounding them, respond to it, and how does that affect their

perceptions of amnesties? I argue that the victim's self-efficacy reveals their perceptions of amnesty and this matters for the process of transitional justice and reconciliation in war-torn societies.

Little has been explored about victims' agency concerning transitional justice processes, particularly concerning blanket amnesties. Other studies about victims' sufferings from traumatic events shed light on how their agency helped them, or not, to recover from trauma (Bandura, 2004; Solomon et al. 1988, 1991; Murphy, 1987; Hobfoll, 1991; Freedy et al., 1994; Benight et al., 2000). Accordingly, their *conscious understanding* of the environment's opportunity structures and capabilities greatly impacted their perceptions and actions. Going back to the debate amnesty *versus* justice, if arguments contest against 'too much truth' as affecting peacebuilding and even the victims' well being (Cohen, 2009, 28; Brounéus, 2010), and others hope for the chance to reveal and account for past atrocities (Hodzic, 2010, Mallinder, 2009), what is it that influences the victims' views about blanket amnesty, and why do they perceive amnesty differently? Considerably, this study wants to glean the victims' *consciousness* of the political environment and capabilities which I argue is determinant for their views about blanket amnesty as part of the transitional justice process that inflicts such an overwhelming impact in their lives (Brounéus, 2010).

Research Problem

Given the understanding of the blanket amnesty as a top-down imposed solution to deal with past crimes, this study explores how victims' self-awareness, including their social-political environmental awareness and their capabilities, impact their perceptions of blanket amnesty and engagement in the political environment. To this extent, and in consideration for the Angolan war victims, I select the case study of a massacre that occurred during the Angolan civil war: the purge of May 27, 1977, silenced for more than 40 years. The case discloses the MPLA¹ interim government as responsible for the killings of thousands of young adult civilians throughout the country considered a potential threat to the party (BBC, Sep 5, 2020).² This way, I want to disclose how victims of violence, such as orphans from forced disappeared parents and survivors from prison camps perceive and cope with the total amnesty law imposed in 2002. To find out, I will track the victims' self-awareness of capabilities and the political environmental structures to reveal how that influences their social-political engagement and perceptions of blanket amnesty as a transitional justice

¹ MPLA: Popular Movement Liberation Angola (Movimento Popular Libertação de Angola)

² Amnesty International mentions 30 000 victims: (*BBC News.*, Sep 5, 2020)

process. These steps will help to disclose the following research question: *How victims' self-awareness impacts their engagement in social-political structures and their perceptions of blanket amnesty as an instrument of transitional justice for reconciliation?*

To find out, it is necessary to link the victims' self-awareness to their perceptions of blanket amnesty and processes of transitional justice in general. And, to uncover this causal relation, I will use the social-psychological theoretical approach to human agency of the Social Cognitive Theory from Albert Bandura, the theory of Self-Efficacy (1997). Accordingly, personal insight of *self-awareness* is fundamental for making decisions and producing behaviour and change, a unique human capacity (Bandura, 1997, 4; Posadzki, Glass, 2009, 926). Supported by the self-efficacy model, this study reveals a causal relationship between the victims' appraisals of the environmental structures and own capabilities (victims self-efficacy level) and their perceptions about transitional justice processes. Essentially, the victims' self-efficacy interferes with their aspirations, motivations, and actions (Bandura, 2012) affecting their environmental perceptions and, consequently, the perception of the blanket amnesty law and engagement in society. This entails that the victim's level of self-efficacy influences their views of the amnesty and transitional justice processes and how they behave accordingly.

This study aims to apply the self-efficacy model to victims of conflict violence in transitional justice processes to find out the victims' perceptions of blanket amnesties and actions. The hypotheses suggested in this study are that victims with a *high level of self-efficacy* have a positive self-awareness and contest amnesty. In other words, they have high aspirations and motivations to engage in society. This means they have a more positive view of opportunities to change the social-political environmental structures regarding transitional justice, reflecting in their struggles to contest blanket amnesty. Thus, these victims are more inclined to seek accountability and prosecution processes.

On the opposite, a negative self-awareness, *low level of self-efficacy*, revealed by low aspirations, motivations, and decisions affects the perception of the opportunities for change in social-political environmental structures, influencing specific transitional justice outcomes. In this case, victims with low self-efficacy are more likely to disengage from contesting against amnesty, and therefore, total amnesty is accepted.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, I describe the scholarly transitional justice debate, where I focus on the main arguments of amnesty *versus* justice. Next, I explain the self-efficacy model and its mechanism, and formulate the hypotheses. After that, the interview process is presented, followed by data presentation and discussion of the results.

Previous Literature

The Transitional Justice Study Field

Since the end of the Cold War, the international community has become increasingly involved in peacebuilding and transitional justice after mass violence, helping war-torn societies to convert into democracies through instruments of justice, such as trials and truth commissions (Lambourne, 2008, 28). However, many countries are not ready to submit entirely to these processes and often refuse to redress crimes, endorsing blanket amnesties seen as a smoother and quieter transition into a sense of peace without justice or opt for conditional amnesties emphasizing truth-seeking (Sharf, 2007, 216-217). Either way, these processes serve to assist societies that went through mass violation of human rights into transition to a more peaceful and democratic state. Despite the challenge, societies see these instruments as a way to reconcile with the past and an opportunity to build a new future (Lambourne, 2009, 30). Each particular transitional justice context determines a specific path to take. The accountability for crimes in legal justice as a corrective model became the Western and liberal traditions. Some authors consider it to be “a ‘new wave of colonialism in the current domain of social control’” (Findlay, Henham, 2005, 187). Accordingly, the international community has pursued prosecutions through *ad hoc* international criminal tribunals in Rwanda and Former Yugoslavia, an international criminal court, and joint domestic/international courts (Cassese, 2003).

The alternative to this model is restorative justice, blanket amnesties, and informal justice. This last one takes the form of traditional practices of indigenous peoples’ justice operationalized through community conferencing, promoting victim-offender reconciliation for crime prevention either as a combination or a replacement for the legal form of punishment (Braithwaite, 2003). The recent alternative is restorative justice based on the truth commission, which focuses on truth-seeking to rebuild relationships and restore communities (Lambourne, 2009, 31). Other restorative processes may involve economic compensation, victims assistance, mediation, etc., that does not involve prosecution. Finally, the blanket amnesty discharges perpetrators from any accountability. In this case, restorative justice has no place in the process. Deciding which model to adopt for a specific post-conflict situation can be an ambiguous process, and it is at the core of the debate.

The international community has supported the bilateral approach to gross violations of human rights and crimes against humanity. The argument asserts that accountability “could interfere with a fragile peace process (as in Cambodia) and that a truth commission would interfere with international legal trials” (as was argued by officials of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY)” (Lambourne, 2009, 31). Between those who want to prosecute perpetrators and practitioners of international peace negotiations, these goals tend to conflict when choosing the correct route for peacebuilding and reconciliation (Scharf, 2007, 198). This way, the international community has established a complementarity of strategies such as tribunals and truth commissions in several countries. This balance meets Findlay and Henham’s argument that the ‘harmonization of restorative and retributive justice is a desirable goal within international criminal justice” (2005, xiv).

Summing up, justice can be retributive or restorative when based on criminal trials and mediation. While blanket amnesty is the antithesis of prosecution, it still has a role in mediation between warring factions. When considering justice, the trend in the West is to focus on the punitive measures in which perpetrators should not go unpunished and pay the price for their crimes. Next, I differentiate the roles of retributive from restorative justice for a better insight into the study field. I then start with the literature review about the blanket amnesty surrounding the debate on peacebuilding *versus* justice.

Retributive Justice: The Role of Criminal Justice

Tribunals are instruments used to address and account for a violent past, prosecute perpetrators, and operate at national and international levels (Findlay, Henham, 2005, 189).³ At the practical level, *ad hoc* tribunals, the International Criminal Court (ICC), and national trials based on international jurisdiction constitute international jurisprudence. The International Criminal Court - ICC - is a permanent international tribunal that prosecutes individuals responsible for the most severe international crimes such as genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity according to the Rome Statute of 1998 ratified by 77 countries in 2002. However, its first role is to guide governments that want to prosecute in their courts while there is political will (Bloomfield et al., 2003, 101).

³ Greece in 1974 and Argentina in 1985 tried some of the top military forces; in Rwanda, *genocidaires* faced courts in Kigali and in Ethiopia, based on Article 281 of the Ethiopian Penal Code on genocide criminal courts submitted 73 authorities of the previous Marxist-Leninist regime (Bloomfield et.al.,2003:99).A total of 14209 victims of genocide and torture were identified, and Special Prosecutor charged 5,200 suspects, from which 3,000 were judged by default (ibid:99). Other indictments invoked International customary law for cases such as forced displacement and forced migration of entire population groups (ibid:99).

In case of the lack of resources, the ICC offers backup, ensuring that criminals of the most severe humanitarian crimes are prosecuted, avoiding impunity. In this light, the UN Security Council established two international criminal tribunals to deal with the atrocities committed in the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) is based in the Hague, Netherlands. It was created in 1993 by the UN Security Council Resolution 827 with the mandate to prosecute those responsible for violation of human rights according to the international humanitarian law during the armed conflict (Bloomfield et al.,2003, 100). Also, to deal with the Rwandan genocide, the UN Security Council Resolution 955 established the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in 1994 in Arusha, Tanzania, with the same prosecutorial tasks as the ICTY (Bloomfield et al.,2003, 100). Other functions included recommending protective measures for witnesses, providing counselling for victims and handling the appointment of defence counsel (ibid,100).

International *ad hoc* Tribunals provide the chance for post-conflict countries to build a society based on the rule of law through a fair and law-based process. Individuals are responsible for the violation of human rights and prosecution, ensuring that they do not go unpunished, and this has been accepted and enforced by the international community (Scharf., 2007, 218). However, some shortcomings hinder governments from accepting prosecution because it may not be appropriate in every post-conflict context (Scharf, 2007, 204). In addition, the arguments surrounding forms of justice in transitional societies flame the debate of amnesty *versus* prosecution.

Restorative Justice

Restorative justice handles violations differently because it is inclusive, and it is based more on mediation and reconciliation than on punishment. It emphasizes repairing the harm caused by criminal behaviour and addressing the wrongdoings if the parties are willing to bring resolution (Center for Justice and Reconciliation). Accordingly, the idea is to repair and transform relationships for the well-being of people and communities. It counts on the victims and offenders participation in truth and reconciliation commissions (TRC) to discuss facts and identify wrongdoing to determine the sanctions requiring an oral or written apology from the perpetrator.

TRC may also involve psychological, economic and cultural restitution such as “returning or replacing property, paying money or providing direct services to the victim (...)

or communities” (ibid). An example is the reconciliation process between the Canadian government and the First Nations (Lenzerini, 2007, 271). The government has settled a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and a formal official apology to the indigenous people regarding the forced assimilation policies. Currently, the government provides financial support for indigenous associations and is seeking to engage in an ongoing dialogue for restitution purposes. Since 2017, the Canadian government has established a department to deal with indigenous affairs; however, there are still many flaws in the restitution and reconciliation processes (CAID.CA.). Nevertheless, TRC can help promote reparation to the victim in ongoing psychological, physical, and economic support to restore the victims’ dignity. Proposing memorials and commemorative ceremonies can also achieve reparation.

There is no professional legal representation in developing this type of justice, and it is a voluntary process where decisions are based on agreement. The goal is to build up relations between offenders and victims and strengthen the community. The victims are the centre of the transitional process through their involvement and input, while offenders are directly accountable to the person or community victimized. This way, offenders accept the responsibility of their acts, make amendments and submit to the consequences imposed by the community (Umbreit, 2001).⁴ To what extent the bargain is fair, unbiased, and safeguarded amounts to the doubts of this process heating the transitional justice debate, which I will disclose next.

The Amnesty, a Literature Review

Total and Conditional Amnesty

The amnesty depends on how it applies and to whom it extends. A range of self-proclaimed amnesty grants occurred during the transition to democracy in many Latin American countries. For example, the military junta in Argentina proclaimed the Law on National Pacification in 1983, conceding blanket amnesty, that is, full pardon without conditions, to its officials for all political crimes. Amnesty can also be reciprocal, such as when it brings

⁴ This type of justice is handled by truth Commissions which are popular transitional methods to deal with the painful past (Bloomfield et al.,2003:123). South Africa, Guatemala, Former Yugoslavia, East Timor, Sierra Leone, Uruguay, and Peru are examples of truth Commissions bringing considerable attention to the importance of truth-seeking.

together warring parties to the negotiation table. South Africa, Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Angola are examples of this type of amnesty (Bloomfield et al.,2003, 109).

Amnesties can be total or conditional. The law pardons political crimes, and either there are conditions for granting amnesties, or it is a blanket, unconditional, full grant. Also, there is usually amnesty for child soldiers and crimes committed in a specific period (Edet and Koofreh, 2018, 140,141). This pardon excludes crimes contemplated under the UN conventions on genocide and torture. However, the scope of amnesty is not always straightforward due to the broad definition of what constitutes a political offence. For example, the amnesty law for the consolidation of peace in El Salvador granted amnesty to all those who committed “in any way (...) political crimes or common crimes linked to political crimes (...) in which the number of persons involved is not less than twenty” (Bloomfield et al.,2003, 109). In another case, the amnesty legislation falls in Mozambique transitions. The negotiating parties agreed on a set of guidelines on political offences. This way, the perpetrator’s motive for committing the crime, its context, nature, and intention of the act, and its severity and proportionality are all dimensions to consider as a political crime (South African Gov. Gazette, Nov. 7, 1990).

The law of blanket amnesty, the official enforcement of forgiving and forgetting all crimes - is a challenging transitional justice instrument in post-conflict societies. It is generally accepted that unilateral, total amnesties obstruct reconciliation processes and should be avoided (Edet and Kooffreh, 2018, 146). Nevertheless, when it comes to being a fragile peace under negotiations, amnesty may be the last resort and justice the last to be considered (Freeman, 2009, 29). However, even then, according to most observers, conditions must be applied, such as a public debate, truth-seeking, reparation, and complete reverence for international obligations towards human rights treaties.

One can understand that retributive justice, from which any amnesty is absent, is perpetrator-oriented, emphasizing guilt and punishment. This process tends to leave the victims behind and overlooks society in conflict (Freeman, 2009, 19). Its critics maintain that this frustrates the victim and might even lead to re-victimization. Moreover, overlooking society, crimes might be repeated (Kriz, 1996, 127, 152). In the face of genocide or mass violence, the minimum requirements are the prohibition of self-amnesty and the amnesty for genocide. There must be an official investigation for individual responsibility (Scharf, 2007, 221).

Both types of amnesty are part of a more extensive debate. There are pros and cons for conditional and blanket amnesties. At the same time, there are arguments for and

against prosecution, that is, in other words, the absence or the presence of any amnesty, respectively, which debate I come to summarize next.

The Debate about Blanket Amnesties *versus* Prosecution with insights on Conditional Amnesty

States have repeatedly resorted to blanket amnesties, which are the earliest tools in dealing with post-conflict peacebuilding, yet they are more than ever contested today. Either claiming safety reasons or healing purposes to avoid conflict relapse, the debate on amnesties spins around what is best for victims of violent conflicts. Some authors (ex. Melander, 2009; Edet and Kooffreh, 2018) argue that blanket amnesty is not challenged due to its role in peacebuilding under extreme circumstances such as political instability and further loss of lives. Hence, the dependency on the blanket amnesty and the consequent victims' exclusion from offering their narratives of past violence. Nevertheless, human rights activists criticise granting full pardons to perpetrators instead of warranting victims' rights to justice as a fundamental precursor to peace which, otherwise, becomes an interim truce between conflicts. Moreover, it is suggested that accountability and justice bring victims to the scene of transitional justice with the higher possibility to tolerate reconciliation and avoid renewing social unrest at a later stage. These and other arguments trigger the debate on amnesties which I will disclose in the following sections.

The transitional justice literature is vast and can be organised in different ways. Still, I choose to focus on these two arguments, amnesty for peacebuilding *versus* justice for counter-impunity (the absence of any form of amnesty) as transitional justice instruments with greater attention to blanket amnesties. We will observe that some considerations militate against granting total amnesties, and others have resisted prosecution. In the first case, amnesty is seen as impunity, and the argument favours prosecution for the sake of the victims' rights and well-being. The arguments concerning conditional amnesties are taken into account as they attempt to harmonise both sides of the debate. In contrast, others consider blanket amnesty as an imperative instrument to halt the violence, thus, favouring peacebuilding for the sake of the victim's physical and psychological safety. The literature divides between those who advocate what is best for the victims' safety (amnesty for peacebuilding) and those who argue for the victims' rights (prosecution for counter-impunity), which dilemma I will unfold next.

The Dilemma between Peacebuilding and Justice

It is frequently crucial to ask whether it is politically wise to pursue prosecutions firmly or to apply leniency in the aftermath of conflicts as a gesture to restore relations between divergent parties or between the state and the citizenry. Such a dilemma produces either outcome: it applauds tolerance and peace or creates division and bitterness (Villa-Vicencio, 2010, 44). Whichever way, the consequences lie in the lives of the victims who, then, either backlash or sustain the resolution. Favouring retributive justice, Justice Goldstone Richard Erstwhile⁵ notes that “full justice consists of the trial of the perpetrator and, if found guilty, adequate punishment” should apply (Edet, Kooffreh, 2018,141). However, occasionally, post-conflict countries opt to entirely overlook past crimes to avoid “reopen wounds for fear of endangering a fragile peace”, applying the blanket amnesty, a full pardon to perpetrators (Bloomfield et al.,2003, 29).

Transitional justice seeks to ensure both sides - peace and justice - within a challenging and balanced framework involving measures of acknowledgement, prosecution, compensation, and forgiveness, which are the vital features for State reconstruction after violent hostilities (UNSC, 8/2004). To this extent, Edet and Kooffreh (2018) consider that the difficulty in these post-conflict processes is precisely finding a balance between amnesties and prosecutions or peace and justice (2018,142). Therefore, I come to disclose the arguments about conditional amnesty to be able, next, to focus on my main debate - blanket amnesty *versus* justice.

A) The Arguments Advocating for Conditional Amnesty

Vila-Vicencio (2010) reflects on conditional amnesty’s implications that allow restitutive forms of justice and a forgiveness approach. Inspired by the South African TRC, the author suggests that truth commissions should converge as much as possible both the goals of understanding the causes and motives of those responsible for atrocities and addressing the demands and needs of the victims under a sincere conversation aimed at a “new social contract.” Accordingly, only trials do not bring closure for many who seek healing in

⁵ Chief prosecutor of the ICTY and ICTR

answers. Villa-Vicencio (2010) cherishes South Africa as an example of formal government commitment and “national conversation” to remember and recognize the injustice of the past (Villa-Vicencio, 2010, 46; 2012, 81). The author concludes that if political reconciliation does not overcome oppression and polarisation, attempts to ensure a sustainable “long-term rule of law is clearly doomed” (2010, 46). The author stresses the importance of gathering victims and perpetrators in a commitment over retributive justice, which was only possible by granting amnesty in exchange for truth-telling.

Between dwelling on the past or the immorality of denying it, Cohen (2009) considers that legal verdicts do not unearth historical records of the events, “let alone its context,” and causes of the conflict or violence that it generates (2009, 27). Cohen explains that “too much truth” imperils other endeavours like reconciliation, social stability, justice, and democracy (2009, 28). Thus, he excuses the amnesty law (though conditional to bring some truth) by warding off legal verdicts, as he finds criminal justice as wanting.

In addition, as an Afrikaner, Krog (2015) suggests that the claimed necessity of trials are Western views of the TRC of South Africa. Krog sheds light on the African tradition of *ubuntu*, an African philosophical worldview in contrast with Western world views. The act of forgiveness and asking for it leads to “recovery, reconciliation, and eventually to fuller personhood for both parties” (ibid, 212). As such, amnesty pardon and the individual request for it (as established in the TRC) is the first message of “admitting to wrongdoing and asking for forgiveness” (ibid, 212). In the African worldview, this is reconciliation. Therefore, the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation embodied in TRC embeds this principle, and for the Afrikaner black people, there is no reconciliation without forgiveness. To this end, amnesty only makes sense after offenders tell the truth and victims accept and forgive. Enforcing this argument, Edet and Koofreh (2018, 140) sustain that pardons should be conditional to perpetrators expressing regret for evil deeds.

B) The Arguments Advocating Blanket Amnesty for Peacebuilding

The literature advocating for amnesty holds that this law plays an essential role in peacebuilding from early peace negotiations. According to Melander’s Additive Model (2009), the author concludes that authoritarian institutions are capable of keeping the peace settlements while democratic regimes fail to achieve a “pacifying effect” within the first two years (Melander, 2009, 4, 13). In other words, this model suggests that “(blanket) amnesties and an authoritarian setting are beneficial to durable peace” (ibid, 14). This bidding assumes

that amnesty ends conflicts and brings peace, avoiding further killings for the sake of victims' security. Thus, it saves lives. As Edet and Kooffreh (2018,140) state in what concerns the African States, the degree of the precariousness of these States' peace process is such that the utmost supporter of prosecution recognises the crucial role of amnesty in securing society from the outbreak of renewed violence emerging with the launch of legal proceedings against perpetrators. To this extent, Freeman considers that blanket amnesty might constitute a "necessary evil to achieve peace and security, and it should not be taken off the policy table" (2009, 29).

