U.PORTO

MESTRADO EM PSICOLOGIA

PSICOLOGIA DAS ORGANIZAÇÕES, SOCIAL E DO TRABALHO

A VIEW ON THE RADICAL UNIFORM: A STUDY ON THE RADICALIZATION OF POLICE OFFICERS

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M

2026

FACULDADE DE PSICOLOGIA
E DE CIÊNCIAS DA EDUCAÇÃO
UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO

A view of the radical uniform: A study on the radicalization of police officers

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Outubro 2026

Dissertação apresentada no Mestrado em Psicologia, área de Psicologia das Organizações, Social e do Trabalho, Faculdade de Psicologia e de Ciências da Educação da Universidade do Porto, orientada pela Professora Doutora Conceição Nogueira e coorientada pela Professora Doutora Isabel R. Pinto (FPCEUP).

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Agradecimentos

Agradeço imensamente à Professora Doutora Isabel Rocha Pinto por me ter guiado na aventura que é a dissertação de mestrado, por cada momento que passou a pensar comigo sobre o tema, por me ajudar com estatística, pelo tempo gasto a corrigir o meu trabalho às duas da manhã, e por me incentivar e me tentar levar sempre cada vez mais longe. Obrigada por ter visto algo em mim que valeu a pena apostar.

Quero agradecer também ao Laboratório de Psicologia Social que me proporcionou um espaço seguro e de imenso conhecimento, com um especial obrigado à Professora Doutora Catarina Carvalho por me mostrar todos os dias o que era investigação, à Márcia e ao João, por serem exemplos a seguir (e pelas explicações extra de estatística), e à Rita, que partilhou comigo este caminho do estágio e da dissertação.

Agradeço ao meu tio Armando e ao Secretário Nacional da ASPP/PSP Cristiano Correia, pela disponibilidade em me ajudarem na distribuição do questionário e investirem na investigação académica sobre a polícia, assim como a todos os participantes que cooperaram num estudo com temáticas sensíveis.

Quero agradecer também à minha família, especialmente ao meus pais por todo o apoio que me deram, não só ao me trazerem até aqui, mas também ao longo do meu percurso de vida. Obrigada por irmos pôr o lixo à noite. Agradeço também aos meus avós maternos, avó Tina e avô Zé, por me perguntarem "como vai a escolinha" e por me dizerem constantemente que ia tudo correr bem, e aos meus avós paternos, avô Neca, que, mesmo não se lembrando de mim, continua a contar histórias dos seus tempos como polícia sinaleiro, e avó Rosa, que tenho a certeza de que se cá estivesse teria muito orgulho em mim.

Agradeço também às minhas amigas pelo apoio que me deram, à Liz, à Sara e à Marta, que mesmo mais longe, me mostram que tudo é possível, à Inês, que é o meu exemplo, e à Mafalda, por trabalharmos nas dissertações às sextas-feiras. Agradeço também aos meus amigos da faculdade, Sun, Mari, Shiro, Catarina, e Filipa, que me motivaram para acabar o trabalho e me convenceram que sair de casa para passear ajuda com o stress. E um especial obrigado à Gabby que me ajudou a pôr as ideias no sítio e que esteve sempre lá para mim.

E por último, mas não menos importante, agradeço-me a mim por ter conseguido chegar aqui. Espero sempre sonhar alto.

Abstract

In a time when democracies are being threatened by the rise of radical right-wing populism, institutions that serve the State are at risk of being influenced by this ideology and the populist beliefs associated with it. The police, as an institution, is indistinguishable from the nature of the State, as political regimes and policing are intertwined. The issue with the extremist radicalization within law enforcement is that it risks threatening public trust in this institution's impartiality, professionalism and credibility. In Portugal, the recent increase of members of a radical right-wing populist party in parliament and its support by the population normalizes their anti-democratic views. With this party's leader great vocal support for police's improvements, namely working conditions and public recognition, officers may find themselves more heard and lean towards populist beliefs. Thus, this study aimed to investigate the occurrence of radical right within one Portuguese police force, *Polícia de Segurança Pública*, and to explore the factors that may be associated with greater adherence to this ideology. A correlational study (N = 104) showed that a high percentage of police officers voted for the Portuguese radical right-wing populist party, and identify significant constraints regarding their working conditions, social recognition for their work, and the tendency for society and the current government to blame this police force. Predictive factors for this vote are more ideological in nature, namely the belief in the urgent need for change and restructuring of the Portuguese justice system, as well as authoritarian ideologies among these professionals.