Examples abound, showing that "the pursuit of justice often inhibits lenient peace efforts" (Edet, Kooffreh, 2018, 140). When three million people died in Biafra, Amadiume, the author on the legacy of the 1967–1970 civil war in Biafra, explains that for Africans: "The evil is in the social system, in the guise of inequality and oppression. According to this African logic, guilt is collective; Africans turn to their social mediators, healers and reclassifiers, such as diviners and prophets. It is a modern arrogance to assume that courts are instruments of healing" (Bloomfield et al., 2003, 106). Adding to the debate, Eberochi (2012) emphasises the role of amnesty in some African cultures as a non-Western typical response to crimes. Here, the amnesty is part of "the heart of the jurisprudence of most African conflict resolution mechanisms [...], in exchange for their confessions and repentance" (2012, 22).

Additionally, Trumbull (2007) recognises that denying amnesty withholds victims from using traditional mechanisms of reconciliation and forgiveness to deal with crimes (2007, 283). Adding to the arguments, Eastmond and Selimovic (2012) consider the opposition of truth-telling, "silence," as a "form of communication as multifaceted as speech" (Eastmond and Selimovic, 2012, 502). The authors analysed the local unspoken form of communication in everyday life between different ethnicities in Bosnia and Herzegovina "particularly used by the displaced and returnees" (ibid, 502). The authors argue that in these contexts, "silence" communicates "respect and even trust" (ibid, 507) demonstrating sustainable relations and a way of life able to promote "family continuity and [protection for] close relationships" (ibid, 502). Silence can also reflect shocking stories in contrast with official narratives "as a pragmatic and at times successful strategy for coexistence" (Eastmond and Selimovic, 2012, 524), even if the larger society diverges. This reasoning sustains the possibility of victims accepting silence, or not speaking about the past, or the pursuit of accountability, as a way of life for peaceful coexistence between neighbouring ethnicities. To this extent, blanket amnesty is supported for its lack of accountability.

Other factors come into play when dealing with perpetrators in post-war scenarios. States often turn down prosecutions by silencing the victims' rights in the face of other priorities. Legal proceedings and investigations require a considerable amount of financial resources lacking in post-conflict societies. According to the argument, what is left should be applied in health care, housing, and reconciliation programs for healing. After all, other concerns might be more urgent to address after a protracted conflict like rebuilding civil services, guaranteeing a minimum of physical security, supporting socio-economically the victims, and repairing the damage (Villa-Vicencio, 2010, Edet and Kooffreh, 2018). One can observe here that authors prioritise restorative methods for reparation purposes over retributive forms of justice because, underneath the amnesty, other forms of extra-judicial reparations might come into play (Spak, 2018).

Moreover, court decisions might provoke hostilities between groups that obstruct democratic consolidation and other reconciliation. Accordingly, prosecutions tend to suffer from outside pressure and become the victor's justice which means more vengeance than justice (Cohen, 2009). In addition, the pressure from Western international institutions weighs over trials reducing the judicial character of the event (Cohen, 2009). In the long run, this can fuel the cycle of violence, undermine fragile democracy and jeopardise the reconciliation process (Bloomfield et al., 2003, 105). This type of arguments serve as a blanket amnesty alibi.

Granting blanket amnesty provides stability which is the paramount concern of the head of state. Therefore, amnesty as an instrument of transitional justice in post-conflict societies is accepted as safeguarding a peaceful transition in hostile conditions (Edet, Kooffreh, 2018,140). As the authors put it, "the want of stability takes precedence over culpability" (2018,143). Last but not least, according to Mallinder, the author refers that to the victims of heinous crimes, the use of amnesty in transitional societies is perceived as a necessity, as "having dealings with the devil" (Mallinder, 2008, 11). In this approval, Szpak (2018) adverts that "sometimes it might be necessary to let go" of justice, however, combined with other non-judicial instruments specially designed for the reparation of victims. Amnesty is one alternative to prosecution and often most appealing; however, it leaves unresolved the duty to prosecute gross violations of human rights (Edet and Kooffreh, 2018, 140). Therefore, research divides between favouring prosecution and avoiding it.

C) The Arguments Advocating Justice for Counter-Impunity

This argument considers amnesty as the synonym of impunity for past atrocities committed against unarmed and innocent civilians. It supports the legalistic approach to combat immunity, even when the amnesty serves the purpose of a peace agreement or to foster national reconciliation. In war-torn societies, decades of oppression and war created mistrust, hatred, and historical inequalities that need to be addressed to overcome its effects, and retributive justice is the answer, according to the argument. Therefore, it advocates for criminal prosecutions of perpetrators in the aftermath of humanitarian abuses. The most promising idea stands for a society emerging from chaotic conflict to build a foundation based on the Rule of Law. Otherwise, what example does it give to the community? (Edet, Kooffreh, 2018,143). Considering the assumption that “there is no peace and no reconciliation without punitive justice” (Bloomfield et al., 2003, 97), Slye (2000) stresses the effects of the repetitive grant of amnesty to perpetrators, that it reduces the possibility of preventing future atrocities (2000, 183). Defensors of this tactic state that while the lack of prosecution encourages distrust towards state institutions, the opposite is also true: that prosecutions increase trust in institutions.

Moreover, this method discourages people from taking matters into their own hands, allowing citizens to recognize a new paradigm in a new society founded on democratic principles, strengthening the weak institutions (Edet, Kooffreh, 2018,143). Ultimately, prosecution advocates assert that trials uncover hidden stories allowing for victims to come forth and reveal the truth as a mechanism to prevent the resurgence of violence. This method provides “a feeling of closure and solace from suppressed [...] emotions” now that their grieves have been redressed and put aside a new cycle of violence (ibid, 144).

According to Ndifon (2012), accountability of historical misdeeds prevents tendencies of denial and forgetting and includes diverse peoples supporting a “common humanity” with severe and beneficial implications for social justice and intergroup relations. Additionally, blanket amnesty obstructs democratic values (Ndifon, 2012,18). In this regard, Kisla (2020) challenges the legality of blanket amnesties, and Szpak (2018) investigates the legitimacy and future of amnesties based on international law. In addition, between “settling past accounts” or “burying the past,” Hodzic (2010) contends that criminal justice can help victims overcome sufferings if adequately addressed by courts. Hodzic (2010) brings the testimonies of victims from past crimes in BiH who wish to see their stories heard and accounted for justice and reconciliation purposes. This study contributes with relevant insights that instruct and inform courts and tribunals “that their work is capable of providing some sense of justice to victims” (Hodzic, 2010, 113). This way, the author sustains that

courts can improve their job in accounting for the victims' narratives and end impunity at the same time.

The argumentation on counter-impunity extends beyond these arguments, and when considering the implications on individual victims, which I resume next.

Blanket Amnesty and its Implications on Individual Victims (insights of conditional amnesty)

Reflecting on the implications of blanket amnesty over victims, Mani suggests that “peacebuilding through amnesty cannot achieve or redress the actual needs of victims of conflict” (2002,127). Critically, it is noted that advocates for peacebuilding focus more on the reconstruction of state institutions than on attending victims' rights to justice, which Mani proposes encourages further conflict. Emphasising the victims' needs, Karstedt adds that, as the law of blanket amnesty does not solicit the presence of victims in post-conflict scenarios, this results in divided truths restraining possible shared narratives from dealing with the past (Karstedt, 2010, 24). Therefore, Kislá (2020) claims that a blanket amnesty prolongs a culture of silence, “oblivion and impunity without any kind of accountability,” preventing trials and investigations to address grave crimes and human rights violations (2020). Furthermore, blanket amnesty prolongs the victims' suffering (Egbai, Chimakonam, 2019). Thus, the victims' voice is essential for acknowledgement and self-healing, suggesting that more participation and accountability would help to heal and reconcile as other narratives would come into play.

To these arguments, Carlson (2012) contributes when reporting on the amnesty legislation in Afghanistan. The “forgive and forget” reconciliation policy released from prosecution not only former combatant rebels but also protected the government from answering for human rights abuses like beheadings and rapes (2012, 415), “leaving thousands of victims of violence and their families without the opportunity to seek justice” (2012, 418). Emphasising this perspective, Blaauw (2002) shows that the suffering of survivor victims can be physically and emotionally overwhelming due to the lack of official acknowledgement of the past. Therefore, impunity has several social and psychological consequences over survivors that aggravate with time as it “creates a strong feeling of lack of control and powerlessness in individuals” (Blaauw, 2002, 781). Hence, the argument stresses the importance of victims being visible, part of transitional societies, and having a voice for

accountability, entailing an official acknowledgement of victims' sufferings in opposition to impunity and silence.

Continuing with the adverse effects of the blanket amnesty, Haldemann (2011) questions if granting total amnesty for gross human rights abuses is "morally acceptable" as he considers amnesty as a form of impunity and official denial. In positioning the victim in the centre of transitional justice mechanisms, the author debates the victimised who "have the moral reasons" to feel neglected and humiliated with the policies adopted in the aftermath of atrocities. The author elucidates the concept of collective denial and how it relates to total or conditional amnesty practices. Taking the example of the South African TRC, the process facilitated "some degree of accountability by making amnesty conditional on full disclosure of offenders' crimes" (2011, 2). However, Blaauw (2002) cautiously warns that the "disclosure of truth (...) does justice to the people who have been victimised, but it does not administer justice over perpetrators" (2002, 781). As such, Haldemann also considers that truth-telling may not be sufficient for the victim. After all, the offender goes free without any requirements to take responsibility while the victim is left 'empty-handed' - "a high price to ask victims to pay" (2012, 22). For the author, the TRC's lack of punishment policy "carries a heavy moral burden" (2012, 22), and therefore, the victims have the moral reasons for feeling insulted and humiliated (2012, 23).

The literature reflects on how blanket amnesty imposes silence on the victims and how this affects them. According to Otake, either enforced or as a coping mechanism, silence aggravates grief, social isolation, and loss of meaning in life and death. Silenced populations worsen the suffering of traumatised individuals, especially those that "are silenced and marginalised in history" (2019, 171). In this reasoning, amnesty enforced by a suppressing political environment "prevented individuals from exposing their stories and experiences, including mentioning the killers and the killed" (2019, 177). These prohibitions included obstructing traditional funeral rituals and other reconciliation systems to help them mourn and "make sense of loss" (Otake, 2019, 171). The author observed that imposed silence through repression increased the suffering to the extent of causing mental health problems (Otake, 2019, 172).

However, to Freeman (2009) and Melander (2009), blanket amnesty is the "necessary evil" to achieve peace and security, and it should always be considered in critical circumstances, as is the case of a protracted civil war (Freeman, 2009, 29). As Melander (2009) finds, when authoritarian regimes add the blanket amnesty law in their peace agreements, this measure decreases the chances of opposing parties renewing fighting and

breaking peace (2009, 4). On the other hand, Freeman (2009) stresses that governments should always pursue justice. Mallinder (2008, 2009) adds that justice can be structured as restorative. Ultimately, Bloomfield et al. (2003) conclude that amnesty should be “the last resource” of extreme circumstances, however, not unconditional but under specific criteria, and when all other options have been drained (2003,110).

To wrap it up, amnesty, either blanket or conditional, is an alternative to prosecution and often most appealing. However, it leaves unresolved the duty to prosecute gross violations of human rights, whatever the type of amnesty. Even conditional, the amnesty means the perpetrator receives a pardon and goes free (Edet and Koofreh, 2018, 140). It is due to this that research divides between favouring prosecution or avoiding it. The amnesty law is the most common source of transitional justice in post-conflict societies, while impunity hardly brings a steady society and reconciliation (Bloomfield et al., 2003,109).

In any case, transitional justice research overlooks the victims’ perception of blanket amnesties because it usually explores other issues surrounding the victim but not *through* the victim. In other words, research reflects mainly macro-level studies. In this regard, Mendeloff (2009) claimed that the transitional justice literature failed in individual-level studies exploring the effects of transitional justice instruments over victims who had suffered mass atrocities. Considering this flaw, Brounéus (2010) evaluated the victim-survivors experiences in the Gacaca courts after the Rwandan genocide. However, what is missing in some micro-level studies are the factors behind their perceptions of transitional justice mechanisms. More precisely, the numerous studies I have gone through lack the relation between the victims’ self-beliefs and the social-political environment, how they cope with it, and how it affects the victims’ core views of transitional justice processes. And, this absence is the cavity in the field I am contributing to, specifically the victims’ core perceptions of blanket amnesties from a psychological perspective.

The research on the role of amnesty in transitional justice processes and its implications on the victims hasn’t gone too far yet. For example, why do some contest amnesties and want their voices heard (Hodzic, 2010), while others accept forgiving and pardon in exchange for truth-telling (Villa-Vicencio, 2010), and some bow to silence as a way of living (Otake, 2019)? Other disciplines should introduce their perspectives when considering the relationship between transitional justice mechanisms and victims of massive violence. While victims react to imposed transitional justice mechanisms and researchers study these reactions, I ask their perceptions of transitional justice, and why they differ in these thoughts about, specifically, the blanket amnesty. There aren’t any studies looking

through the victims' perceptions of amnesties reflecting their self-awareness of capabilities and political environment opportunity structures. This paper aims to fill this lacuna by bringing victims' psychological perspectives on blanket amnesties. In other words, I contribute by looking how victims' self-efficacy influences perceptions of blanket amnesties as transitional justice mechanisms. I argue that self-efficacy impacts how victims perceive both the political environment structures for change and the opportunities to make the change, reflecting in their perceptions of blanket amnesty, a condition that, after all, affects their developmental paths and their lives.

This study adopts a social-psychological model to the case study, the theory of self-efficacy proposed by Bandura (1997), whose social cognitive logic mechanism was confirmed and used in several other observations (Solomon et al. 1988, 1991; Benight et al., 2000). Studies emphasise the importance of increasing the victims' self-efficacy to overcome hardship and detect how a shift in their self-awareness affects their perceptions and actions, marking the difference between engagement or disengagement attitudes towards society. Finally, I come to add this logic to studies of transitional justice processes. The following section explains this model and how I apply it to the case study.

Research Design

In this section, I detail the self-efficacy model as a *thinking tool* to help interpret and understand the phenomena I seek to study. After this, I demonstrate the methodological approach I used to answer the research question.

Theoretical Overview

This study applies the self-efficacy concept of Albert Bandura (1977) to survivors of mass violence to find out how the level of their efficacy beliefs impacts their perceptions of amnesty and their engagement in the social-political environment. According to the author and his colleague, the *sense of personal efficacy* (the person's belief system) is the foundation of human agency (Benight and Bandura, 2004, 1131). Therefore, these efficacy beliefs operate an influential role in causal structures (Bandura, 1997, 35). As a result, thought processes are cognitive activities that exert determinative influence over human functioning (Bandura, 1997,4). Accordingly, cognitive productions raise senses of personal efficacy, which once formed, these efficacy beliefs regulate aspirations, motivations, decisions and actions in general (ibid, 4). Therefore, this study considers the first three indicators to determine the victims' level of self-efficacy and studies how levels of self-efficacy impact the perception of blanket amnesty and engagement in Angola, which are my dependent variables. I want to demonstrate that the victims' self-efficacy level shown through their aspirations, motivations and decisions, which demonstrate their sense of personal efficacy, influences their perceptions of amnesty and their engagement in the social-political environment.

In the next section, I disclose the independent variable of self-efficacy and its mechanism to focus on its indicators. Then, in a different chapter, I explain the dependent variable and how both variables correlate.

Independent Variable: Self-Efficacy, a Mechanism of Human Agency

Bandura (1977) proposes a new paradigm in which *consciousness* is functional and internal, involving information processing from the background and personal capabilities for selecting and constructing courses of action (Bandura, 2001a, 2). Accordingly, to make it through a complex and challenging world full of hazards, individuals must make a proper judgment about their capacities, “anticipate the probable effects of different events,” measure “socio-structural opportunities and constraints,” make decisions and take actions, respectively (Bandura, 2001, 3). This way, to decide and finally engage in action, individuals are conscious about their capabilities to change their political or social environment because they believe that there are opportunities to change social-political structures. This is the internal mechanism that develops self-awareness which makes individuals “self-examiners of their functioning” (2001, 10), carry responsibility, and are instruments (agents) in their environment. This *cognitive process* in which individuals assess their capabilities and process information from the environment develops a level of self-efficacy indicated in their aspirations, motivations, and decisions, regulating their perceptions and actions (behaviours) translated into engagement or disengagement from the environment (Bandura, 2012). This study will focus on the three indicators - aspirations, motivations, and decisions. These indicators reflect the victims’ self-efficacy level affecting their judgment about social-political structures, opportunity changes, their perceptions of transitional justice outcomes, and finally, their engagement or disengagement in the socio-political situation. First, I will disclose the self-efficacy indicators and explain its mechanism more in-depth to, finally, apply it to the victims of conflict violence.

The Theoretical Framework of Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is founded in self-awareness of capabilities and environmental perceptions influencing the persons’ functionality demonstrated through aspirations, motivations, decisions and actions (Bandura et al., 2001a; Benight and Bandura, 2004, 1131; Bandura, 2012). In practical terms, according to Bandura, *self-efficacy* is a mechanism that reflects the individual’s beliefs in their capability to “exercise some measure of control over their functioning and environmental events” (Bandura, 1997; 2001, 10). And, these beliefs affect the way individuals think in *self-enhancing* or *self-debilitating* ways, influencing how they

self-motivate and endure in the face of difficulties (Bandura, 2012). This way, the person's aspirations (goals), motivations (incentives to act) and decisions (choices) are part of a *cognitive process* that reveals if the person is resilient to adversity or vulnerable to stress, the quality of emotional life, and the choices made at critical decisional moments in their lives. At the core of these paths is the conscious belief in one's capacity to produce some control and resilience, defining the person's level of self-efficacy (Benight and Bandura, 2004,1131).

In the face of traumatic events, self-efficacy plays a crucial role in response to stress, the 'quality of coping' in threatening situations (Bandura, 1997,321, 322), and how it affects reactions' intensity and persistence, fear, and constraint. Therefore, it is time to associate the victims' level of self-efficacy with their judgments and engagement with transitional justice mechanisms put in place in the aftermath of mass violence. Overall, the personal level of self-efficacy demonstrates the belief in one's ability to organise and execute the actions needed to solve a problem or accomplish a task, simultaneously reducing the perceived vulnerability to stressors (Bandura 1977, 322; Ozer and Bandura, 1990). This means that people with high levels of self-efficacy believe in problem-solving while, on the contrary, people with low self-efficacy lack the belief in problem-solving and the ability to undertake certain tasks in specific domains, which reflects in their perceptions and engagement. In short, these levels influence beliefs of one's capabilities towards the environment, and thus, over decisions and actions.

To this end, the model finds that self-efficacy has a relationship with the persons' aspirations, motivations, and decision-making reflecting in one's behaviour towards society (Bandura, 1997, 35). It predicts that high aspirations, motivations, and decisions to accomplish specific actions change from disengagement to engagement (Bandura (vimeo), 2012; Bandura, 2012). This study reveals what this means regarding the victims' perceptions of transitional justice processes and behaviour, a relation that has not yet been analysed among victims of massacres.

In the following sections, I explore the factors that indicate a person's self-efficacy level to discern the coping strategies people adopt when facing the environment.

Aspirations

People either have high or low aspirations, which makes it an indicator of the level of self-efficacy. The basis for one's aspirations is people thinking in self-enhancing (optimistic) or

self-debilitating (pessimistic) ways influencing one's functioning (Bandura, 1994; 2008). The reality is that the stronger the self-efficacy, the higher the goal aspirations people adopt and persevere in their commitment to them (Bandura, 1991; Locke and Latham, 1990). It is also true the opposite when considering low levels of self-efficacy.

The American Psychological Association's Dictionary of Psychology defines the concept of aspiration as "an ambition, goal, or any kind of the desired end that might be achieved through personal effort" (2015, p. 79). Aspirations are the goals someone wishes to achieve, making aspirations somewhat idealized, approximating "hopes" (Seginer 2009; Bozzato, 2020). According to Bandura (1997), the causal agency resides first in goals that the mind sets in forethought (1997,128). Evidence from research on the level of aspiration shows that people set their goals often higher than their proved capacities (Ryan, 1970; Bandura, 1997, 130). However, others are left with self-doubts that they can achieve specific goals, judging themselves as inefficacious and lowering their aspirations (Bandura, 1997:130). Therefore, it is a concept that psychologists often consider not realistic instead of more objective appraisals of the future (Bozzato, 2020, 2). Indeed, Bandura considers this relationship between aspirations and realism, asserting that those with higher aspirations are more unrealistic than those with lower aspirations who assume reality with such objectivity that stressors overwhelm them, constraining them from engagement (Bandura, 2012). Accordingly, "to succeed in tough undertakings, one cannot afford to be a stark realist. Realists forgo formidable activities; are easily discouraged by failures should they try, or they become cynics about the prospect of effecting changes" (Bandura, 2012). Regarding the argument above, the closer aspirations portray reality, the lower one's self-efficacy. A high efficacy level is a buffer that safeguards individuals from the adverse environment and lowers the sense of capacity (Bandura, 2012, 31).

The level of aspirations reveals a related level of self-efficacy, which makes it a good indicator (Bandura et al. 2001a). In general, high and low levels of self-efficacy beliefs are associated with high and low aspirations or goals which affects motivation and decision making. Cognized goals regulate motivation and behaviour (Bandura, 1997,128), a correlation explained in this section. This way, evaluating the victims' aspirations allows one to determine their self-efficacy level and how that relates to their ability to change the social-political hostile environment.

Motivations

Motivation is a general construct that encompasses self-regulatory mechanisms. (Bandura,1997, 228). Motivations are shaped by aspirations as well as the expected results for one's efforts (ibid,35). People choose what challenges to undertake according to their goals, how much effort is dispensed, and how long to endure in the face of difficulties according to their motivation. This way, efficacy beliefs also contribute to the degree of motivation (Bandura,1997,129), which reveals the level of self-efficacy. Therefore, this study assesses the victims' motivations as a valuable indicator of their level of self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy, or beliefs of personal efficacy, creates powerful motivational effects (ibid, 1997, 28). To this end, and in opposition to discouragement, motivations to make a decision and act reveal a high level of self-efficacy. People's efficacy beliefs in attaining their goals determine cause or incentives. In this last case, they readjust aspirations accordingly when they don't believe they can achieve their goals (Campion, Lord, 1982). People adopt personal challenges according to one's capabilities, enduring motivation for the endeavour.

Decisions

Personal capabilities affect decisions or choices (Bandura,1997, 160). Hence, beliefs of personal efficacy play a crucial role in people's lives by influencing their decisions in activities they get into or environments they create (ibid,160). As a result, people either avoid or undertake actions that they feel exceed or fall behind their capabilities. This way, the higher their self-efficacy level, the more challenging the actions they decide to endeavour (Bandura, 1997, 160). Therefore, decisions are an essential indicator in this study.

The selection of a decision is determinant for the evaluation of the level of self-efficacy. Accordingly, decisions produce either significant personal changes or foreclose the person from it according to efficacy beliefs. This way, decision processes elucidate the person's level of self-efficacy: "It is only after people choose to engage in an activity that they mobilize their efforts; generate possible solutions and strategies of action" (Bandura, 1997,161). Decisions set into play previous goals and motivations which otherwise would not affect people's lives. Contrarily, indecisive ones are discouraged from playing their role in the environment aborting attempts or settling for mediocre solutions.

The Interplay Between Indicators

People incentivise themselves and regulate their behaviour considering in advance the outcomes they predict from courses of action (Bandura, 1997,125). Therefore, when accounting for the strength of incentive motivation, one considers possible results with specific actions that should amount to positive outcomes. The basic theory predicts that the higher the goals and expected positive results that specific actions can retrieve, the “greater is the motivation to perform the activity” (Bandura, 1997,125). In addition, the belief in one’s capacity to exercise influence in the outcome of an action is an effective cognitive mechanism triggering motivation to act (ibid,128). This way, goals or aspirations do not activate motivation to action alone; the predicted outcomes are required as an incentive to make a decision.

A person’s *thinking process* - the belief in the ability to make *changes* in the environment - is the motor that regulates aspirations, motivations, and decisions, indicating one’s level of self-efficacy (ibid., 128). Specifically, individuals are motivated to make decisions and engage after evaluating the level of environmental challenge, one’s capabilities to overcome them, and the predicted results from the action (Bandura, 2001,7). This way, a high level of self-efficacy and its corresponding indicators are the senses that trigger effort and engagement, and this motivational process allows for self-efficacy to predict behaviour in dire circumstances.

Perceptions of amnesty and engagement in the social-political sphere account for the dependent variables in this study which I now present.

Dependent Variable: Perceptions of Amnesty and Engagement

According to Bandura, people act on their judgments (Bandura,1997, 5). Considering a war-torn society going through a transitional justice process, when governments adopt the blanket amnesty law in post-war societies, they formalise a national narrative that inevitably suppresses the victims’ stories of past crimes. Thus, how victims view this policy translates into their perceptions of transitional justice mechanisms, thus of blanket amnesty, making it my dependent variable in this study. Furthermore, this study unfolds the relation between the victims’ views and their ability to manage the social-political structures, affecting their self-

efficacy. The result of this correlation either can overwhelm or inspire them to either succumb to or challenge the amnesty law, respectively allowing us to assess their perceptions of amnesty and their level of engagement, making this last one as part of my dependent variable. Essentially, this paper wants to show that perceptions of amnesty and engagement depend on the victims' level of self-efficacy.

Namely, perceptions of amnesty and engagement result from victims' decisions according to their aspirations and motivations. Indeed, I expect that self-efficacy indicators have a tremendous influence on actions and perceptions in post-war societies. Moreover, their sense of capability over environmental stressors influences their performance over the social-political environment and their perceptions of transitional justice processes. Thus, I seek to determine that the victims' level of self-efficacy regulates how much effort people are willing to expend and endure threatening activities, therefore, contesting amnesty or not while engaging or disengaging, influencing their perceptions of transitional justice mechanisms. Victims bear a complex environment in post-war societies. Their level of self-efficacy dictates how they view opportunities in the political environment structure as either worth challenging or withdrawing. Thus, when the victims' self-efficacy level is low, they do not believe they can make a difference in the social-political environment. They perceive the environment as a threat, so they decide to back off from engaging in society. In this case, amnesty is not contested and, therefore, accepted. Those who hold back too soon in coping preserve self-debilitating expectations and fears for a long time, hindering them from making the necessary changes in the environment (Bandura, 2012). In this case, total amnesty is not contested and, thus, accepted, and victims perceive amnesty as positive and do not engage in society.

On the other hand, when victims have a high level of self-efficacy, they believe in their ability to change the social-political structures, consider them as non-threatening, and engage in society to challenge amnesty and, consequently, their perceptions of amnesty are negative. Therefore, the perceptions of amnesty reveal the victims' positive or negative views of opportunities to make a change in the hostile environment. They do not contest amnesty if they do not see opportunities to change, such as their narratives heard. Thus, they disengage, and amnesty is accepted. Still, if they view chances for changing the social-political structures addressing their stories, amnesty is contested, and thus, they engage, and amnesty is unacceptable. This way, victims with high efficacy beliefs want to fight for their narratives to be heard and contest against amnesty. Thus, amnesty is not accepted, and they perceive amnesty as negative while engaging in challenging it.

Regarding engagement, this variable is operationalised by actions. According to Bandura, it is the belief in the power to produce desired effects by one's actions (change in the environment) that gives incentives to act in the face of difficulties (Bandura, 1977, 247; Bandura, 2004, 1131). Hence, the self-awareness of appropriate skills or capabilities, plus adequate incentives (goals and motivations) and decisions, are necessary for engagement (action) to be an option. Therefore, the self-efficacy mechanism influences engagement and perceptions about amnesties.

In the next section, I disclose how victims engage or disengage in hostile environments based on their self-efficacy over managing difficult circumstances. Finally, I reveal the aversive environment as the background of self-efficacy to understand its importance for victims of violence who confront a hostile social-political situation in the aftermath of a conflict. This demonstrates the correlation between perceptions and engagement.

The Impact of Self-efficacy over Engagement in the Aversive Environment

Studies have shown how self-efficacy has helped recover from traumatic events to determine that self-efficacy has a particular function within fearful circumstances. The authors Benight and Bandura (2004) consider that this self-belief defined as the “perceived capability to manage one's functioning” (Benight and Bandura, 2004,1130) is particularly useful for individuals to manage the multiple environmental requests in the aftermath of traumatic events. *Traumatic stressors* include risk, uncertainty, and unruliness (Benight and Bandura, 2004, 1130), in which individuals have experienced or witnessed an event involving the threat of death or grave injury of the self or others and have felt “intense fear, helplessness, or horror in response to the traumatic stressor (ibid,1130). These sensations portray the victims who lived in the context of civil war and survived mass violence.

The research observes that self-efficacy as a belief system emerges as a central *mediator* of post-traumatic recovery, making the model helpful to evaluate the victims' coping measures such as their mindset and perceptions towards the environment and their capabilities to deal with it. People who have experienced traumatic events continue to show “severe stress reactions long after the trauma” (2004,1130). These amount to several different symptoms, among which disengagement from meaningful life circumstances

(2004,1130). The results point out that these reactions reflect one's senses of capabilities to manage an aversive environment (ibid, 1130), affecting the person's aspirations, motivations and decisions (Bandura (vimeo), 2012; Bandura, 2012,13).

According to researchers, self-efficacy contributes *independently* to recovery from these traumatic events through the “enabling and protective function of beliefs in one's capability to exercise some measure of control over traumatic adversity” (Benight and Bandura, 2004,1129). Moreover, self-efficacy is a buffer from the harmful effects of own failures as they cope with difficulties (Bandura, 2012, 31). Therefore, this study aims to demonstrate the correlation between the level of self-efficacy of victims of mass violence and their perceptions about transitional justice inducing to engagement or disengagement from these processes.

The Mechanism: The Victims Agency over an Adverse Environment, Engagement, and the Perceptions of Amnesty

Environment stressors, such as threats, are caused by events and are built by the individual's sense of coping capacities concerning the adverse environment affecting their views and engagement (Bandura, 2012; Bandura, 2012,13). The *mechanism* suggests that people who believe they can control an aversive situation display lower physiological arousal and less performance (action) deficiency. Conversely, those who believe in lacking personal control (low self-efficacy) show higher stress symptoms and high-performance deficiency.

As such, self-awareness of coping abilities determines the imminent danger subjectively. This way, these beliefs influence the more or less vigilance toward potential threats (Benight and Bandura, 2004, 1132). Individuals living in their coping deficiencies magnify the severity of possible threats and worry about possible dangerous situations that might not happen. These “inefficacious” thoughts cause distress and constrain the individual's level of functioning (Bandura, 1997). This illustrates the relationship between negative thoughts and performance of individuals with low levels of self-efficacy, leading to disengagement and positive perceptions of amnesty because they do not contest against it as they do not believe they can make a change in the political situation. In brief, the sense of “self-efficacy to manage intense stressors affects not only how threats are constructed but how well people cope with them” (Benight and Bandura, 2004, 1132), affecting views and

engagement. As such, individuals produce some agency in life circumstances rather than just being their reactors.

Accordingly, those with a high sense of coping efficacy can adopt strategies and actions to change adverse into benign environments. And, these beliefs alleviate stress symptoms favouring perceptions and engagement in society. The stronger the efficacy belief, the fearless the person is in taking the matter at hand, lowering the environment's sense of threat and shaping to one's liking.

People's mind is a world created by the way people think with a tremendous impact on behaviour. While they control what they believe, they contain what to expect and behave, impacting their perceptions. What follows is a strong sense of coping efficacy revealed by favourable judgments of potential threats, weaker stress reactions, and less grave concern leading to better management of a hostile environment and engaging in it.

The individual with high levels of self-efficacy has high, nearly unrealistic aspirations, has high incentives while expecting that the sense of efficacy (efficacy belief) extends beyond the specific task making individuals persist in coping efforts in defiance of an aversive environment. This way, considering the case under analysis, levels of self-efficacy leads to a specific understanding of the threatening environment, affecting specific transitional justice outcomes.

In this reasoning, two hypotheses are considered in this study considering that the level of self-efficacy is the independent variable that leads to specific perceptions and engagement in transitional justice processes consisting in the dependent variable:

1. Victims with low self-efficacy perceive blanket amnesty as acceptable, and they disengage from political society.
2. Victims with a high level of self-efficacy perceive blanket amnesty as unacceptable, and they engage in society seeking to change the social-political structures affecting them.

The self-efficacy mechanism is the foundation of the hypotheses. In short, in the first hypothesis, I expect to find that the victim's self-awareness of low capabilities influences the perception of amnesty as tolerable. On the opposite, the victim's self-awareness of high capabilities shapes the perception of amnesty as intolerable. In the first case, the low self-awareness of one's own capabilities discourages victims from engaging in threatening activities in the political environment and affects their perceptions of transitional justice

mechanisms, and thus, of the amnesty law. In this case, engagement exceeds coping skills that the victims lack. Their low aspirations and motivations advise them that the action against amnesty does not compensate for the risks. Then, there is no motivation to act; thus, victims disengage. This accounts for their perception of amnesty, which reveals as acceptable; therefore, they have a positive view of the amnesty law. According to Bandura's argument, "People of low efficacy are easily convinced of the futility of the effort, and in the face of difficulties, they quickly give up" (Bandura, 2012,13; Bandura (vimeo), 2012). These victims reveal low self-efficacy associated with a miss-belief in their ability to change the environmental structures. Therefore, they accept total amnesty as a transitional justice solution.

On the other hand, victims with high levels of self-efficacy consider the environment as enabling and full of possibilities; therefore, they raise their aspirations and motivations, believing in their capabilities to execute changes in the background while predicting positive outcomes from their engagement. In this case, victims tend to contest against blanket amnesty. These victims extend their approach towards transitional justice to its last consequences; they are not satisfied with total amnesty. Moreover, they consider the prosecution of perpetrators as the right path to achieve justice. As Bandura put it, "Those with high self-efficacy view impediments as surmountable by the development of their competencies and persevered effort; they stay in the course of difficulties" (Bandura, 2012).

In conclusion, the victims' efficacy affects people's emotional life and their vulnerability to stressors affecting perceptions of amnesty and their actions. Post-war societies and transitional justice processes are critical environments, and self-efficacy determines how victims decide about justice processes. These decisions can profoundly influence the courses that life takes and what people become. And citing George Bernard Shaw, Bandura points out, "Reasonable people adapt to the world, unreasonable ones try to change it, human progress depends on unreasonable ones" (Bandura (vimeo),2012).

With the previous transitional justice research in mind, the internal and functional consciousness of the victims processing information for selection, construction, and evaluation of courses of action will fill the literature gap. This study allows us to expand the understanding of the victims in post-war societies, why they feared the Gacaca courts in Rwanda, why they accepted a truth-telling mechanism for amnesties in South Africa, or even why blanket amnesties bring more peace in countries under authoritarian regimes. Victims are agents who clearly understand their abilities and how to cope with the environment they inhabit, and their self-awareness influences their opinions of transitional justice instruments.

In the next chapter, the empirical analysis attempts to prove this correlation.

Next, I will expose the fascinating historical background of this case study and reveal the May 27 massacre told by witnesses of the atrocities. But first, I go through the research methods and demonstrate why I selected this case study and how I engaged in this research.

Methodology

This case study requires the victims' narratives on their experiences and thoughts. Therefore, I interviewed orphans and survivors of the May 27 massacre because I needed to know their views of the blanket amnesty implemented in Angola in 2002. I took an ethically informed decision to conduct the study according to a research methodology design (Brounéus, 1998, 148). For this purpose, I take responsibility for all factors involved from the research design until the conclusion of the research process.

I have selected a qualitative research approach to this case study to verify the hypotheses proposed by the research question. Furthermore, I intend to extract and interpret the victims' self-efficacy level and their views of amnesty. Therefore, it is helpful to employ qualitative methods in this research because it is easier to measure the victims' perceptions and behaviour. For example, to evaluate their reactions to impunity and their self-awareness through qualitative methods, especially if interviews are used as a method of data-gathering (Brounéus, 1998, 134).

Based on secondary and primary sources, I expose the events of May 27, 1977, and the foundation of the blanket amnesty in Angola, the government's attitude towards methods of reconciliation and transitional justice, and finally, I want to find out how victims understand these official measures to answer my research question.

Case Selection and The Single Case Study Method

This study is about the blanket amnesty in Angola, more precisely, the victims' perceptions of blanket amnesty in Angola after mass violence. I choose this case because it has not been

represented much before, and it communicates to a broader population of other countries where there are blanket amnesties. Furthermore, this case analysis aims to explain the case under investigation and shed light on similar situations of blanket amnesty and transitional justice processes. This possibility of generalising my case to a larger class of cases defines a case study (Gerring, 2017, 30). Therefore, I select the single case study analysis as it gives me a chance to engage and contribute to empirical knowledge.

The single case study analysis grants a more effective investigation and better comprehension of the complex issues in real-world settings (Harrison et al., 2017). The case study methodology requires highly focused research consuming a significant amount of time in analysis and its subsequent presentation of the case and its findings that support the argument (Gerring, 2017, 28). In addition, the case study approach allows me to uncover details of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test explanations that may broaden to other similar situations (George and Bennett, 2005, 4). Drawing on characteristics of the case, this method is usually used to explain outcomes and events, conveying special lessons to politics, society, human nature, and ultimately, contributing to a better knowledge of the world (Gerring, 2017, 4). While I evaluate a group of victims and their perceptions of the blanket amnesty in Angola, my case analysis pertains to politics and society. It provides a formative message to policymakers in transitional justice processes and post-war societies.

Case studies examine the generalisation of causal mechanisms in singular cases in detail (George and Bennet, 2005, 21). This way, my case study aims for causal inference: I want to find out the role of victims' self-efficacy in perceptions of blank amnesty and engagement in transitional justice processes. Therefore, there is causal reasoning in which levels of self-efficacy cause different perceptions of amnesty. Within a single case study, I can observe some intervening variables, observe causal mechanisms, or identify conditions causing the mechanism (George and Bennet, 2005, 21). This would not be possible in statistical studies that would oust all contextual factors (George and Bennett, 2005, 21). In this method, I use a theory (self-efficacy) to explain the causal mechanism and provide psychological explanations of historical settings. Therefore, this case study benefits from a cross-disciplinary analysis.

As this theory has not been tested in this context, I consider this case study a *theory-testing* case analysis (George and Bennett, 2005,75.) The single case study allows me to identify and measure indicators that best represent the theoretical concept I intend to measure (ibid,19). My variables, such as the perception of amnesty and the victims' self-efficacy levels and indicators, require detailed consideration of contextual factors best

achieved in case studies (ibid,19). This approach (single case study) is robust where statistical methods are inappropriate (George and Bennett, 2005,19). Therefore, the single case analysis is the best choice for my research.

Research Objectives

The evaluation of the victims' interviews was undertaken according to the theoretical self-efficacy framework. The victims' self-efficacy is grounded on the belief in causal capabilities. Here lie human aspirations, motivation, and accomplishments. This is what I sought in the interviews. What are the victims' beliefs and aspirations, how much are they motivated by goals when measuring results from decisions and actions, and how strong are their convictions when they say institutions must do justice? Some used the expressions or words "force the government" and "demand," others said, "I would like to" or "it is not possible, for now, we must wait." I aimed to single out their thoughts about their goals, motivations, and decisions to observe the causal effects on the dependent variable, their perceptions of amnesty and actions (George and Bennett, 2005,77). This way, it is possible to capture the victims' self-efficacy level and explain a noticeable variation in the dependent variable (George and Bennett, 2005, 77). This is an investigative and exploratory process to clarify the importance of the victims' self-efficacy in transitional justice processes while accounting for their perceptions of the total amnesty in Angola.

Qualitative Research Design

As this is a sensitive case, I pursued a systematic rule-governed work that keeps me uninvolved and able to maintain distance from the phenomena being studied (Titscher, Stefan, et al. 2000, cp.1). When building a case study to investigate causality, one looks for the relevant actors to interview (Mosley, 2013,113). According to my research question, victims are my "relevant actors" (ibid,113) due to their particular connection to the case. The most effective way to learn about people's thoughts and lives is by asking them (Lune and Berg, 2017, 172). Therefore, I started my research by looking for survivors and orphans of the May 27 massacre in secondary sources seeking names as a starting point. I also tried to use my relationships to reach victims as I lived in Portugal for a long time, and I can get to some people living in Angola. To my surprise, I had considerable drawbacks from these pursuits. Gaining access to victims living in Angola and even to some Angolans living in Portugal was difficult since, often, they refused to speak about the May 27 massacre because it became

a *taboo* subject among Angolans. As the environment surrounding May 27 is threatening, these people are ‘marginalised’, making them hard to find because they tend to hide (Cohen and Arieli, 2011). Fortunately, the snowball sampling method was the answer to my challenge, and I could reach 12 victims to interview, enough required by research methods (Baker and Edwards, 2013: 10). In this method, subjects recruit other subjects from among their acquaintances, increasing the researcher’s chances of reaching more people. Yet, while facilitating access, “the snowball technique also increases the potential for bias” due to reaching people through personal networking who might tend to answer questions differently than would otherwise be the case (Mosley, 2013, 115). For this technique to work, granting confidentiality was crucial for the interviewees (ibid, 115). This way, I approached four orphans from forced disappeared parents and eight survivors from concentration camps living in Portugal or Angola from May 27 victims’ associations. The following section investigates methods of data collection from semi-structured interviews.