Keywords: *Police officers; Radical right; Populism; Radicalization; Socioprofessional attitudes*

Resumo

Num momento em que as democracias estão a ser ameaçadas pela ascensão do populismo de direita radical, as instituições ao serviço do Estado correm o risco de serem influenciadas por esta ideologia e pelas crenças populistas que lhe estão associadas. A polícia, enquanto instituição, é indissociável da natureza do Estado, uma vez que os regimes políticos e a atividade policial estão interligados. O problema da radicalização extremista no seio das forças de segurança reside no risco de comprometer a confiança do público na imparcialidade, no profissionalismo e na credibilidade desta instituição. Em Portugal, o recente aumento do número de deputados de um partido populista de direita radical no Parlamento e o apoio de que este recebe por parte da população normalizam as suas visões antidemocráticas. Com o forte apoio manifesto do líder deste partido às melhorias na polícia, nomeadamente nas condições de trabalho e no reconhecimento público, os agentes podem sentir-se mais ouvidos e inclinar-se para crenças populistas. Assim, este estudo teve como objetivo investigar a ocorrência da direita radical no seio de uma força policial portuguesa, a Polícia de Segurança Pública, e explorar os fatores que podem estar associados a uma maior adesão a esta ideologia. Um estudo correlacional (N = 104) revelou que uma elevada percentagem de agentes da polícia votou no partido populista de direita radical português e identificou constrangimentos significativos no que diz respeito às suas condições de trabalho, ao reconhecimento social pelo seu serviço e à tendência da sociedade e do atual governo para atribuir a culpa a esta força policial. Os fatores preditivos deste voto são de natureza mais ideológica, nomeadamente a convicção da necessidade urgente de mudança e reestruturação do sistema judicial português, bem como as ideologias autoritárias entre estes profissionais.

Palavras-chave: *Agentes da polícia; Direita radical; Populismo; Radicalização; Atitudes socioprofissionais*

Résumé

À une époque où les démocraties sont menacées par la montée du populisme de droite radicale, les institutions au service de l'État risquent d'être influencées par cette idéologie et les convictions populistes qui y sont associées. La police, en tant qu'institution, est indissociable de la nature même de l'État, car les régimes politiques et le maintien de l'ordre sont étroitement liés. Le problème posé par la radicalisation extrémiste au sein des forces de l'ordre est qu'elle risque de compromettre la confiance du public dans l'impartialité, le professionnalisme et la crédibilité de cette institution. Au Portugal, l'augmentation récente du nombre de députés d'un parti populiste de droite radicale au Parlement et le soutien dont il bénéficie au sein de la population contribuent à normaliser ses opinions antidémocratiques. Le chef de ce parti se faisant le fervent défenseur d'améliorations au sein de la police, notamment en matière de conditions de travail et de reconnaissance publique, les agents pourraient se sentir davantage écoutés et être tentés de se rallier aux idées populistes. Cette étude avait donc pour objectif d'étudier la présence de la droite radicale au sein d'une force de police portugaise, la *Polícia de Segurança Pública*, et d'explorer les facteurs susceptibles d'être associés à une adhésion accrue à cette idéologie. Une étude corrélationnelle ($N = 104$) a montré qu'un pourcentage élevé de policiers avait voté pour le parti populiste de droite radicale portugais et faisait état de contraintes importantes liées à leurs conditions de travail, à la reconnaissance sociale de leur métier, ainsi qu'à la tendance de la société et du gouvernement actuel à rejeter la responsabilité sur les forces de police. Les facteurs prédictifs de ce vote sont davantage de nature idéologique, à savoir la conviction qu'il est urgent de changer et de restructurer le système judiciaire portugais, ainsi que les idéologies autoritaires présentes chez ces professionnels.

Mots-clés: *Agents de police ; Extrême droite ; Populisme ; Radicalisation ; Attitudes socioprofessionnelles*

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Introduction

Radical right-wing populism has been growing in popularity across Europe in recent years, reshaping electoral competition in numerous democratic societies (Machado et al., 2022; Rydgren, 2007). Portugal has been no exception to this trend, even though the far-right's rise in the country only began forty-five years after the fall of the *Estado Novo*, the authoritarian regime that ruled Portugal until 1974. The stigma associated with that authoritarian regime was so strong and explicit that the entire party system remained left-leaning for decades, reflecting a broader reaction against the right's association with dictatorship (Manucci, 2020).