Data Collection and Semi-Structured Interviews

It seems plausible to employ qualitative methods in this research because I wanted to investigate the victims’ attitudes. Furthermore, it is easier to measure behaviour such as reactions to impunity, the victims’ views of the past sufferings and awareness through qualitative methods that can handle several factors and relationships simultaneously (Titscher et al., 2000). These reasons brought me to select interviews as a method of data-gathering (Brounéus, 1998, 134).

According to Lune and Berg (2017), an interview is “a conversation with a purpose (..) to gather information” (2017, 65). It can also be an art (Grobel, 2004) exercised in a performance “in which the researcher and subject play off of one another toward a common end” (Lune and Berg, 2017, 66). Accordingly, it is up to the researcher to follow a script or to improvise (ibid:66). Mosley (2013) sets the ‘performance’ and its importance in the political spectrum. Interviews are an important, and often an essential tool for making sense of political phenomena” (Mosley, 2013, 2). When interviewing people, the researcher can “interact directly with the individuals who populate our theoretical models” (Mosley, 2013, 2). If social outcomes are essential for the research, “in terms of the beliefs, incentives, and behaviours of individuals— interviews can directly and deeply assess the roots of individual actions and attitudes” (ibid, 2013, 2), and this is precisely what I am looking for in data

gathering. Moreover, interviews disclose causal mechanisms allowing for constructing “more-general theories” or for “testing the accuracy of theories” (Mosley, 2013, 2). As Mosley refers to interviews, they “were a direct window into identifying cause and effect” (Mosley, 2013, 4), which is also what I look for to reveal with my data collection: the causal mechanism between victims’ levels of self-efficacy and transitional justice and actions.

I find that the most suitable way to handle the research question is by collecting data through individual semi-structured interviews (Gubrium et al., 2012,197). Particularly, the semi-structured interview is designed to capture subjective responses from individuals concerning a particular situation or phenomenon they have experienced (McIntosh and Morse, 2015, 1). It allows me to understand their perceptions of events and certain phenomena (Lune and Berg, 2017, 70), which I want to find about the victims. In addition, semi-structured interviews are helpful when the researcher knows about the theme but cannot predict all the answers (Gubrium et al., 2012,197).

Choices in research design are fundamental to reaching research goals. Because I want to establish the causal effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable (Mosley, 2013, 113), drawing a questionnaire with *designful* research questions and interpreting answers from interviewees are core abilities that matter for the case study and its analysis (Mosley, 2013, 109). This leads to “draw generalised conclusions and to interpret the way the world works” (ibid, 109). To this extent, a well-designed interview is a tool for testing hypotheses and formative social goals (ibid, 109). The technique is to absorb enough uncertainty in the interview “to allow for unanticipated insights” such as “stories, surprises, and synchronicity that an interview has to offer” to balance subjectivity with more specific information (Mosley, 2013, 109).

In the next section, I describe how I did these interviews according to the suggested methods of semi-structured interviews and my research agenda.

The Interviews

I was interested in the aspect of the theory in which individuals reveal their levels of self-efficacy in contrast to their perceptions of amnesty. So, I developed the indicators, but I transformed them into questions that I would ask in my semi-structured interviews. Each responded to the same type of questions, and the interviews lasted approximately one hour. After the victims’ previous consent, I conducted the interviews using the Zoom platform and

WhatsApp mobile application to use the camera from these platforms. Using the camera allowed me to create a trusted atmosphere when interviewing because the respondent and I could see each other (Brounéus, 2011, 140). This is particularly important in this case study because truth-telling is not encouraged in Angola, and even less regarding the May 27 massacre.

Semi-structured or semi-standardised interviews are a qualitative type of interview consisting of open questions to which participants are allowed the freedom to stray. It may include more incisive and insightful questions that could have been planned or emerging from the participant's response (Gubrium et al., 2012,197). Interviewees are expected to dive far beyond the replies to prepared questions (Lune and Berg, 2017, 69). Likewise, these types of interviews also allow some freedom for the interviewer to ask further questions, besides the prepared ones, when the interviewees provide additional information considered relevant to the case study (Lune and Berg, 2017, 69).

Semi-structured interviews are beneficial because it allows me to get to know the thoughts of each individual, which is crucial to follow the victims' cognitive process (Adams, 2015, 492). Furthermore, the open-ended interviews allow the subjects to discourse about their thoughts and the interaction to flow back and forth with the interviewer to help them reach an answer (Lune and Berg, 2017, 71). For this purpose, I addressed the interviewees in a "gently (...) conversational" fashion to create a comfortable and encouraging atmosphere to build trust and empathy while leading the interviewees through the well-prepared questionnaire (Brounéus, 2011, 136).

I prepared the questions to cover the topic, and the expected replies could be collected (Gubrium et al., 2012,197). Questions were designed for theory testing purposes and for the opportunity to "follow respondents' core concerns about the dependent variable" (Mosley, 2013, 117). There were crucial topics that needed to be addressed and which I listed as a first step. Then, I created relevant questions related to the significant conceptual subject matters (Lune and Berg, 2017, 72). The design of the interviews was meant to provide qualitative data (Mosley, 2013,117).

The questions followed a particular order for all participants equally. This way, it was helpful to start with simple and easy inquiries to answer, such as non-intrusive demographics (Adam, 2015, 498). Usually, "where and when were you born?" would start the conversation because it would take them back to the events of the May 27 massacre. But before getting here, the chat would warm up with some family information. This allowed me to get to know the person, break the ice, and specially set the person comfortable with the

topic before reaching out to more challenging questions (Lune and Berg, 2017, 72; Adam, 2015, 498). I found this approach easier to introduce the victims into their past stories because before heading into the amnesty topic, I had to know what they had gone through and how they were affected by the events. Next, I started with some of the more critical questions for the topic at hand (each question focusing on a single topic) (Lune and Berg, 2017, 73), such as the membership in a victims' association. As the conversation developed and I got some answers, I intercepted follow-up questions (Adams, 2015, 492) while showing *active listening* and trying to "read between the lines" (Brounéus, 2011,137). More sensitive questions followed to let the respondent dive into the topic, such as feeling threatened. At this point, I blended closed- and open-ended questions, often accompanied by follow-up *why* or *how* questions (Adams, 2015, 492). This helped to hold the interview flow so I could finally ask the crucial question: what they think about the blanket amnesty. Overall, it was essential to make the interviewees feel that I, as the listener, reflected by using non-verbal listening techniques, and for this purpose, the camera was crucial (Adams, 2015, 502). My role was to listen actively and reflectively to keep the conversation mode while retaining the right track. It is easy to get lost in the story of the events as all survivors wanted to clarify the May 27 events (Lune and Berg, 2017, 73).

Next, after collecting data, I transcribed all interviews. Finally, all data were analysed item-by-item systematically using the *content text analysis* method (Gubrium et al., 2012,197; McIntosh and Morse, 2015,2), which I will explain in the next section.

Qualitative Data Analysis: Content Analysis

Content analysis is the backbone of most qualitative analysis (Lune and Berg, 2017, 181). I analysed collected data methodologically, transformed it into information, and interpreted it through using a system of categories coded in the Maxqda system to classify textual elements as "uniformly as possible" (Titscher, et al., 2000, cp.1; Lune and Berg, 2017, 181, 182). Content analysis is performed on all forms of human communication, interviews included (Lune and Berg, 2017, 182). Accordingly, to content analysis methods, how one interprets the textual transcripts depends partly on the theoretical orientation adopted by the researcher (Lune and Berg, 2017, 183). According to the method, texts were coded as data in a form that considers the self-efficacy model to address research questions (ibid,182, 183). I coded categories to organise data from the interview transcripts to distinguish trends in indicators

and causal mechanisms (Lune and Berg, 2017, 183). Therefore, I used a grounded theoretical approach to content analysis (ibid,183). Victims' memos were produced, as well as memos explaining categories. I used analytic codes derived from the theory reflecting the theoretical framework I have adopted to view the study (Lune and Berg, 2017, 184). This means that, for example, I talked with respondents about what they believe is possible to reach given the circumstances, and I coded the data as 'efficacy beliefs.'

This way, the investigative process was organised in individual case studies where thoughts, attitudes and observations were interpreted in light of the theoretical framework and coded, which I will expose more clearly in the next section.

Evaluation in the Scope of the Self-efficacy Model

Following Bandura's model, I developed my indicators based on the self-efficacy theory and independent and dependent variables. I have chosen as the primary domain the victims' self-efficacy within a transitional justice process. The model requires the discrimination of four specific facets, which I have categorised in Maxqda: aspirations, motivations, decisions, actions, to which I added efficacy beliefs, positivism, negativism, environment, silence, and relation with Angola. This categorisation requires taking as much information as possible from the interviews. For example, to achieve the explanatory power of the victims' capabilities, I measured their efficacy beliefs through their aspirations, which is indicated respectively in their hopes and goals: what they want to achieve. This corresponds to the model's main principle, which emphasises that - "I believe; therefore, I achieve." Then, I disclosed their motivations in the face of current impediments, i.e., what they predict being capable of reaching while facing an adverse environment. Some victims demonstrate disbelief, while others expect a positive outcome from the CIVICOP⁶ to accomplish their goals. These incentives and beliefs directly affect their decisions, reflecting in perceptions of transitional justice and actions. Meanwhile, I measure how they handle the environment and their positive or negative considerations.

The victims indicate how they intend to change the course of their present situation if displeased, suggesting a decision-for-action for change in face of situational adversities. This shows their self-efficacy. This category should be used if there is a) personal

⁶ CIVICOP: Reconciliation Plan in Memory of Victims of the Armed Conflicts in Angola. The new president Joao Lourenco launched this Commission to deal with reconciliation among the Angolan people who suffered from the civil conflict and all related violence, including the May 27 massacre.

influence on the transitional process, b) actual personal behaviour, and c) behavioural intentions are stated. A factor that influences choice behaviour can profoundly affect the courses that life takes and what people become. "Beliefs affect the slate of options people consider and the choices they make at important decisional points (...) (which influences) the course of their life paths and what they become." (Bandura, 2012, 13). Finally, I evaluate their actions and engagement and contrast them with their perceptions of amnesty.

I reveal tendencies and patterns that are important to graduate levels of self-efficacy and how it reflects in perceptions and choices of action. With this study analysis, I disclose valuable findings and reach relevant conclusions for the transitional justice field of study.

Ethics

There was an ethical consideration towards the interviewees because these individuals went through highly traumatic events. Going back in time might help alleviate the suffering or revive it. According to Brounéus (2011), clarifying the interviewee about the aim of the research and getting the victim contentment to give the interview prepares h/him for what is expected, and this might prevent re-traumatisation (2011, 144). Therefore, spiterit is essential to acknowledge the sensibility of the situation to "ensure that no harm is done to the participants" (Brounéus, 2011, 138). Cautiously, I have the ethical responsibility to conduct the interview not too deep, so it does not get out of control, but just enough to keep the semi-structured interviews aligned with the questions. This direction and "regulations" also help me to be comprehensive while objective, preserving some distance. There is no space for therapy in this kind of interview with a research objective to be accomplished. However, I have noticed from all participants the relief in talking about their past and present suffering. Keeping the balance politely and respectfully is crucial (ibid, 139). This is also valid, especially when it comes to the researcher's feelings of hopelessness, anger or sorrow that might arise while growing in empathy.

In the next chapter, I reveal the historical background in which the victims lived and the environment they currently go through based on secondary and primary sources.

Empirical Analysis

In this chapter, I will apply and test the theoretical model with the help of the selected methods and the sources identified as most suitable for this study. For a start, I reveal the historical background to then immerse in the presentation of data and its analysis.

Historical Background

In this section, I present the onset of the May 27, 1977, massacre and the civil war context in which it developed, followed by the establishment of the blanket amnesty law in Angola after a protracted civil war. This way, one can understand the background of the victims and their aspirations, motivations, and decisions regarding processes of transitional justice.

May 27 Massacre, 1977

Immediately after Angolan independence on November 11, 1975, internal dissents challenged the interim government led by the pro-communist MPLA leadership, its corruptive policies, and the tight military alliance with Cuba (Amnesty International Report 1984, 3). As a result, the MPLA⁷ expelled its critics, Nito Alves⁸ and his closest colleague Jose Van Dunem from the Central Committee, accusing them of *fraccionismo*,⁹ or ‘splitters’ of the party (Mateus, 2007, 113). A week later, in the first hours of May 27, the 9th Brigade (supporters of Alves), a small female battalion, launched an attack on São Paulo Prison, freeing several people linked to Nito Alves, called *nitistas* (Nito Alves supporters) (Mateus, 2007).¹⁰ At dawn, the National Radio was taken announcing the end of DISA’s¹¹ repression and the freedom of “the revolutionary comrades, unjustly accused of traitors (Aflalo, Revista, 1977, 21). Hundreds gathered in front of the National Radio, but not for long (Cabrita, 1992). Backed up by the

⁷ MPLA: The People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola

⁸ Nito Alves had been Minister of the Interior until October 1976.

⁹ ‘Fractionism:’ name given by the MPLA to supporters of Nito Alves, and who were considered as wanting to divide the party.

¹⁰ Such as members of the Revolutionary Council and members of the FAPLA’s Political Commissariat.

¹¹ DISA: Direção de Informação e Segurança de Angola (Angolan Information and Security Direction) was the State secret police.

Cubans, DISA launched a violent response, referred to as “*a limpeza*” (the clean-up), to the alleged “coup attempt” against its leadership and any suspected followers (Aflalo, Revista, 1977, 21). After four MPLA commandants were found dead,¹² the President outraged words against the *nitistas* handing in power to execute without trial to the security forces,” we will not lose time with prosecutions” (MPLA, Boletim n3, 1977; Mateus, 2007, 115). Thenceforth, an aggressive retaliation disseminated from North to South and West to East of Angola, launching a wave of terror with massive proportions culminating in the deliberate massacre of all suspected *nitistas* (Mateus, 2007, 107-123).

On the evening of May 27, massive raids dragged hundreds of people to execution sites all over the country (Mateus, 2007, 117). Immediately targeted were all related to the masses organisations (women, youth and syndicates), the armed forces political commissars,¹³ especially from the 9th Brigade (none from the female battalion survived) (Mateus, 2007, 152), and all from the ‘popular power,’ such as *Comissões de Bairro* (Neighborhood Commissions), members of the Central Committee and the Political Bureau that supported Nito Alves with the assumption that *nitistas* infiltrated all institutions, universities and the organisations of the masses (Mateus, 2007, 118). Several commissars and governors of Luanda, Benguela and Malanje provinces were executed (Valles, 43-45). Superiors started to order the killings, including the President himself, who signed lists of people to be eliminated, as reported by Iko Carreira¹⁴ in an interview, “One day, one of the lists had 300 names” (*Revista Expresso, 1996*). Then, the situation went out of control when DISA staff arbitrarily escalated the killings from the high rankings to the populations in several provinces (Mateus, 2007, 152). Vidigal, ex-prisoner, says, “The executions were summary and were no longer based on lists. It happened in all provinces from Cabinda to Cunene (...) There were people thrown through the Tundavala Crack.”¹⁵ In the morning of May 27, 1977, security forces arrested many young people hanging around the city as if they had been in the popular manifestation. They took hundreds to the Centre of Revolutionary Instruction (CIR) in the Eastern front, and the local leaders executed them in cold blood (Cosme, 2004, 79). In the outskirts of Luanda, a group of soldiers were rounded up and shot in the head “one by one” (Mateus, 2007, 153). Only in Malanje, more than one thousand

¹² Among them, there were members of the Central Committee, members of the General Staff of the FAPLA and of the Revolution Council, and the Minister of Finance.

¹³ These commissars represented the MPLA in the armed forces in the southern, centre and eastern fronts in the independence war, including the national political commissar Bakalov, the responsible for the propaganda department and the responsible for the general staff department), (Mateus, 2007, 152).

¹⁴ Iki Carreira was part of the president’s circle of influence.

¹⁵ This is a Crack with straight 1000 meters located in Huila

people were shot and many others in the provinces of Moxico, Huambo, Lobito, Benguela, Uige and Ndalatando (ibid). In Bie, 300 people were killed, and in all regions, the executions proceeded for months and even years while *nitistas* suspects were kept in prison camps and summoned for execution (Mateus, 2007, 152). Students were ordered to come back from Eastern European countries, including from the Soviet Union (USSR), who at arrival was immediately arrested without receiving any explanation. Several were decapitated without knowing the reason. An ex-prisoner reveals what he witnessed, “I watched the students’ arrival from Cuba, directly from the ship to the seclusion house where they were put into cells. After that, the guards sent bursts against the cell. All died. The following testimonials from ex-prisoners reveal how DISA, with full power, performed the massacre (Pawson, 2014).

José Maria da Costa (ex-prisoner) says that without explanations to the parents, “DISA started to go inside people’s homes to ‘catch’ young intellectuals, artists, sportsmen, and businessmen” and take them to “execution sites” (Folha 8, May 26/1998, 6).¹⁶ Francisco Michel, says, “every day at night people was taken to be executed” (Michel, 2007, 54). Vidigal says, “people were taken in the dead of night in ambulances and vans to killing sites.” A Cuban doctor, Dr Martinez, details these operations. He witnessed the execution of his hospital staff along with 17 Angolans in the outskirts of Luena, “In front of the ditch stood seventeen Angolans accused of being *nitistas*,” including his assistant, Cristina, who was pregnant, and other nurses. He was forced to sign death certificates stating, ‘road accident.’ The firing squad was made up of Angola FAPLA troops assisted by the Cubans (Pawson, 2014, 238).¹⁷ When in the concentration camp, “prisoners were forced to open 12 ditches.” Francisco Michel, detained for three years in Moxico, says, “Every day, at least 14 prisoners were killed. Hundreds were killed. I buried people to survive!” Zeca reveals, “I saw people who were going to be interrogated and who never came back. One of these was Ademar Valles, the brother of Sita Valles, who was killed in March 1978.” These testimonials detail DISA’s movements and actions reaching out with its tentacles to all corners of the country. The number of killings is uncertain. However, Amnesty International has reported on the May 27 massacre “a considerable number of people were executed after the (alleged) coup attempt,

¹⁶ The main members of the Central Committee involved in the insurrection were Nito Alves, José Van-Dunem, João Jacob Caetano (known as *Monstro Imortal*, Immortal Monster), Eduardo Gomes da Silva (Bakaloff). They escaped from Luanda but were persecuted and captured by DISA one by one. They were tortured, and without trial, they were executed (Mateus, 2007).

¹⁷ This included the head of the Cuban regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Masso, and the adviser to the Cuban Ministry of the Interior, Colonel Eloy Bartos Bustos, and the adviser to the JMPLA, Urbano Varela. Colonel Ramon Valle Lazo were also present.

most without any semblance of a trial” (Amnesty International, 1981, 24-26). Accordingly, it is estimated the killing *en masse* of 20 to 40 000 people by the MPLA and assisted by the Cuban military and security forces (Amnesty International Report, 1981; Mateus, 2007; Trehala, 2018). To this day, the families of the forced disappeared do not know where their loved ones are. They never had a chance to mourn which has traumatised whole families and the whole of Angolan society. It is said that “there was no family left in Angola that had not somehow been affected by the purges” (Van Munster and Van Wijk, 2020).

Since the events of May 27, the Angolan regime imposed a climate of fear and violence on the population, accusing of *fraccionismo* anyone speaking against the government. Therefore, the May 27 massacre became a *taboo* for decades, and still, many are afraid and refuse to speak about it. Finally, however, after decades, popular manifestations are slowly emerging, claiming for the bodies of the dead in the massacre to symbolise a voice against state violence, repression, and a silenced population (VOA, 2011).

Next, I will demonstrate the context of the civil war in which May 27 developed and the forces that provoked the onset of the massacre. Then, I reveal what the new Angolan President is trying to do regarding reconciliation among its people.

The Civil War Context

After 500 years of Portuguese occupation, the interim MPLA¹⁸ pro-communist government managed urgent political and military instability in the newly created Angolan state after the war of independence (Hodges, 2001, 75).¹⁹ On military grounds, there were two other liberation movements, the FNLA,²⁰ and the anti-communist UNITA,²¹ which had also fought in the revolutionary war, and continued to compete for power in the following Angolan civil war beginning in 1975. Meanwhile, in the political spectrum, the demand was also high. As a liberation movement, there were different ideological views within the MPLA, much to the dislike of its President Agostinho Neto, which culminated in the May 27 massacre (Pawson, 2014).

¹⁸ 43 countries, including 23 African states, recognized Angola independence and the MPLA as its representative of the new independent state (Shubin, 2008).

¹⁹ Likewise, the economic department faced critical challenges. All infrastructures crashed as a result of the war of independence and the ongoing military civil conflict between the three parties. 95% of Portuguese citizens left the country creating a void in all sectors of the economy. The exception to this was the oil industry which helped provide some stability to the MPLA as the ruling power.

²⁰ *Frente Nacional de Libertação de Angola* (National Front for the Liberation of Angola)

²¹ *Uniao Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola* (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola)

Under pressure and to win its big-time, the MPLA joined forces with Cuban soldiers and won the backing of the Soviets. With the military support, the MPLA managed to oust the FNLA from Luanda and became Angola's *de facto* 'provisional' government (U.S. Department of the Army 1977, 221). However, on the other end, the U.S and South Africa backed UNITA, which cast irregular warfare in the East and South of the country, making the Angolan civil war a Cold War proxy conflict (ibid). At the beginning of 1976, the party controlled most of the country, and UNITA guerrillas dominated the High Plateau²² (Amnesty International Report, 1984, 3). Both had enough support to wage war until 2002 with the death in combat of UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi.

Meanwhile, as the leader of the MPLA, Neto attempted to control not only the whole country but also the members of his party. In 1976, the internal dispute became clearer as some criticized President Neto's corrupt leadership and the government policies, such as the close military alliance with Cuba, which diverged with more pro-Soviet views within the party, namely from Nito Alves (Mateus, 2007; Amnesty International Report, 1984, 3). In addition, the MPLA had suffered previous attempts to its leadership by challenging organizations (Amnesty International, 1984, 5).²³

This time, the cleavage came within the party structures. Nito Alves, heading the pro-soviet Marxist-Leninist group, advocated for popular agencies with political autonomy that would control state power.²⁴ While, on the opposite perspective, Neto and his right-hand man Lúcio Lara would like to adopt socialism to the African reality without any specific ideological affiliation and defended a more centred administration where state agencies intermediated between popular participation and political power (Mateus, 2007). However, at Alves' reach, the popular structures from the bases²⁵ allowed him to obtain popular support for his views (ibid). In addition, his influence extended to the intellectual elites of the secondary and universities, professors, and students alike (Mateus, 2007, 150).²⁶ Ex-combatants from

²² Bié and Huambo provinces.

²³ The Active Revolt (*Revolta Activa*) and the OCA, Angolan Communist Organization (*Organizacao Comunista de Angola*) whose members were arrested by DISA, namely, the Angolan Department of Information and Security - Angolan Political Police (*Policia Politica de Angola*).

²⁴ Lei do Poder Popular: popular self-management project through the *Comissões Populares de Bairro* CPB (Popular Neighbourhood Committees) to manage the populations of the neighbourhoods.

²⁵ Such as the CPB and the DOM- National Department of Masses Organization (*Departamento Nacional de Organização de Massas*).

²⁶ This influence was exercised through the actions of the charismatic Sita Valles in charge of the The Action Committee of the Revolutionary Intellectuals, in Portuguese, (*Comité de Ação dos Intelectuais Revolucionários*). About Sita Valles (married with Van Dunem), "She brought the ideological stamp. Used to the clandestine fight in Portugal. She brings that organizational capacity." (Interview with Marcelo Bettencourt with Tali, Luanda, 21 and 27 February 1995). She was arrested in the aftermath of May 27 by DISA men and after giving birth she was shot.

the First Region, all FAPLA²⁷ Political Commissariat directed by Van-Dunem,²⁸ Alves' closest colleague, and some members of the Central Committee²⁹ were joining the so called *nitistas* (Nito Alves supporters) calling for changes in the political organization. This way, Alves managed to establish alliances that slowly constituted a group linked by political affinities and exerted as much pressure as possible on the government. The proxy cold war conflict influenced the gap between the President Neto and Alves, his minister, reflecting the ideological struggle within pro-communist/socialist factions. Meanwhile, the Political Police - DISA - had started to investigate and chase what they called 'clandestine activities,' such as meetings at Sita Vales' home and in the popular Sambizanga and Rangel slums.³⁰ This helps to understand why there were so many killings in the so-called 'witch hunt' of the May 27 massacre, as DISA was secretly collecting information about the *nitistas* movements.

At the Central Committee in October 1976, Nito Alves and José Van-Dunem were formally accused of "*fraccionismo, and provoking ideological confusion,*" based on DISA's investigations marking the beginning of the conflict between *nitistas* and the MPLA dome (MPLA, Central Committee, 3rd meeting, Oct 26-29, 1976). As a result, the Central Committee determined the withdrawal of both protagonists from duties without a chance to defend themselves, and Alves' department of Internal Administration was extinct. This way, the MPLA would concentrate the control of the *masses* to its direction and shut down all press rooms favouring *nitistas*.³¹ After that, the party formed a Commission of enquiring led by José Eduardo dos Santos,³² a member of the Political Bureau who was Commissioned for six months to find the extent of the accusation of *fractionismo* in the MPLA under absolute secrecy. However, expelled from their duties, both Alves and Van-Dunem were still members of the Central Committee. In the following months, *nitistas* actions intensified to the point that in the *musseques*, their prestige was adamant after speeches of racism and corruption given to populations suffering hardship conditions.

In February 1977, Alves wrote a document of 150 pages called *Treze Teses em Minha Defesa* (Thirteen Theses in My Defence), but never got the chance to defend himself at the Political Committee. The primary idea was to explain that *fractionism* had come from other leaders within the MPLA against the party leadership that was deviating from its main

²⁷ The People's Armed Forces of Liberation of Angola, originally the armed wing of the MPLA.

²⁸ José Van-Dunem was a militant of the MPLA since he was 17 years old, married to Sita Valles.

²⁹ Comité Central, namely, Ernesto Eduardo Gomes da Silva (Bakalof)

³⁰ The *nitistas* had major influence in these slums (*musseques*).

³¹ The MPLA closed the *Jornal de Luanda* (Luanda's Journal).

³² Jose Eduardo dos Santos became the next president of Angola forty years after Agostinho Neto two years later.

revolutionary principles and social project. The elite was transforming the political power into a repressive bourgeoisie taking advantage of the profits of the country's primary resources in prejudice of the masses, which should be the Nation's true leaders (Mateus, 2007, 68). On May 21, six days before the massacre, and based on the Commission of Enquiry, the MPLA confirmed that *fractionismo* is a reality intended to divide the party.³³ President Neto, in a rally in Luanda, urges all to hunt members of *nitistas*, the *fractionistas*³⁴ (MPLA, Boletim do Militante, n.3, 1977, June 27, 4) arresting those against this hunt, according to testimonies (Mateus, 2007,120; Figueiredo, 2010, 142). In the following days, the national press published expressions such as "eliminate *fractionismo*" and "*fractionismo will not win*" throughout the country (Figueiredo, 2010, 146). The preparation for what was to come had been set up.

I have described the context that triggered the onset of the May 27 violence *en mass* and onwards that eliminated 30 000 souls. In the following section, I disclose the transitional justice in Angola, the steps to conquer blanket amnesty and what the new presidency is trying to do regarding reconciliation, 20 years after the amnesty in force.

Transitional Justice in Angola

In this chapter, I describe how the blanket amnesty had always been a precondition for warring parties to sign a peace settlement in Angola and how warlords always refused the interference of third parties in this matter of reconciliation. Then, in a different section, I reveal the emergence of a reconciliation Commission formed by the new government that came into power in 2017, after decades of Dos Santos ruling and after forty years of the May 27 massacre. Through testimonials from survivors and orphans of May 27, I took the chance to reveal how Angolan society has been living in silence for decades and what differs now from the previous government. I also took the opportunity to demonstrate how these testimonials see the Commission of Reconciliation (CIVICOP) if it brings hope or is hopelessness. This way, I bring in this paper the necessary background information on the blanket amnesty in Angola and the adverse environment that is often mentioned in my data presentation and analysis.

³³ It is known today that Eduardo dos Santos signed the investigation report that confirms that there were no *fraccionismo*. Dos Santos was briefly incarcerated for stating this fact (Mateus, 2007).

³⁴ Newspapers, radio stations and radio phones projected a witch hunt: "you have to find them, tie them up and shoot them" (Mateus, 2007,120).

The Blanket Amnesty

The 2002 blanket amnesty has its roots in the *de facto* deal of the 1991 Bicesse Accords, which was merely a military agreement to ceasefire pointing towards total military reconciliation between warlords, granting free elections and respect for human rights, including freedom of speech and association (UN Peacemaker, Bicesse Accords). Nowhere in the accords refers to accountability to atrocities committed by both parties. It only envisioned the future. Still, the war had broken out again and was far from its end. Later, the new peace attempt by the 1994 Lusaka Protocol provided an amnesty for all illegal acts committed by anyone in the context of the civil war ('Lusaka Protocol'. n.d. Peace Accords Matrix). This settlement encouraged a peace process in Angola ravaged by 20 years of relentless war. In addition, Article 6 of the Protocol asked the Angolan people to "in the spirit of National Reconciliation (...) forgive and forget the offences resulting from the Angolan conflict and face the future with tolerance and trust" ('Lusaka Protocol'. n.d. Peace Accords Matrix). However, the country saw another wave of bloodletting, which only ended eight years after the Protocol. The conflict was only finally over in 2002 after Savimbi's death at the hands of the Angolan troops. His downfall prompted UNITA to join the negotiation's table, initiating a peace and reconciliation process with the MPLA based on the previous Lusaka agreement (Security Council on Angola. Press Release SC/7372).

The wider public started to express interest in the government peace process, and there were appeals for the participation of civil society in the peace talks. Still, the warring parties dismissed the interference of third parties. Associations, such as Angolan Civic Association (ACA), issued an open letter manifesting interest in monitoring the amnesty process by helping "identify criteria to define a typology of crimes to be amnestied" (Griffiths, 2004, 26). Organisations tried to intervene advocating for accountability, such as Amnesty International and the United Nations under the Secretary General Special Adviser who warned against total amnesty for crimes against humanity.³⁵ For decades the Organisation has been launching consecutive reports about the several attempts on "the right to life" by both parties in the conflict, urging the government to introduce a culture of accountability to build confidence and ensure human rights protection in the country

³⁵ At the Security Council meeting (4517th Meeting), the Special Adviser stated that he "had entered a reservation concerning the non-recognition of any general amnesty that included genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes." But that his statement "had left some apprehension in the minds of UNITA and some segments of civil society, who felt it may undermine the peace process, because some combatants might believe it negated the Amnesty Law recently passed by the National Assembly" Security Council (23/04/2002) Press Release SC/7372).

(Amnesty International, 1993, 2).³⁶ Despite all pressure, the government backed by UNITA's Management Committee, refused the third parties participation initiatives by stating that it would *confuse* the peace process (Aaron Griffiths, 2004, Accord, issue 15, 26). In tune with the principles of previous accords, the parliament approved the blanket amnesty unanimously. This was days before signing the new Ceasefire Agreement in Luena, heightening "the sense of an exclusive two-party pact" (ibid, 27). To emphasise the blanket amnesty, on April 3, the eve of the signing ceremony, President Dos Santos made a public speech to the nation appealing to forgiving and forgetting the past, "to leave behind feelings of hatred and revenge that will not help national reconciliation reconstruction." And continuing, "Those who want peace must forget and reconcile with the others" (...). Finally, everyone should embrace the building process of democracy and the rule of law (Angola Press. 2013.). The next day, the Memorandum was signed.

Luena Memorandum of Understanding, together with the Lusaka Protocol, form the final resolution of the Angolan conflict on April 4, 2002. The issue of amnesty constitutes the 'sole item' of reconciliation, putting an end to hostilities. In Article 2 of the Memorandum, it is written, "The Government guarantees, in the interest of peace and national reconciliation, the approval and publication by competent organs and institutions of the state of the Republic of Angola an Amnesty Law covering all crimes committed in conjunction with the armed conflict between UNITA Military Forces and the Government" (UN Peacemaker, 'Luena Agreement'). This blanket amnesty formally ended hostilities between warring parties while bypassing any accountability for crimes committed, overlooking thousands of civilians' murder, torture, and rape. Moreover, it ignored any national incentives or initiatives to meet reconciliation, apart from the military troops and their families and "the resettlement of an estimated 4.5 million displaced persons" (UN Security Council (23/04/2002) Press Release SC/7372) that were integrated as a reconciliation gesture.³⁷ According to the government, the granting of blanket amnesty settled the nations' reconciliation process solely.

³⁶ The first time that the May 27 massacre was denounced was in a 1981 report. The following reports have been consecutively returning to the systematic killings.

³⁷ Security Council (23/04/2002) Press Release SC/7372 "The Government was also committed to assisting the families of UNITA soldiers -- about 300,000 people. It was also committed to providing vocational training and reintegrating the former combatants into civilian life and into the productive sector. Moreover, it had pledged to assist demobilized soldiers and to take care of the disabled, the orphans and widows. In addition, the Government had undertaken the resettlement of an estimated 4.5 million displaced persons." (SECRETARY-GENERAL; Meetings Coverage and Press Releases)

Reconciliation Plan in Memory of Victims of the Armed Conflicts in Angola (CIVICOP)

In 2017, a new era arose with the election of a new president Joao Lourenco, known as ‘JL’, who has been breaking with the Dos Santos Family³⁸ massive corruption giving the impression that JL’s government is more open to discussing the past (*Welle , Deutsche. n.d. | DW | 13.11.2021’ . DW.COM.*)

After four decades of silence about the May 27, 1977 massacre, counting with two decades after signing the peace agreement of 2002 that put an end to the civil war, the Angolan government exhibited a more transparent direction since the new presidency. JL announced adherence to human rights standards and the fight against corruption (Van Munster and Van Wijk, 2020). A year later, in January 2018, the M27 association was created, connecting and uniting orphans from the May 27 massacre. In a letter to the President, the association urged the Angolan government to clarify the events of May 27, “one of the darkest and most traumatising phases of Angola’s post-independence history and restore the lost dignity and good names to the victims and their families of this tragic occurrence” (*Associacao M27, Letter to the President, Jan 2019*). More than a year later, with the debate surrounding May 27 warming up, JL issued a decree in May creating an inter-ministerial reconciliation Commission assigned to develop an action plan to honour the victims of all political conflicts that occurred during the civil war (Van Munster and Van Wijk, 2020). In other words, the mandate contemplates all victims from 1975 to 2002, that is, the entire timespan of the civil war. To deal with the Commission, the M27 Survivors Association, and the M27 Association (orphans) organised an interface between the Commission and the victims’ associations through the *Plataforma 27 de Maio* (May 27 Platform). In the next section, I present the Commission and its meaning.

CIVICOP

In 2019, the government created the CIVICOP presided by Francisco Queiroz to deal with political conflicts dated from independence 1975 to the peace accord of 2002. The goal is to emphasise thoughts and acts of pardon and reconciliation among the population without

³⁸ Dos Santos refers to former President José Eduardo dos Santos who presided over the government since the death of Agostinho Neto. Dos Santos was the one responsible for the commission of inquiry meant to accuse the *nitistas* of *fraccionismo* (though the commission failed to prove this). Dos Santos family took over the government and have been usurping the main resources of the country: oil and diamonds.

accountability. The President of CIVICOP emphasises the ‘model’ of reconciliation created by the peace accord in 2002. As he states, “Angola also has its experience in conflict resolution,” in other words, the blanket amnesty, which was the only item considered for reconciliation in the accord (RFI. Aug.9, 2021). CIVICOP grounds the legitimacy of its reconciliation purpose on the 2002 blanket amnesty insisting on the official approach to past narratives - ‘forgive and forget’ the past and focus on the future. The new call is to “forgive and embrace the others and the future” (ibid; Van Munster and Van Wijk, 2020).

In the opinion of the MPLA, which he represents, the hypothesis of a truth Commission will only endanger peace (RFI. Aug.9, 2021; Van Munster and Van Wijk, 2020). As he puts it, “instead of solving the problem, it would raise another problem that is more difficult to solve, and that would not lead to reconciliation and forgiveness,” and continuing, “you can’t buy someone’s forgiveness” (RFI. Aug.9, 2021). This said, the Commission is not intended for accountability or compensation purposes in any form. To this extent, the prosecution is out of the question.

In particular, the Commission’s concept of victimisation is a novelty, and it legitimates the lack of accountability. In his words, assuming that all conflicts are political errors, including the civil war, “all are victims” of the circumstances. In his reasoning, all fought for what they believed; therefore, “they were all victims of a historical political error” (RFI. Aug.9, 2021). This way, perpetrators and victims are included in this concept of what constitutes a ‘victim.’ Under this light, the May 27 massacre carries the same concept of victimhood. As Queiroz says, “there was the active side, at the time of the attempted *coup*, and there was a passive side that defended itself (the government). Then things reversed. The passive side became active, and those who were persecuted and killed became the passive side. But, either one or the other, within the same vision, are all victims” (ibid). Therefore, Queiroz continues, “the concept of a victim must be seen within this scope, for forgiveness and reconciliation” (RFI. Aug.9, 2021). In this light of considerations, CIVICOP wards off accountability, prosecution, and a truth Commission. When asked by a journalist how many mortal victims from political conflicts were there between 1975 to 2002, he replies, “From 77 to more or less 79 was the time of greatest disappearance of people which occurred in all Angolan provinces” (ibid).

Summary

To sum up, this information is meant to provide a clear picture of the victims' background. One can conclude that the Angolan peace accords always envisioned the establishment of the total, unconditional amnesty in the country with the only goal to ceasefire dismissing processes of reconciliation. Both parties agreed that a reconciliation process with accountability purposes would jeopardise the peace effort; therefore, they avoided third-party interference. As a result, society integrated warlords and all those who committed atrocities without any consequence of their acts. Peace overcame justice, and to keep it that way, the MPLA became an authoritarian regime, silencing the past. With the present reality of the facts in mind, we can dive into the data, which I organised according to the research methods.

Data Presentation

After studying all interviews, their attitudes towards transitional justice, and their behaviour, I have recognised two groups. For data presentation purposes, I divided these groups based on their levels of self-efficacy. But, first, I will expose some information of the interviewees to group them as demonstrated in the methods section.

The data is based on 12 interviews. All interviewees are victims of the May 27 massacre, from which four of them became orphans who lost their parents in the killings, and eight are survivors. Two of them are females, and the victims live either in Angola or in Portugal. As I said in the methods, I present the data based on the outcome of the independent variable, which is the level of self-efficacy. One group has low self-efficacy, and another group proves to have high levels of self-efficacy.

I expect to find that the level of self-efficacy explains the variation in perceptions of amnesty and engagement. So, I will examine the indicators of self-efficacy in each group to reveal their levels and relate it with their perceptions of transitional justice mechanisms and their interaction with the environment according to the interviews' data. What I found supports my argument that those with low self-efficacy, group 1, accept blanket amnesty and do not seek change and disengage from the political environment. So, I will check these correlations because these are the variables I am studying. In contrast, those with high self-efficacy, group 2, are against blanket amnesty and want to change the social-political climate in what concerns transitional justice process, and act accordingly.

In both groups, I present the self-efficacy indicators and the impact on their perceptions of amnesty and performances towards the environment because self-efficacy, as part of human behaviour, is contextualised (Bandura, 1997, Bandura, 2012, 30). In this light, how they cope with their awareness of the circumstances and their capabilities is fundamental for the gradation of self-efficacy which is shown through their aspirations, motivations, and decisions.

Group 1: Low Level of Self-Efficacy

In this group, I include six victims of the May 27 massacre, of which three are orphans, three are survivors, and some live in Angola, others in Portugal.

Victim N1, Teresa, is an orphan female who was only fifteen days old when DISA went to her home and took her father, never to be seen again. She did not know that her life had something to do with May 27th before 2007 when she discovered what happened to her father. Until then, she lived under the care of a distressed mother who kept silent for decades. Currently, she lives in Portugal. Another orphan Tomas, victim N2, is a man born in Angola but is now living in Portugal. His father has also disappeared after being arrested by DISA and never came back. After May 27, his mother decided to move to Portugal. He witnessed his mother experiencing a long depression, and he could not talk about the events of May 27 with his family. It was an aunt who told him the truth about his father when he was seven years old. Another orphan female who lives in Angola, Isabel, victim N3, was 16 years old when her father was taken from home in handcuffs surrounded by men. They never saw him again, and she had to take care of ten siblings while enduring her mother's depression and constant crying for her father's disappearance. Victim N4, Jakob, is a man survivor living in Angola who witnessed torture and killings and suffered inhuman prison conditions. DISA arrested him after his son was born and held him in prison for two and a half years. Jordi, victim N5, is a survivor living in Portugal. On May 27, he was a university student when he was arrested by DISA and taken to a concentration camp. Finally, victim N6, Kent, a man survivor living in Angola, was part of the FAPLAS. During May 27 systematic arrests, he was taken to a prison camp where he lived inhuman conditions and witnessed numerous killings, including of students sent home from the USSR and Cuba. None of the survivors understands the criteria of why some were killed, and others spared. There were no explanations given by the authorities for their fate. Regarding the orphans, their families kept silent.

What follows is the extraction of the victims' self-efficacy indicators - aspirations, motivations, and decisions - from their interviews and according to the methods of analysis to acknowledge their levels of self-efficacy and evaluate the impact over perceptions of transitional justice and behaviour. The victims' beliefs reveal their cognitive process influencing their perceptions and actions. Hence, in this group, we will observe that the victims succumb to the political environmental impediments abstaining from conducting a transitional justice process. For this reason, the victims of this group reveal a low level of self-efficacy.

In the following data presentation, we can observe their aspirations, motivations and decisions adjusting to the environmental impediments.

Aspirations

This section investigates the victims' aspirations according to the concept presented in the previous theory section. Accordingly, beliefs shape aspirations. We will observe the victims' beliefs regarding what they think is possible given the circumstances. In this group, victims do not believe that accountability is possible; therefore, they point to other goals.