Against this backdrop, the emergence of *Chega* (Enough!) marks a significant break with the post-dictatorship political landscape. In 2019, it became the first radical right-wing populist party to win a seat in the Portuguese Parliament since the fall of the *Estado Novo*. In the general elections of May 2025, *Chega* increased its representation to sixty members of parliament, over one fifth of the Assembly of the Republic, making it the second most powerful party in Parliament (Assembleia da República, 2025).

This rapid political ascent raises questions that extend beyond electoral competition, particularly regarding the institutions responsible for upholding democracy itself. Research on extremist radicalization of law enforcement remains underdeveloped, yet the growing support for the radical right in Portugal makes it essential to pay close attention to institutions dedicated to sustaining democracy, such as the police, to ensure that they remain independent of political factions and do not themselves become politicized.

The police hold the legitimate authority to use force as an institution that upholds democratic legality and guarantees the safety and rights of citizens, in accordance with the Constitution and an impartial national law of a retributive nature, this authority is not intended to serve a radical ideological faction, and certainly not to operate against the democratic regime itself (Polícia de Segurança Pública, 2023). It is this presumption of impartiality that comes under threat when members of police forces organize around an ideology that divides society into "good people" and "enemies" (such as elites, minorities, and immigrants), raising questions about the police's democratic accountability (Lusa,

2026). A police officer holding private opinions, which are protected in any democracy, represents a fundamentally different situation from the existence of organized groups within the security forces, bound by networks that generate loyalties parallel to the official chain of command and mechanisms of mutual cover-ups, collective dynamics that run directly counter to core democratic principles. The distinction between one's private views and parallel loyalties and potential cover-ups are relevant to the police profession, as certain organizational cultures, such as the police, based on the fact that the profession itself generates a close-knit culture given the unique demands of the job itself, may encourage feelings of loyalty between officers that may dissuade them from reporting misconduct to higher authorities (Skolnick, 2002).

The informal and opaque nature of these collective organizations makes their detection all the more difficult, which allows such groups to persist and, in doing so, to exert a significant impact on the concrete, day-to-day work of police officers, conveying a parallel mission and organizational climate, one less consistent with the democratic principles these police forces are meant to represent, but that contribute to internal division. Portugal is not an isolated case in this respect (Euronews, 2025; Henriques, 2025; Marcelino, 2024; Tibiriçá & Lusa, 2025); comparable dynamics have been identified in other countries, including Germany (Koehler, 2025).

It is precisely this progression, from individual sympathy to organized collective ideological adherence, that makes the co-optation of security institutions and the justice system one of the most decisive steps in the consolidation of radical authoritarian regimes from within formally established democracies, as the extreme radicalization of law enforcement personnel could significantly impact the criminal justice system through, for example, dynamics involving police officers and the influence of neo-Nazi sympathizers (Koehler, 2025). If a significant subgroup of the police already shares the ideology of a movement that comes to power, the institutional counterweight that would normally resist illegal or unconstitutional orders disappears.

This risk is compounded by the nature of police work itself. Democratic policing has, in recent decades, sought to restructure itself around proximity and community-oriented security activities, moving away from a model centered on coercive force and

self-appointed justice towards one grounded in trust-building, prevention, and service to the community (Fonseca, 2019). Yet, this same, evolution relies precisely on the considerable discretionary power that officers exercise on a daily basis: who is stopped, searched, or detained, or how a protest is managed, discretion that, in principle, should be guided by proximity and impartiality. However, it can easily become a vehicle for the selective and discriminatory practices this model was designed to overcome. Social psychology research consistently associates radical right-wing populist attitudes with heightened intergroup prejudice and greater acceptance of authority and social hierarchy (Pellegrini et al., 2022). Those who hold real coercive power therefore run a concrete risk of engaging in selective, discriminatory policing, usually directed against minorities or political opponents, taking into account their adherence to an extremist right-wing authoritarian conservative ideology.