In this group, the victims' goals are inclined towards recognising past experiences and mourning their loved ones. One victim says, "I believe the most important thing is to regulate the story of the victims (...) to silence victims is to forget their stories and to forget their existence" (Teresa (1): 2: 2174 - 2: 2241). They consider that lifting the memory of the dead is what is important now, "I believe it is necessary that executioners create a new memory from the past, a new collective memory (Kent, P. 9: 238). For these victims, to revive the memory of the dead became the most aspired ambition, which also requires finding the truth about the events.

However, these goals have adjusted to what the victims believe it is possible to achieve. The victims mention previous thoughts about justice which were abandoned due to the lack of belief in its possibility, "I thought that people should be punished (Teresa (1), P. 2: 1975), I don't believe it could happen in Angola (Teresa (1), P. 2: 1854), today, I believe it is more important to revive the memory of the dead (Teresa (1), P. 2: 2061). N 6 also sought justice, but today, that is out of consideration (Kent, P. 7: 2732). N 2 says, "they [the MPLA party members] are wealthy and risk losing everything" and therefore, they will never expose themselves to the public" (Tomas, P. 3: 1014), "to accuse someone individually is very difficult" (Tomas, P. 3: 1020). N 5 says that the resolution of May 27 can only be solved when the MPLA loses elections" (Jakob, P. 2: 1022) because, for the meantime, in Angola "there is no hypothesis of impartiality" (Jakob, P. 3: 1608; P. 3: 1307). The others follow the same arguments of disbelief in the possibility of accountability because, as N4 says, "the MPLA has boundless influences" (Jakob, P. 3: 1985).

All victims of this group turned their ambitions to find the truth, where the bodies are and return them to their families "We want the truth; we want DNA tests" (Tomas, P. 4: 162). Their aspirations extend to the MPLA party's revelation of the truth about the events "as a whole party," not individually (Tomas, P. 3: 1848). N5 also considers that May 27 should be investigated thoroughly, "the families of commandants were forced to be at home for a long time and not allowed to speak to anyone (...) The truth must be revealed (Jakob, P. 1: 1398).

And, N5 reinforces, “we must contribute for the investigation and clarification of May 27 events (Jordi, P. 5: 904).

The victims of this group aspire to respect the disappeared and leave a legacy to the orphans so that these last ones may continue the work on the memory. Because, as N5 sustains, “the victims association is a long-time process, it will never end.” (Jordi, P. 5: 216).

In the next section, I will show the incentives that drive these victims to make decisions.

Motivations

In this section, the victims show how they respond to their aspirations and what induces them to make decisions. The victims emphasise their sufferings and how they should remember the massacre. All elements of this group maintain that it is crucial to voice their relatives and own stories. Breaking the silence is the motivation that leads this group.

As one victim 1 says, “the silence and fear have done so much damage to the families, in my personal life, in all victims, it is so impossible to describe what it is to live in this reality. When there is silence, these people are forgotten, and this is the hardest part (Teresa (1), P. 2: 2268). Another victim, N5 says that the families of the disappeared must be acknowledged, “In that time of May 27, in the middle of all suffering, the parents disappeared, and the uncles took care of the children. These events and stories have to be investigated” (Jordi, P. 1: 2477). And continuing, “all these people who disappeared had a story, had parents and children” (Jordi, P. 1: 2399). Others put it as an obligation, “I have an obligation for those who were killed ingloriously and individually without any justice, I must rescue the dignity of those people” (Jakob, P. 2: 40).

Moreover, regarding the possibility of perpetrators coming forth to confess the crimes and reveal the truth about the events, one warns that “they have much to lose, perpetrators will never admit” (Tomas, P. 3: 1014), because as the victim reflects, “they always have defences in their favour and would use it such as the excuse that were forced to kill (...). They will say in their defence that if they wouldn't obey orders, they would be killed” (interview 2; Tomas, P. 3: 1082). The victims think that “for now, perpetrators are not ready to confess crimes and tell the truth” (Isabel, P. 3: 1299; Joao, P. 3: 1082). This pursuit is a waste of time.

The victims reveal the personal need to mourn their loved ones, and this is a motivation. All reveal the necessity to mourn. As N2 shows, followed by the others, “My

family needs a funeral” (Tomas, P. 4: 235). However, due to the impediments already presented, they do not expect much from the Commission, so there is no incentive to fight for it. Moreover, the victims suspect that CIVICOP is procrastinating the case on purpose, as they already did in the past, “if they took all these years to form this Commission, they would also drag this problem (Kent, P. 9: 1504), “I believe there is an internal problem of the MPLA” (Kent, P. 9: 762), “We find that it is for the best that we just want now that they tell us the truth, the perpetrators who massacred them to come confessing to giving us greater heart relief, and tranquillity” (Kent, P. 7: 2871). Moreover, the victim recognises that, “as a catholic, one does not forgive without the other asking forgiveness (...) we have to know the truth first” (Kent, P. 8: 616). To find the truth and to mourn are important incentives.

For these reasons, this group resides in the possible plan of finding orphans and survivors of the May 27 events and digging into the past to find the true narrative. The goal is to lift their memories because “they all have a face” which must be shown (interview 5, Jordi, P. 1: 2477). In addition, “the historical work of the Association is a long-term investment. It is to remember in order not to forget” (Jordi, P. 5: 215). Seeking for the truth is very present in the minds of all victims “To find the truth is a necessity” (Kent, P. 8: 2295). In other words, the incentive is to break the silence because it is feasible and worth the effort.

This next section will present the victims’ decisions according to their previous goals and motives.

Decisions

In the face of any environment, one has a decision to make. However, this group restrains its choices regarding transitional justice processes, which are left at the whim of destiny. Instead, they commit to the memory of the victims of the massacre without disturbing the political environment.

These victims “are committed to rescuing the dignity of our dead” (Jakob, P. 2: 2002), because “The disappeared are not anonymous; therefore, we must contribute to the investigation and clarification of the May 27 events” (Jordi, P. 5: 761). Another victim says, “the story of these victims (must be) regulated.” In addition, another victim considers it fundamental to have an independent Commission to take care of May 27, “that the Commission finds what families want: the location of the remains of the dead, to follow traditions and do a proper funeral for the family members” (Kent, P. 8: 2935). And the victim

reinforces his decision that was taken together with other members, “we marked a position there: until the methodology changed, we do not participate in Civicop.” Moreover, if they want reconciliation, they must ask forgiveness. According to Ken, “I have catholic education, one does not forgive without a request of forgiveness first. This is what we want and not to embrace and reconcile without them asking forgiveness first” (Kent, P. 8: 616).

N2 suggests that “The MPLA party must ask for an apology in the name of the whole MPLA party due to the DISA excesses. If the Pope asked forgiveness for the inquisition, the MPLA must also do it” (Tomas, P. 3: 2234). According to the lack of trust in the present institutions, N5 suggests retreating from the “fake” Commission so they can spend their efforts elsewhere, specifically giving more time to other more productive activities, “For me, it is important to denounce the executioners, to say who was responsible for the disappearance of thousands of people and those who say where the bodies are (...) If they do not hear our requests, we leave” (Jordi, P. 4: 857).

The victims show that if the Commission does not hear them, they leave the process and concentrate their time and effort on another cause such as working for the memory and finding the truth by themselves. A cause that detaches from the political environment because they do not believe they can change it. For this reason, their motivations are low.

Next, the victims reveal their perceptions of transitional justice, which derive from the other indicators.

Perceptions of Transitional Justice

The victims’ perceptions of transitional justice translate their understanding and adaptation to the environmental political conditions (Kolok and Adam, 2019, 7). In this group, the victims select the amnesty.

When asked how they understand the process of transitional justice in Angola, most of these victims revealed how their initial views for justice changed when faced with the adverse political environment surrounding the May 27 massacre.

One replied that she does not consider the possibility of prosecution or conditional amnesty in Angola (Teresa (1), P. 2: 1854). And another victim confirms, “prosecution is impossible” (Isabel, P. 3: 2010); however, “the amnesty is a problem (Isabel, P. 3: 2010). However, total amnesty is inadmissible (Isabel, P. 3: 1248); and conditional amnesty is

plausible” (Isabel, P. 3: 574;). According to the victims of this group, conditional amnesty is not possible either in today's political environment.

There is one exception in this group who considers the possibility of a truth Commission (Tomas, N2), because he proposes a solution for the MPLA to come forward and confess the crimes as a whole party instead of each individual perpetrator. This victim defends a truth Commission (Tomas, P. 3: 1847). However, N4 contradicts this possibility because, as he puts it, “A truth Commission at the national level has no chance of impartiality (...) unless controlled by international institutions,” which he does not see happen any time soon. But even then, he does not trust completely due to the MPLA’s boundless influences. As he puts it, “Money buys many things, and not only in Angola!” (Jakob, P. 3: 1985). Therefore, his perception is that there is no possibility to establish a transitional justice process. But he would like to see revealed and shamed the executioners, that their names come out in the open and cease to be a secret. This perspective contradicts N2 who says that this will never be possible as they - the perpetrators - have much to lose. Finally, N6 confesses that there is no motivation to pursue a transitional justice process, “There was a time (in 1992) when we spoke about penal responsibility, but not today” (Kent, P. 7: 2732). Another agrees, “my deepest wish is a trial prosecuting all those perpetrators” (Jordi, P. 3: 3053); however, “my good senses make me understand that them (the executioners) being identified, and indicated their barbarian crimes, it would be already satisfying, and this public penance to be their sentence. And, finally, this would turn history upside down, and this would be satisfying enough (Jordi, P. 4: 1456).

Victim N6 understands that a truth Commission based on the transitional justice methods advised by the AUO can bring justice because he believes that this is not a civil war case but a purge with nothing to do with the civil war crimes, and therefore, nothing to do with the 2002 amnesty law.³⁹ Hence, he concludes that, due to the situation in Angola, the AUO (conditional amnesty) is more realistic (Kent, P. 8: 2833).

All consider that conditional amnesty is the pathway for a transitional justice process, but for the time being, conditional amnesty is not possible to achieve, which means that they disengage from the political environment and blanket amnesty is not contested. Therefore, these victims do not believe in the feasibility of a transitional justice process and blanket amnesty ends up being accepted.

³⁹ Victims (survivors and orphans) consider that the purge of May 27th cannot be included in the amnesty law that forgives all crimes committed in the context of the civil war. However, the President of CIVICOP says that justice has already been dealt with, because all victimization is included in the amnesty.

In the next section, it can be observed how these perceptions influence their actions.

Actions

Victims have the option of disengaging or engaging in response to an adverse environment full of stressors. According to the self-efficacy model, individuals with low self-efficacy disengage. It can be observed in this group that their actions do not involve pursuing a transitional justice process.

Victim N5 says, “Every day, we seek new stories from the disappeared,” (Jordi, P. 5: 761). Another victim, N1, says, “it’s the first time I’ve been able to talk about the topic with a certain calm. In fact, the association helps a lot. We have an intention to try to gather these stories, show these stories, and give dignity to those people who were victims, the one who died and the orphan. Being in contact with people with the same history, and on the other hand raising the dignity of those who have died” (Teresa (1), P. 3: 668).

One of the victims, N6, is very active in this matter and declared to CIVICOP that “if the AUO's transitional justice policy recommendations and procedures are not followed, we no longer attend the Commission.” As he states, “We marked a position there,” (Kent, P. 9: 1294).

In addition, some are self-driven persons who decided to engage in self-development by acquiring as much information as possible to release pain and find a solution to deal with May 27 by themselves. This is the case of Tomas and Kent. Jordi is committed to finding victims on May 27 and has succeeded in this task. Teresa and Isabel, more quietly, dedicate their efforts to giving interviews, being members of the association, and participating in its meetings. Inspired by the association, Isabel engages in self-development and writes her father’s memories to leave a legacy to the family and the association. The victims have engaged further in the association’s activities to raise the memory of the forced disappeared and killed and to find the truth. These are meaningful activities which do not challenge political structures.

The actions in this group are far from engaging in a transitional justice process. Instead, they detached from it and pursued other simpler, though valuable, activities related to the association and the memory among themselves without contradicting political forces directly. In other words, they limit themselves to tasks outside of the official framework of government imposed transitional justice.

Summary

Data shows the victims' self-efficacy beliefs from what they aspire through to their incentives based on predicted outcomes and their decisions, compared to their perceptions of transitional justice processes and actions. In this first group, the victims consider that the restitutive measures without accountability are enough: to find the truth and the bodies. They restrain from pursuing justice because the environment is too inhospitable to handle, and ultimately, too impossible for any sort of accountability and justice process. As a result, all victims adjust and surrender their beliefs to their negative perceptions of the environment; they do not believe that actions can produce a change in these adverse circumstances. Therefore, there is no incentive to decide in favour of change, quite the contrary, if it is too difficult, then, they resume it to simpler, but meaningful, tasks among themselves without contradicting political forces. Therefore, I grade this group with a low level of self-efficacy. The consequences are that amnesty is accepted, and there are no actions to change the law or directly contradict the Commission.

In the next group, I present different trends leading to opposite outcomes.

Group 2. High Level of Self-Efficacy

In this group, I include six victims of the May 27 massacre, of which one is an orphan, and five are survivors, some living in Angola, others in Portugal.

Diego, N7, is an orphan living in Portugal whose father was taken by DISA and shot. He was raised by his grandparents away from Angola and considered fortunate because it safeguarded him from the family's distress. After forty years, he understood the May 27 systematic killings and their impact on Angolan society after attending a colloquium in Lisbon. Franco, N8, is a survivor living in Portugal who suffered inhuman conditions while incarcerated. He saw friends being tortured and killed. The events dismantled his family and he decided to flee from Angola. Zilla, another survivor, N9, was arrested and sent to a concentration camp where he witnessed all kinds of torture and saw people going for interrogation and never returned. When he was released, he met his daughter for the first time at one year old. Victim 10, Marius, is a survivor who always lived in Angola, was arrested

and kept in captivity for three years. He saw systematic killings in the concentration camp of Moxico. Virgil, victim 11, a survivor living in Portugal, was a university student when he was arrested for more than two years in the concentration camp of Kibala, in Cuanza Sul.

According to the victim, there were 1800 people; the majority were prisoners from May 27. Finally, victim 12, Rand, is a survivor living in Portugal who was “kidnapped” by DISA (as he puts it), was tortured and beaten in prison without explanations. Rand was listed twice to be shot, but somehow, he got away by occasional fortunate circumstances. Like in group 1, no survivor received an explanation for why they spent so long in prison.

The victims of this group believe that prosecution is a possibility. The impediments they consider that exist in the environment do not hinder them from seeking the possibility of justice. They have strong incentives to engage in challenging tasks. Therefore, I classify this group as having a high level of self-efficacy. In the following data presentation, I will show their aspirations, motivations, and decisions in contrast with the environmental adversities, reflecting their perceptions and engagement in transitional justice processes.

Aspirations

The victims’ goals and hopes precede motivations and decisions. Their inner thoughts either trigger or constraint other indicators. These victims show high levels of aspirations unleashing incentives and specific decision-making towards transitional justice that I will expose in the following sections. This group aspires to pursue justice for the victims and accountability of executioners.

One victim warns that “It is necessary to deliver some sense of justice” (Diego, P. 8: 391); another says, “We want the executioners to be denounced and acknowledge what they have done” (Zilla B, P. 4: 1853). One other reinforces the message, “there can't be reconciliation without truth and justice” (Franco (1), P. 5: 1448.Rand, P. 6: 1566), and continuing, “I worry about fighting the maximum while I'm alive so there's some justice” (Franco (1), P. 4: 1491).

Most of them found their aspirations on the legal principle that crimes against humanity do not prescribe, as N10 says, “I include May 27 in ‘crimes against humanity (Marius, P. 4: 867), and continuing, “they must ask forgiveness in the name of the MPLA party to the Angolan people and to reverse the official narrative: assume and ask forgiveness” (Marius, P. 4: 1104); “according to the AUO, and its transitional justice, forgiving does not

mean impunity” (Marius, P. 4: 1215). And another pressing “This (the truth) needs to be studied. This type of crime does not prescribe” (Virgil, (1), P. 8: 999).

For all these victims in this group, “hope never dies” to see perpetrators come forward, admit the truth for accountability and justice purposes. “The truth is that the crimes are sole of the Angolan state, with summary executions, ... we want the historical truth and withdraw the false accusations (*against fraccionistas*)” (Virgil, (1), P. 8: 2437). Some want to know why their incarceration lasted such a long time. Others emphasise finding who was behind the incident that triggered the massacre. (Marius, P. 4: 2403). They want to repair May 27, find out the truth about the death of the commanders found at dawn inside an ambulance dead and burned (Marius, P. 4: 1976). One victim, N11, reinforcing this hope says, “to have forgiveness and reconciliation, they must show that they are truly repentant. They have committed crimes and must confess” (Virgil, (1), P. 8: 999). One of the victims stands out from the group as only seeking prosecutorial justice to repair May 27. Interview N12 frames ‘justice’ into prosecution as the only way to exercise it, “I give my enemies the benefit of a court. They deserve a court and answer for the crimes they committed. They are criminals” (Rand, P. 7: 414).

For these victims, the adverse environment is not a condition shaping their beliefs. On the contrary, their beliefs shape how they establish goals while overcoming adversities. Next, I show their motivations that bound beliefs and decisions. That is, what drives victims in this group to dismiss any hardship.

Motivations

What are the incentives for establishing decisions? First, there is the strong motive of seeking accountability for the ‘refinements of evil,’ finding the truth behind the ‘clouded’ massacre. Second, there is trust, a belief, that this is possible through political environmental structures even in an adverse environment.

The victim who wants to punish perpetrators through trials, N 12, expresses his reasons illustrating, “because the way people were slaughtered is not done to anyone, and there are testimonials that it was with the refinements of evil” (Rand, P. 7: 414). Others’ incentives for achieving justice depart from different perspectives. Diego perceives that the whole nation needs to mourn May 27, “we must not forget the victims (the killed ones) because they were ready to die for the country in the revolutionary war against the

imperialists and turned out to be unlawfully shot without trial by those they served before” (Diego, P. 7: 2254). In his turn, N8 departs from surmounted injustices that orphans and survivors have been going through for decades. For both, it is not enough what CIVICOP is trying to do: silence the people by blanking the event. Therefore, people need to see justice done, and this triggers their actions. “To say that everything is ok now, I don’t think so” (Diego, P. 8: 844).

Some have predicted negative results from CIVICOP and seek alternatives because they believe it is possible to solve the case, while others keep their hopes in this Government. N12 believes there are too many impediments within the MPLA’s structure hindering a process of reconciliation, “We have the notion that they are deceiving us. Without telling the truth, you get nowhere with reconciliation.” (Rand). However, N7 and N11 still rely on this new government to make justice and come forward with the truth. As Diego exclaims, “I’m very positive regarding this government” and Virgil, “it has to be (the government must do it). It's an attempt to make a country” (Virgil, (1), P. 8: 2889); and continuing, “One must have hope, it has to be so. However, we carry grief for our friends and colleagues’ death for the rest of our lives” (Virgil, (1), P. 9: 1040); “there were people who died without knowing why or what was going on” (Virgil, (1), P. 9: 888), “People were killed indiscriminately” (Virgil, (1), P. 9: 688).

Another of the victims, Marius (N10), struggles for the truth to come out, making it the motto of his incentives, “DISA ordered the massacre. This was a macabre plan to kill all educated Angolans and *mestizos*, those who could develop the country (after independence). Who killed the commandants?” (Marius, P. 4: 2241); and continuing expressing eagerness to find the truth, “Time cures wounds, I did my catharsis, but I cannot stop to seek the truth. If anyone paid a high price, it was me” (Marius, P. 4: 495). N10 reveals what he suffered, “I was in the worst camp! I buried dead men. No one has suffered more than the group that was there in this death camp” (Marius, P. 4: 622). And in addition, these victims want to find out why they were arrested for more than two years as there is no specific accusation. They do not understand the irrationality of violence, “those suspected of being against Neto were to be killed” (Marius, P. 4: 348). Therefore, they expect that perpetrators will come forward to reveal the truth and account for their actions, “There are hopes and beliefs that they come to the public” (Zilla).

One of them, N 10, points out that the importance of May 27 is beyond the victims’ scope, “The massacre represents the beginning of a culture of silence in Angola. Today, several manifestations advocate for a solution of May 27 because it means corruption and

forced silence in Angolan society.” In addition, another believes that the party endures this situation of fear lived by the population as a way to control it and “to keep the memory of fear and to delay in power the single-party system (...) Thus, the trauma continues and helps the regime” (Diego, P. 10: 829). And N7 rests his motives in giving voice to these silenced ones and who are afraid to speak, “May 27 is a ghost. All are afraid to talk” (Diego, P. 2: 1121), “Many people were contacted, but more than 80% were pressured not to speak, including my family” (Diego, P. 2: 464). And to those who were unlawfully killed, “People died and fought in the name of a country. These people must be honoured” (Diego, P. 8:1111).

The predicted positive results are the accountability of perpetrators. At the same time, the truth is revealed, and the victims are voiced so that the massacre is acknowledged, and not forgotten. There are strong beliefs that this is possible, even within the present political environment. As one says, “There were perpetrators, and there is hope that they will confess the crimes” (Zilla B, P. 7: 483). In addition, they consider that it is possible to find the remains of the bodies, give them to the families after DNA tests, and stipulate their causes of death so the families can receive a certificate. According to them, the truth is found this way, and justice can be done because “reason is on our side” (Rand, P. 6: 1565). These beliefs blind them to realise the present difficulties, which they almost do not acknowledge.

This security leads them to make decisions which I reveal in the next section.

Decisions

Self-efficacy also steps into our decision-making processes when selecting situations that we sense that we control and can manage (Mun and Hwang, 2003). Data shows a group that is highly involved with their beliefs and undisturbed with adversities and impediments.

Regarding accountability, “Let's see if CIVICOP is enough, or else we have to resort to international institutions” (Zilla B, P. 7: 483). And another says, “We must not be silent” (Rand, P. 6: 1565). However, as there is still belief in this new executive, they should make all efforts towards the CIVICOP. Apart from expectant considerations about the political circumstances, all assume the life motto of fighting the maximum possible to see justice done, whatever it takes.

They also point out that perpetrators must pledge forgiveness not only for the sake of justice but also for reconciliation to be possible; “We want to force the MPLA to bring up the true narrative and what was the basis of May 27” (Marius, P. 3: 2314).

A more charismatic victim does not accept that those responsible with “blood on their hands” go free forever (Rand, P. 7: 1753). To Rand, “they must face a court” and answer for the crimes they have committed (Rand, P. 7: 1753). For this victim, these criminals used “refinements of wickedness” to kill, which has no forgiveness (Rand, P. 7: 568; Rand, P. 7: 2114).

Like him, others believe that crimes against humanity do not prescribe and consider May 27 as such “we go to international institutions because crimes do not prescribe” (Virgil, (1), P. 8: 223); therefore, “prosecution is a must.” In addition, they emphasise that “It is not possible to issue death certificates to disappeared people which is against International Law (Franco (1), P. 5: 1823). Therefore, “We claim political responsibility—the truth about the massacre and a Truth Commission (Marius, P. 4: 1215).

These are the major decisions made by the victims of this group whose ultimate choice is to prosecute. In the next section, I show their perceptions of transitional justice, built based on their cognitive process.

Perceptions of Transitional Justice

This group approaches transitional justice confirming their viewpoints about ending this process in a just way, through accountability, no matter what it takes. That is, if milder methods do not satisfy their purposes, they consider recurring to other measures for accountability such as prosecution. The *Plataforma* has been pulling for transitional justice just like the AUO suggests, which means conditional amnesty. As one victim puts it, “it is psychological and emotionally difficult for people to accept amnesty without any repair or justice.” In this group, a blanket amnesty is not acceptable under any terms. Interviewee N12 goes further in his perception. To him, any amnesty is not acceptable, “Amnesty is of no use to me” (Rand, P. 10: 799), and continuing, “Without truth and justice, there is no reconciliation. Those responsible have blood on their hands and must answer before a trial. They must be accounted for their crimes” (Rand, P. 7: 1730)

Worried about reconciliation, victim 7 applauds the possibility of an international institution handling the case to do justice “that (prosecution) would be very important for the population!” (Diego, P. 10: 1539) for reconciliation purposes because it helps the population mourn their loved ones and heal from trauma. Some, such as N9, perceive that the perpetrators' accountability in exchange for amnesty is a viable path, but

under strict conditions. N 8 says that “Amnesty is only acceptable within a truth Commission” (Franco (1), P. 7: 635), and N9, “We want them to recognise the mistakes they’ve made (...) I trust that a conditional amnesty is possible”; Otherwise, the prosecution is a possibility (Zilla B, P. 4: 1444). After all, these victims rephrase their goals and motives in their decision-making, “We are trying to do justice” (Zilla, B, P. 3: 3377), “or there is the possibility to resort to international institutions” (Zilla B, P. 4: 1444). If it is necessary to have reconciliation in those terms, to me, it is okay. What is required is to do it!” (Zilla B, P. 4: 1592).

These victims consider the prosecution hypothesis in case conditional amnesty doesn’t work, but for one of them, there is no other justice besides prosecution. Next, their actions practice their decisions leading them to engage in the transitional justice process.

Actions

The victims in this group engage in the transitional justice process. They are starting from their active voices in the Commission, spreading the word for the general acknowledgement of the massacre, and seeking to prosecute the case. As one says and the others follow, “We will not slow down” (Franco (1), P. 5: 2044). One of them reinforces this message, “I try to draw attention that one should never lower one's arms or be silent. It's an unequal war. The winners are winners for a long time, and people give up (‘May Mothers’ from Argentina never gave up and managed to put the executioners in jail). When reason is on our side, we must not be silent. That's what I have done for 40 years” (Rand, P. 4: 1478).

However, there are impediments, but the victims can overcome obstacles, “Everything I do ends up not having results, but I will continue.” What makes me strong is having the ability to work. I managed to give a voice (I authored books), and I will continue. This is my mission. Disseminate by all means” (Rand, P. 11: 1975). This victim is the author of two books and is nearly launching another one about May 27. Other victims are working on finding the bodies by contacting specialised companies, such as forensic investigation experts, overruling the CIVICOP (Virgil, (1), P. 5: 1388).

Others work on their own. Some dedicate their time to acquiring as much information as possible about the event to help the transitional justice process when required. They consider that “gathering as much information as possible is crucial for the process”, (Zilla) bearing in mind a possible prosecutorial process.

Some of them go much further than the acknowledgement of the massacre and general sensitisation. Rand is trying to find someone to help him with the prosecution. To this extent, Diego (N7) proposes to seek justice through international institutions and points to the tasks ahead, considering it a “laborious process of investigation” but possible to collect evidence.

However, N 7 works more on reconciliation to avoid pain, “I have adopted a defence system, which is avoiding too much information in which I’m not interested to know. I want to concentrate on national reconciliation, the existing national trauma, this silence, this pain that I see in older people because not even my mother speaks of it, nor the majority do” (Diego, P. 5: 602). Therefore, he participates in the association’s activities as much as possible and spreads the word fearlessly in public conferences to speak openly about the case, and they do not miss an opportunity to do so.

Meanwhile, they all devote their efforts to the association activities because they believe in collective action, “that together it is possible to achieve justice,” because, “We want the retribution of the corpses; otherwise, we will go to International courts. [Franco] Together, these victims warned the Commission regarding their inactivity towards the May 27 massacre, “We made a statement that if nothing has been done by June 2022, we will take other measures” (Marius, P. 4: 1880). And continuing, “We are fighting for the Angolan state tell us where the mass graves are” (Virgil, (1), P. 5: 1388). To reinforce their actions, N8 says, “at the moment, our fight is strong” (Franc (1), P. 6: 1960). Thus, the victims engage in the political environment confronting it.

Summary

Nothing can stop the victims from pursuing justice in this group because they made it their lives’ motto. As such, this gives them the strength to surmount any difficulty. All adversities are put aside because what counts is the belief that to do justice is not only possible but also a ‘must.’ This means that this group predicts positive outcomes from their decisions and actions, going to the extent of challenging the government with prosecution. To this point, I must conclude that the high level of self-efficacy is the bedrock of the victims’ aspirations, motivations and decisions influencing their perceptions of amnesty and engagement in the political environment. In the next chapter I analyse the data hoping to show the causal mechanism of the theory on this case study.

Analysis and Discussion

In this chapter of the paper, I will analyse the data based on Bandura's approach to human agency, the self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977, 1997, 2000, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2012). Accordingly, self-efficacy is a belief system that affects the quality of human functioning (Bandura, 2006, 165, 168). In other words, it involves the interplay between "intrapersonal, behavioural and environmental determinants" (ibid, 165). Therefore, in this paper, I invite you to see the victims as agents with the capacity to influence the course of their lives.

According to Bandura's paradigm, and adapting it to my data analysis, the victims have an internal consciousness that is functional. They process information from the background and exercise "personal capabilities for selecting and constructing courses of action" (Bandura, 2001a, 2). In this view, based on these theoretical assumptions, my key hypothesis is that self-efficacy levels influence the victims' perceptions of amnesty and their engagement in the political context. Based on the data, I found out the following: Victims of the first group feel hopeless and are pessimistic in their ability to influence the political events concerning the transitional justice process of the May 27 massacre. Therefore, they accept blanket amnesty and only engage in meaningful tasks outside of government-imposed transitional justice's official framework. These victims are products of the environment, and thus, I graded group 1 with a low level of self-efficacy.

On the other hand, the victims of the second group bring hope. They are optimistic about their capabilities to change in their favour over the political situation and contribute to the transitional justice process of the May 27 massacre. This way, they engage in more challenging actions and contest against amnesty. In this case, they show a high level of self-efficacy. In this analysis, I will decode the theory applying it to my case study.

The May 27 massacre was a traumatic event in 1977, and its repercussions extend to these days. As we can understand now, the victims' background can be threatening, stressful and traumatic as Angolan society embedded the climate of fear and violence (Mateus, 2007, 195). In Bandura's words, it is an environment full of stressors and hardships (Bandura, 2001, 22). As we could observe in the historical section, some victims lost their parents, others survived the massacre, and after that, society forced them to stay silent for decades, and still today, some do not speak about it. So, victims endured traumatic events, and a sense of threat and lack of trust in institutions still hung in the air. In the face of these

adverse stressors, and according to Bandura, self-efficacy plays a crucial role in response to these circumstances through the individuals' quality of coping' in threatening environments (Bandura, 1997, 321, 322; Bandura, 2008, 8). The victims show how their affective capacities (positive or negative) influence their abilities to persist in hardship, fear and constraint (Bandura, 2001, 10). This cognitive process is demonstrated through their aspirations, motivations, and decisions, which I will evaluate next.

According to Bandura (2001), there is an internal mechanism, or in other words, a cognitive process, through which individuals develop self-awareness, making them "self-examiners of their own functioning" (Bandura, 2001, 10). This mechanism generates a level of self-efficacy which mediates their aspirations, motivations, and decisions (Bandura (video), 2012; Bandura, 2012, 26-32). This study analyses how these levels of self-efficacy regulate their perceptions of blanket amnesty and actions. In this light, to make it through a complex and challenging threatening situation, the victims must properly judge their capacities to cope with the political environment: a corrupt Commission representing the authoritarian Angolan government. As the theory says, they measure socio-structural opportunities and constraints; in other words, they evaluate possibilities to break with the *status quo* (Bandura, Vimeo (vimeo), 2012). In this process, they anticipate the probable effects of different actions, that is, predict outcomes from engagement or disengagement from the political context. Finally, the victims take decisions and actions respectively (Bandura, 2001, 3). In the context of this case study, victims either decide to challenge the Commission or to dismiss entirely from the process. In this light, the victims process information from the political environment and assess their capabilities to carry responsibility as instruments in their environment.

As shown in the theory section, and according to Bandura, the level of self-efficacy affects their affective state (Bandura, 2012, 13, 18, 27). In this analysis, and according to the theory, this is shown through whether victims think positively or negatively about their capacity to influence change. What is expected is that those with high self-efficacy think in self-enhancing ways, and those with low self-efficacy think in self-debilitating ways (Bandura, 2012, 13). Moreover, this affective state influences how well or poorly victims motivate or dissuade themselves from persevering in adverse conditions or leaving, acting accordingly (ibid). However, for a person to *decide* and *act*, so says Bandura, awareness of one's capabilities is not enough. There must be *motivation* based on predicted outcomes of the action that leads to a specific decision revealing the level of self-efficacy. This way, what is expected in this study is that the victim's self-efficacy either prevents adversities and victims avoid the political environment or encourages victims to proceed against the political

environment. In the first case, the hostile climate prevails over the victims, inducing them to disengage from the political environment structures, revealing low levels of self-efficacy. In the second case, the impediments serve as an engine for the victims to proceed and act against hostilities and overcome them. In this last situation, the victims see and engage in new opportunity structures. The victims see a way out from adversities by confronting the Commission and even threatening to resort to trials to do justice, showing a high level of self-efficacy.

The key finding that I acknowledged while exploring the interviews was how this belief system influences perceptions of amnesty. Victims from Group 1 adjust their aspirations, motivations and decisions to political environment impediments resulting in constraining their actions towards a transitional justice process along with their positive perceptions of amnesties. Furthermore, this behaviour affects the acceptance of amnesty. While individuals from Group 2 have high aspirations, high motivations to act and make decisions to change the political environment, reflecting on their negative perceptions of amnesty, their engagement in society, and acting accordingly. One can observe that a self-enhancing decision-making process reflects self-development actions and the ability to change the environment. This study confirms that people's goals, motivations, and choices at crucial decision moments in life denounce one's self-efficacy level and impact perceptions and actions.

To this end, based on data and according to the self-efficacy model theory, I will analyse the victims' self-efficacy through their functioning. This is shown through their aspirations, motivations, and decisions, which affect their perception of the transitional justice process of the May 27 massacre and their engagement in the social-political environment.

Aspirations

In this section, I compare the aspirations of the victims of both groups emphasising their differences.

All victims in group 1 show that they aspire to revive the memory of loved ones and colleagues, those who were taken away, forced disappeared and were executed in the May 27 systematic massacres to reveal the survivors' stories. In other words, to break the silence. These goals contrast with Group 2, whose aspiration is to reach justice and accountability of executioners. In addition, there are those from both groups whose ambition is to find the truth behind the events as much as possible. However, they have different

purposes. Those who want the truth in the first group are for historical reasons, for the victims' narratives, while the second group seeks the truth for accountability and justice.

But why do they adopt different goals making Group 1 be graded with low self-efficacy and Group 2 with high self-efficacy? While analysing data, I realised that Group 1 thinks in a pessimistic and self-debilitating way; whilst Group 2 has positive and self-enhancing thoughts about their capabilities to handle the political environment. Data shows how Group 1 had previous enthusiastic thoughts about prosecution and justice and how these changed considerably when the victims *realised* the environmental hazards. Thus, justice is considered impossible to achieve. They turned their goals into something they could reach without fussing with the political structures or putting themselves at risk. As Bandura says, "People also create environments that enable them to exercise better control over their lives. There is no risk" (Bandura, 2012, 12). In this environment (the 'victims' association' environment), they could speak freely about the May 27 massacre and break the silence without risk. For Group 1, the scope of the victims' association is where they feel comfortable, where they control risk, that is, avoiding too much exposure and effort against the government. It is safer. These victims behave cautiously. Whereas Group 2 never turns away from the goal of justice and accountability, no matter the environmental impediments. I capture these aspirations through their statements.

As Group 1 reveals, a victim says, "I thought perpetrators had to be punished, (...) but it is not possible to prosecute in Angola, (...) now, I believe it is more important to revive the memory of the dead. When there is silence, these people are forgotten" (Teresa (1), P. 2: 2268). But Group 2 shows a different approach to May 27. They have a sense of responsibility towards justice. As one of the victims describes, "It is necessary to deliver some sense of justice" (Diego, P. 8: 391), and others reinforce, "We want the executioners to be denounced and acknowledged for what they have done" (Zilla B, P. 4: 1853). According to these victims in Group 2, there is no reconciliation without accountability and justice, and this is their life motto. It can be seen how group 1 adjusted to the adversities and decreased their ambitions to less challenging goals, just as Bandura measures levels of self-efficacy regarding the extent to which individuals adapt their goals to environmental impediments (Bandura, 2012, 19).

The striking difference between the groups is the way their system belief controls how they settle their aspirations. According to Bandura's theory, as referred above, those who think pessimistic and self-debilitating have low self-efficacy, while those who are optimistic and think in a self-enhancing way show a high level of self-efficacy (Bandura,

2012, 13). The first group reveal the conviction in their inability to change their political environment. They do not believe in finding new opportunity structures or challenging the *status quo* to do justice. Therefore, the victims resort to the memory of the force disappeared. In other words, their goals submit to what they believe the current environment allows them to do, which is very little, and they resume simple, though meaningful, activities. While in group 2, the victims aspire to the accountability of individual perpetrators and make justice besides the hazards by surmounting positive and self-enhancing thoughts about challenging and overcoming the political environment, which shows a high level of self-efficacy, according to Bandura theory (2012, 18). According to both groups, only truth and accountability brings reconciliation, but only the victims of Group 2 believe in their ability to accomplish these aspirations. In the next section, I examine the victims' motivations and attempt to display the differences between the groups.

Motivations

According to Bandura, individuals process information from the background for selection based on predicted outcomes of decisions and actions (2012, 19, 20). In this light, next, I show how the victims handle the political environment and what incentivises them to make decisions.

We have seen that the victims' goals are settled according to what they believe is possible to achieve. In this conscious mechanism proposed by Bandura, goals serve as incentives to make decisions as long as they predict positive outcomes from decisions and actions (ibid). In my case study, the victims choose paths they believe they can reach and exclude those they cannot fulfil. As data shows, the first group's incentives are to break with silence to revive the memory of past narratives of the May 27 massacre. This is the path they believe is achievable while excluding prosecution because they predict a negative outcome. They do not believe that prosecution is a viable course of action, and therefore, the expected negative result of failure does not justify the efforts. In opposition, Group 2 believes that prosecution is possible, and therefore, the predicted positive outcome justifies the efforts, even facing risks. This way, there are incentives to challenge the political structures by breaking them or seeking alternatives fearlessly. Here, motivations challenge the political system dealing with the May 27 massacre. As Bandura says, those who take the risk even if the environment poses a threat believe that the effort is worth it. This mindset changes lives.

Therefore, this difference allows me to grade Group 2 of high self-efficacy and Group 1 with low self-efficacy.

To this extent, the victims from Group 1 show only encouragement and an obligation towards past narratives and feel motivated to counteract against the imposed silence. As victim 1 puts it, "When there is silence, these people are forgotten, and this is the hardest part" (Teresa (1), P. 2: 2268). Others consider it essential for the MPLA party to reveal the truth and ask forgiveness for reconciliation purposes. Furthermore, it is crucial to accede to the requests from orphans and survivors: to return the bodies to their families so they can mourn (Tomas, P.3:2234; P3:1014). Finally, for these victims, the truth "give(s) us heart relief and tranquillity" (Kent, P.7: 2871), which is an incentive that reveals that this group does not want to struggle with political structures but wants to be heard.

Whereas Group 2 pursue justice and accountability for several reasons that they consider crucial and above any impediment. Some victims believe that it is mandatory to seek responsibility for the 'refinements of evil" (Rand, P. 7: 414). Others remind that many were murdered after serving the MPLA in the revolutionary war (interview 7), which must be justified. Others remind the victims' injustices that orphans and survivors have been going through for decades with the imposed silence of their stories and the spread of a false official narrative. Another speaks of grief for the indiscriminate killings, "we carry grief for our friends and colleagues' death for the rest of our lives" (Virgil, (1), P. 9: 1040, P. 9: 688). What keeps this group going is the belief that they can do justice because they do not accept otherwise, which, as Bandura says, demonstrates perseverance in harsh conditions. Although all victims of both groups suffer the same way, the first group lacks belief in their capabilities to triumph over adversities. Therefore, they resort to what the environment allows them to achieve, revealing a low level of self-efficacy. At the same time, the second group shows a high level of self-efficacy in persisting in an environment that is always trying to throw them back to their starting point.

These motives drive the victims' decisions, and goals settings based on what each group believes is possible. This difference denounces a big gap between both groups in efficacy beliefs and motivations. This gap is more emphasised when victims make decisions that take us to the next step.

Decisions

In this section, I compare both groups' selections of environmental situations. Bandura's theory instructs that, individuals select environments they believe they can control after

assessing their capabilities and measuring their incentives (Bandura, 1997; 2000,10). After that, it is time to make decisions. According to data, Group 1 chooses to withdraw from political confrontation and Group 2, quite the opposite, decides to challenge the political establishment.

The victims of Group 1 depart their decisions based on the lack of trust in institutions and their established goals. As they say, "there is an internal problem of the MPLA and that there are many secrets to be unveiled," which, according to the victims, will never be out in the open. Still, some say, "Now, we only want them to tell us the truth, (...); and for this, they want an independent Commission to solve the case of May 27 and reveal the truth, "That the Commission finds what families want: the location of the remains of the dead, to follow traditions and do a proper funeral for the family members." [Kent]. Notwithstanding, another refers that the "case faces too many impediments to be concluded" (Jakob, P. 3: 1608). This group does not believe in challenging the MPLA. Therefore, they stick to lifting the memory of their relatives and friends and finding the truth about the massacre by themselves, without disturbing the party personalities directly because, according to their consciousness, this is what is possible. These victims depend on the environment. In other words, the environment dictates the rules.

As for Group 2, "Let's see if Civicop is enough, or else we have to resort to international institutions" (Zilla B, P. 7: 483). Because there is the belief in institutions, they not only want to give it a chance but also to force the political structure to change the official narrative, "We want to force the MPLA to bring up the true narrative and what was the basis of May 27." Marius]. Moreover, because "crimes against humanity do not prescribe," and those responsible with "blood on their hands" are free, N 12 states that "they must face a court" and answer for the crimes they have committed.

This way, both groups differ considerably in their decisions that come from their aspirations and motivations. The decision-making in this group steps over adversities. Moreover, adversities trigger these victims to seek other solutions meant to confront the political structures more harshly. While Group 1 finds that fighting back Civicop in the Angolan political context is useless, Group 2 considers this fight a "must," an essential decision in their lives, and see adversities as triggers for a decisive sparring position. As Bandura says, the cognitive process in this second group points to a different direction, revealing their resiliency to adversities, while the first group shows vulnerability to environmental stressors (Benight and Bandura, 2004,1131). According to the author, at the core of these decisions, Group 2 has a high level of self-efficacy and Group 1 has a low level

of efficacy beliefs. In the next section, I compare their actions that will resume in either engagement or disengagement, simpler, though meaningful, or challenging.

Actions

In this section, I evaluate the difference of engagement in society between the groups. According to the theory, the victims motivate themselves to act in environments they control. Bandura says that the level of self-efficacy indicates the belief in one's ability to perform as needed to solve a problem and achieve a goal. At the same time, engagement decreases the perceived vulnerability to stressors (Bandura 1977, 322; Ozer and Bandura, 1990). In this light, those with high self-efficacy beliefs increase confidence to engage, while those with low beliefs in one's efficacy reduce their possibilities to make changes. Thus, we can observe that Group 2 embodies the first hypothesis and group 1 the second path.

Group 1 excludes completely the necessity to counteract against CIVICOP because, as they emphasise, "the historical work of the Association is a long-term investment. It is to remember not to forget" (Jordi, P. 5: 215). In other words, they do not need the approval or interference of the Commission or political structures to reach these goals. Therefore, they disengage from the political environment to immerse themselves in an environment without stressors that they can control. In situations where the victims control their background, such as in the scope of the victims' association, there is an emergence of self-development and collective activities (Bandura,1997). Some victims resort to writing the memory of their loved ones, and others engage in looking for families of the disappeared and strive to give a face and a voice to those killed and forgotten, "Every day, we seek new stories from the disappeared," (Jordi, P. 5: 761). Those seeking as much information as possible about the May 27 massacre do it within the scope of the association.

The victims reveal to what extent beliefs can motivate enduring efforts. Group 1 denounces leaving the Commission, "We marked a position there: until the methodology does not change, we do not participate further in CIVICOP." (Kent), but do not seek to confront them with other measures but to abandon the process. These actions demonstrate Bandura's motivation assumption that those who do not believe in a positive outcome do not find incentives to act (Bandura, 1997). Their initial positivity towards a possible solution of May 27 falls short within the association's activities by lifting the memory of the victims and disengaging from the political context.

It is expected that the victims in Group 2 behave differently. For this group, withdrawing is not an option. On the contrary, as data reveals, they "will not slow down" (Franc (1), P. 5: 2044). What strikes in their statements is that they know the adversities they face. They understand that they fight an "unequal war" (Rand, P. 4: 1478), but this does not remove them from their goals, motives, decisions and actions. This is due to their high level of self-efficacy, in other words, in their beliefs of capabilities to surpass adversities. Thus, as Bandura informs, they reduce their vulnerability to stress while engaging and facing obstacles (2012, 13).

Thus, the victims challenge political structure and are fully engaged in the political context trying to change it and persisting, ignoring their setbacks. These victims' behaviour shows Bandura's theory when he states that, "Peoples' beliefs in their personal efficacy play a paramount role in how they organise, create, and manage the environment that affects their developmental pathways" (Bandura, 1995, 35). Next, I reveal the victims' perceptions of amnesty and how these derive from their levels of self-efficacy.

Perceptions of Transitional Justice

Perception is how something is regarded, understood, and interpreted (Kolok and Adam, 2019, 7). As the previous theoretical section explained, perceptions of transitional justice occur in the aftermath of a conflict and mass violence. The May 27, 1977, massacre happened more than 40 years ago. However, data shows that the victims still have a lucid perception of transitional justice and the amnesty imposed on the event seeking to blank it. As Bandura explains, individuals act on their judgments (Bandura, 1997, 5). So, I compare the victims' perceptions of the amnesty law to evaluate the effects of their levels of self-efficacy over these perceptions and be able to show this correlation. In this section, I have preferred to examine both groups separately and carefully as this is part of my dependent variable.

Group 1

The perception of the impossibility to prosecute annuls its possibility for victims of this group, and amnesty is accepted. Both perceptions derive from their levels of self-efficacy, which belief system and conscious mechanism step in their views of transitional justice processes.

For Group 1, impunity was unthinkable, and prosecution was imperative until it ceased to be. Observations demonstrate this shift: "I thought that people should be punished, but today, I believe it is more important to revive the memory of the victims (Teresa 1); "The prosecution is not the justice that I am looking for "it is too tough to prosecute someone in Angola." These observations show that when they perceived the environment as adverse, they decreased the challenge into a more plausible, realistic, and feasible solution. From other observations, a conditional amnesty based on a truth Commission is still considered "more realistic, due to the situation in Angola" (Isabel, P. 3: 574). Therefore, they do not seek prosecution but a conditional amnesty; because it is promising in finding the bodies and returning them to the families to mourn.

Notwithstanding, others consider that impediments hinder the process of transitional justice and consequently, not even conditional amnesty is possible in current political conditions. Moreover, they would be satisfied with public penance to be their sentence (Jordi, P. 4: 1456). This means that revealing the truth does not mean lifting the blanket amnesty law. On the contrary, it means shame for the perpetrators, social humiliation, and on the other hand, it means finding bodies, families mourning loved ones, and breaking silence. These statements indicate that previous thoughts of prosecution became 'wishful thinking' instead of goals. Though they understand that conditional amnesty is ideal, due to the political conditions, the victims do not have a solution to contest blanket amnesty or force a conditional amnesty process because the amnesty is conditional to accountability, and they do not believe it possible.

Moreover, they do not act as if they could change. This means that the victims from Group 1 submit totally to environmental adversities, that is, victims are more permeated to hardships. This way, they accept the established blanket amnesty while they do not contest it. Therefore, their level of self-efficacy is low, reflecting on their positive perception of amnesty. This way, blanket amnesty is not challenged and therefore, it is accepted.

Group 2

For the victims of Group 2, the prosecution is a growing possibility, and blanket amnesty is unacceptable. Though the majority accepts conditional amnesty, they warn that it is accepted under rigorous conditions. If this process does not move forward, including the accountability of perpetrators, they threaten prosecution. The more impediments the government presents, the further these victims attempt to challenge. The victims' self-efficacy allows for specific

transitional justice procedures until its last resources, the trials and recurring to the international instances. For these victims, it is not the environment that dictates the 'game rules.'

The best illustration of the correlation between high self-efficacy level and perceptions of amnesty in this group is the observation of one of the victims who claim for prosecution as "Amnesty is of no use to (him)" (Rand, P. 10: 799). This victim is not an exception as others consider prosecution necessary for reconciliation and an alternative in case conditional amnesty with accountability does not progress. The victims encourage finding the bodies and demonstrate facts for prosecution purposes. As they put it, though, "it is a lot of work, but it is feasible" (Diego, P. 10: 1539). In addition, they consider resorting to international institutions. In a resume, "We want them to recognise the mistakes they've made (...) I trust that a conditional amnesty is possible. Otherwise, the prosecution is a possibility (Zilla B, P. 4: 1444). These victims show a high level of self-efficacy while challenging powerful political structures that affect their development pathways, reflecting the theoretical finding that high self-efficacy is a buffer that protects them from adversities (Bandura, 2012, 31). They seek to change the establishment, which is blanket amnesty. The strength of their efficacy beliefs overcomes constraints while seeking other means such as prosecution to achieve justice and accountability for reconciliation. If the Commission overlooks the requirements, they are prepared to assume other measures and prosecution will be considered more in-depth. These victims believe that working for justice is a stronghold against surrender, stating that dropping off is not an option; therefore, justice must be done, and total amnesty is unthinkable.

Discussion

I verified my expectations that self-efficacy theory could explain the victims' perceptions of transitional justice from the data and the analysis. More precisely, I demonstrated that self-efficacy has a tremendous impact on victims' actions and perceptions of transitional justice in post-war societies. Victims have a sense of capability over environmental stressors influencing their performance over the social-political environment, and it enlightens their perceptions of transitional justice processes. This correlation upholds Bandura's theory about the influence of people's beliefs in their lives, "Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions they have little incentive to act or to persevere in the face of

difficulties” (Bandura, 2008, 1). Thus, one could observe how much effort victims are willing to expend and endure threatening activities, engaging, or disengaging, either contesting amnesty or not. The theory supports, and data shows that their self-efficacy level regulates their functioning and influences their perceptions of transitional justice mechanisms, and particularly the blanket amnesty. As Bandura explains, “people are contributors to their life circumstances, not just products of them” (Bandura, 2006, 164; Bandura, 2008, 1). This way, victims are also agents capable of intentionally influencing (their) functioning and the course of environmental events (Bandura, 2006, 164; Bandura, 2012, 11). As individuals, some have low, and others have high levels of self-efficacy influencing their decisions and the course of their actions and perceptions.

To this end, Group 1 shows a lack of belief in the possibility to change the established political environment conditions towards a renewed process of justice. According to the theory, they are self-limited, underconfident and products of the environment (Bandura, 1986, 1997, 2006, 164-165). Therefore, while they make efforts towards the memory and for the return of the bodies, they submit to what they believe is possible to achieve and the law of blanket amnesty stays untouched. In other words, while the Commission eventually satisfies their requests to return the bodies and build a memorial for the victims, even if the MPLA confesses the DISA excesses, the blanket amnesty is not contested, and the group stays fairly happy, while lacks accountability. Under these circumstances, blanket amnesty is accepted.

Instead, Group 2 invests their efforts in demanding accountability and engages in taxi ventures to reach their goals, deciding to endure and persevere in public confrontation besides the uncertain outcomes and obstacles ahead because the results are worthy of the efforts. Group 2 believes in change, invokes and enforces it. These are the “innovators,” the “persisters and risk-takers” capable of producing the difference for themselves and contributing to society (Bandura, 2008, 1-2). According to theory, communities’ benefit from innovators and their accomplishments (ibid). These beliefs and attitudes reflect in perceptions of transitional justice and their engagement. In this case, they see opportunities to change the imposed blanket amnesty. Moreover, they request accountability. This means that if the Commission provides the bodies of the forcibly disappeared and builds a memorial, this is not enough for this group because they want to change the law of blanket amnesty. The lack of accountability is not acceptable. Either the Commission engages in a conditional amnesty process, or they will seek prosecution, which is a considerable difference from the first group. In light of the exposed, one can say that self-efficacy level can predict if victims are willing to

accept transitional justice mechanisms imposed on them. Moreover, it can indicate if processes of reconciliation will succeed or not.

There could be other factors controlling the level of self-efficacy, such as location and condition. For example, the victims' living location could have an impact on the level of self-efficacy. One would expect that living in Angola, an authoritarian regime, could influence the perception of risk and influence self-efficacy. While living in Portugal, a democracy, it is expected that the victims would show a higher self-efficacy due to low-risk perception. However, data shows that some victims with low self-efficacy live in Portugal while others with high self-efficacy live in Angola. Regarding their condition as an orphan or a survivor, both conditions belong to both groups. Therefore, these factors do not control self-efficacy, which, according to Bandura, proves to be an independent concept. That said, I have shown that self-efficacy influences perceptions of transitional justice processes and this finding brings implications to the field.

What has been observed with this study has implications in terms of transitional justice processes in general and the blanket amnesty in particular. These processes expect to establish a mechanism of justice and reconciliation among the peoples of war-torn societies when peace is established between warring parties. Overall, this study shows that on the victims' side, there is no reconciliation without accountability. All victims from both groups said that without accountability, there is no reconciliation. Even those from the first group who would accept some restitutive forms of justice, such as the return of the bodies and the opportunity to build a memory, expect some compensation along the process, otherwise, reconciliation is not possible. And, in this case, for this group, it would be enough for the President of the MPLA to come forward and declare the party's wrongdoings 'as a whole', avoiding pointing guilt at specific individualities. In other words, those who submit to the imposed conditions, such as the case of Group 1, who select a more peaceful environment to live in and dismiss from public engagement, still do not personally reconcile if these transitional methods do not address some form of responsibility for committed violence. Their attitude comes from a low level of self-efficacy. That means that if they had a high level of efficacy beliefs, they would strive for official individual accountability. So, even if they are apparently at peace, their deepest wish is prosecution along with the other restitutive forms of compensation. However, the environment dictates otherwise to which they succumb. For these victims, a conditional amnesty involving some form of accountability would be acceptable. Victims only accept blanket amnesty when they cannot enforce it against an authoritarian and corrupt government. This confirms Melander (2009) study in what concerns

blanket amnesties in authoritarian regimes, which guarantees peace. As victims do not see another way around it, they submit. But for how long?

More submissive victims might be quiet for a while, but it does not mean they have reconciled. However, those with high self-efficacy will give them a voice. These ones show that the lack of reconciliation has future implications in what concerns blanket amnesties. After forty years, they are looking for accountability and prosecution if necessary. And they are not alone. There are manifestations on the streets of Luanda for accountability regarding the May 27 massacre, where can be seen in posters a manifestation of another victims' association, the *Fundação 27 Maio* (May 27 Foundation), "Even with the repression and death threats, let us not be afraid to denounce the Edwardian dictatorship" (VOA, May 30, 2011). After twenty years of the peace accords and the law of blanket amnesty, still, victims urge for accountability.

Blanket amnesty builds a fragile peace because it silences past narratives and avoids confronting perpetrators. Mass violence changes people's lives forever, and its consequences do not end with a quick-fix blanket amnesty. According to all victims I interviewed, grief is part of their lives, and accountability brings the truth of past narratives of victims' experiences, giving all 'peace of mind.' As Bloomfield et al. (2003) say, "there is no peace and no reconciliation without punitive justice" (2003, 97). Accountability through prosecution and a strict conditional amnesty process is the panacea for all victims.

Sooner or later, victims will want to sort out a blanket amnesty. The victims' pains endure for generations, as the victims interviewed have shown. However, those with low levels of self-efficacy do not contest blanket amnesty, and regimes may expect some peace for a while, as Melander (2009) evaluated in his study. It can take decades. But there are those victims who want to contest it as soon as they believe they can, as my research shows. The advantage of those with a high level of self-efficacy is that they are willing to do whatever it takes to resume accountability as soon as they believe it possible. Overall, this implies that if victims are not heard, they are often against transitional justice processes, deterring enforced reconciliation systems in their daily lives without the acknowledgement of the authorities. This leads me to concede that institutions should look more closely at victims and attend to them because they can jeopardize their efforts to keep a stable peace.

This paper shows the importance of micro-level examination of victims. It shows that processes should consult the victims, attend more carefully to their sufferings, observe their feedback, and seek to negotiate an inclusive transitional justice process. Otherwise, sooner or later, amiss justice mechanisms might backfire.

Conclusion

As referred to in this study, after a civil conflict where there were gross violations of human rights, such as the episodes of mass violence, international institutions step in implementing transitional justice processes following the local governmental authorities. In this course of engagement between conflicting parties, where peace is at stake and populations are hurt, the selection of a just transition is ambivalent. It often closes up in an imposed blanket amnesty. While these processes expect reconciliation between parties and affected peoples, winners try to impose their narratives. At the same time, victims stories of past abuses tend to be forgotten, leaving a void in damaged populations. The problem is that transitional justice processes deal with local governmental institutions instead of addressing individual cases directly and privately. For these reasons, I have started this research paper to find the victims' agency in post-conflict societies, specifically in what concerns transitional justice processes that have an overwhelming weight on the victims' pathways.

To find their agency in these processes, I started this study by asking how victims' self-awareness impacts their perception of blanket amnesty as a transitional justice instrument for reconciliation? To answer this question, I needed to explore the victim's self-awareness of their social-political environment and consciousness of their capabilities to manage it. To help my research, I used the self-efficacy theory of human agency. This theory enlightened me to delve into the victims' consciousness of their aspirations, motivations, and decisions to extract their perceptions of transitional justice and, more, their engagement in society related to this framework. For this research to be possible, I selected the case study of the May 27 massacre perpetrated in Angola by government forces and their Cuban allies. I interviewed 12 victims, orphans from force-disappeared parents and survivors from the massacre. This way, I could solve my research question regarding the correlation between the victims' self-efficacy and their perceptions of blanket amnesties as an instrument of transitional justice for reconciliation. The answer to this question shows to what extent victims are capable of agency in transitional justice processes and how self-efficacy can predict perceptions of transitional justice mechanisms and even reconciliation among peoples and their governments.

This study allowed me to reach some objective key findings. Primarily, I uncovered that the victims' self-efficacy levels influence different perceptions of transitional justice mechanisms, and therefore, of the blanket amnesty. What I found based on the

interviews was that the victims' core beliefs in one's efficacy to face a threatening political environment is the bedrock of their aspirations, motivation, and decisions affecting their perceptions of transitional justice. Moreover, this study finds that the extent to which these indicators are rooted in the victims' core beliefs has the power to effect changes by their actions. In this light, I can argue that the victims' self-beliefs step in their aspirations, motivations and decisions, reflecting in their accomplishments and perceptions of transitional justice.

To be more precise, victims graded with low self-efficacy adjusted aspirations, motivations, and decisions according to political environment impediments. That is, an environment full of threats, conflicts, corruption, frustrations, setbacks, and inequities take over the thoughts and motivations of the victims, who gradually distrust and disengage as their beliefs decrease. On the other hand, victims who have a high level of efficacy beliefs have an aggressive approach to the political environment stressors and towards a transitional justice system. I find that victims with high self-beliefs increase motivation to prosecute while the political structures try to silence them by misrepresenting their requests. This shows that victims have their strengths and beliefs, which are the foundation of their motivation and persistence. Even deeper, I found that self-efficacy can predict the victims' perceptions of transitional justice systems and reconciliation processes among people. This finding can help institutions implement accountability processes in post-conflict societies.

This research is interesting because it is a micro-level study that brings the 'active victim.' Usually, victims are seen as a group of submissive people who suffered from violence and either died or survived it, and for whom institutions must make decisions on their behalf. Far from this, this study shows that victims are too individuals with agency, capable of deciding their pathways according to their goals. They are individuals who want to have a saying in their future. I tried to detect that their traumas and sufferings did not numb them from having their voices in post-war societies. On the contrary, I found that their perceptions of transitional justice are pretty active and vivid. If the victims of Group 1 had felt the confidence to prosecute, that would have been their first choice. Victims should feel free from threat when deciding what is best for them to deal with past atrocities, and this fact is often overlooked in transitional justice processes. Moreover, implemented transitional justice systems should not ignore the background in which victims continue to live in and should not leave victims unattended.

Therefore, considering this study, I find that self-efficacy matters for transitional justice as the individual agency is essential, especially when dealing with top-down imposed

transitional justice measures. I am aware that, although many studies tend to focus on the collective level, that is, the victims as a group, more studies of the perception of individual agency in relation to the social-political environment needs to be promoted to understand better why individuals engage in transitional processes in different ways.

Regarding blanket amnesty, since it does not address the victims' narratives and usually, it is the winner's story that is official and recognised, this paper finds that quiet victims are not equivalent to being reconciled with the past, but of an impasse. Blanket amnesty and its consequent silence towards the past gives victims, survivors and orphans, a sense of the worthless death of loved ones. Grief endures forever if not appropriately addressed. The lack of accountability gives victims the feeling of an unsettled issue with the past that prolongs in time. Therefore, this study finds that Angolan blanket amnesty serves as an example, or a warning, for other cases of blanket amnesty. Institutions implementing transitional justice mechanisms should be aware that if it is peace and reconciliation they expect, blanket amnesties build it over sandy grounds, and in the future, anything is possible.

Transitional justice is the answer for instances of mass violence and the hope for the victims to overcome past atrocities. However, if these processes ignore victims, it perpetuates agony and torment in thousands of families. I hope this paper sheds light on the importance of addressing the micro-level study of victims' perceptions of transitional justice and their roles in these processes. This way, I would propose more studies to be conducted in these lines for the sake of the prosperous future of war-torn societies. Otherwise, peace is built over flimsy grounds. This instability can endure for decades or break a fragile equilibrium in an instant.

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Annex

Interview questions

Past events	How you experienced May 27 events?
	How was life after the events?
Relation with Angola	How is your relationship with Angola?
Environment	Is it safe to speak about the May 27?
	To what extent the authoritarian regime affects you?
Behaviour	How did you overcome the May 27?
(affectiveness)	Are you part of any victim association?
(actions)	If yes, does it help with your catharses?
	What do you do in the association?
Self-efficacy (Goals)	What are your goals?
	What do you want to achieve?
(Motivations)	What do you expect to achieve?
(Relation with transitional justice)	Is there hope (with CIVICOP)?
	What are the constraints that you face?
Amnesty (perceptions)	Do you agree with blanket amnesty?
	Would you consider prosecution?
	What are your views in this matter?