Finally, police legitimacy itself rests on the perception of procedural justice and impartiality. Those who hold real coercive power may run the concrete risk of engaging in selective and discriminatory policing, and if certain social groups perceive that the police do not protect them equally, this perception feeds directly into processes of institutional distrust, disinvestment from the broader social contract, and, ultimately, recourse to forms of "vigilante justice", that is, taking justice in their own hands, outside the formal system. Taken together, these dimensions justify why law enforcement constitutes a critical site for studying their increased adherence to the radical right.

Despite this relevance, research on the extremist radicalization of law enforcement remains underdeveloped. Several publicly documented cases illustrate the phenomenon, involving not only members of the public, but also law enforcement professionals expressing support for far-right ideologies and organizations across Western countries, through emails, text messages, or social media activity (Johnson, 2019; Koehler, 2025). In Portugal, there have been cases of group chats among police officers who shared material sympathetic to the far-right: in 2022, it became public that 591 police officers' profiles circulated messages inciting violence against women, and other messages with racist, xenophobic, misogynistic and homophobic content (Marcelino, 2024). More recently, in 2025, more police officers were found in groups embracing neo-Nazi ideology (Euronews, 2025; Henriques, 2025; Tibiriçá & Lusa, 2025). It is known that

authoritarian regimes can maintain a strong basis of legitimacy among the population, especially if police action is directed at specific groups, such as minorities, immigrants, or political opponents (McCarthy et al., 2025), a dynamic that connects directly to the broader ramifications of radical right-wing mobilization examined in the following section.

1. The ramifications of the radical right

Radical and extremist parties can be described as supporting drastic changes to society, with the goal of either creating a radically different future or returning to an idealized version of the past (Powell, 1986). This is especially relevant in the context of uncertainty, crisis, and social instability, since these parties focus on the need to protect their nations from a loss of identity caused by those they believe to be politically undesirable (Pinto et al., 2020). When this idea takes root in society, it can create a perception of a threat to the sense of collective identity, which leads the leaders of these parties to promote a sense of identity continuity through change that is consistent with the group's identity (Syfers et al., 2021).

The extreme right is often viewed as anti-pluralist or monist because it opposes political diversity and may reject democratic systems or democratic principles (Lipset & Raab, 1970; Rydgren, 2007).

When considering the radical right, certain core ideological elements will come up, such as nativism, populism and authoritarianism (Mudde, 2019; Muis & Immerzeel, 2017). There are some core psychosocial concepts that need to be defined and clarified when it comes to understanding determinants of adherence to radical right political forces: populism, authoritarianism and system justification.

1.1 Populism

When it comes to one of the core ideological elements of the radical right, populism can be considered a thin-centered ideology (Mudde, 2021; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2018) that revolves around a division between "us" and "them", using the

tendency to form identities in relation to groups and construct the social world with ingroups, which the common identity is often the perceived shared grievances, and outgroups, the scapegoats that are claimed to be responsible for that said grievances.

When combined with right-wing ideologies, populism often comes hand in hand with nativism, where the "us" or the "people" becomes the national in-group and the "them" can be considered the elites (vertical opposition, usually referred as anti-elitism) and foreigners or immigrants (horizontal opposition, often referred as anti-pluralism) (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013). These boundaries between groups can be explained by Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory, primarily through social categorization, in which a distinction is made between the ingroup, "the good people", composed, in this case, of a social identification with the more homogeneous population and the political values they defend, and the outgroup, "the immigrants" (in terms of anti-pluralism), who are perceived as a threat to the ingroup. Taking it a step further, Brewer (1999) expands on this theory by adding that this discrimination against the outgroup exists because there is a favoritism toward the ingroup that is distinct from a negativity toward the outgroup; in other words, these biases may also arise not necessarily because of hatred for the outgroup, but simply because positive feelings are reserved solely for the ingroup. Thus, a need arises to justify the ingroup's values through moral superiority and processes of social and political comparison, thereby linking ingroup loyalty and identity to hostility toward the outgroup (Brewer (1999).

As for the elites, these are portrayed as a homogeneous corrupt group which works against the people, including the ones who hold leading positions in the economy, politics, the media and the arts (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013). These authors propose another core concept to populism: the notion of the "general will" of the people, which embodies one unified voice and identifies a common enemy. By this notion, populist discourse paves the way to the formation of a strong identity proposing itself as an alternative, challenging the *status quo* (Lacau, 2005). From this point of view, populism appears to be a democratizing force, as it defends the principle of popular sovereignty, giving voice to those who do not feel represented by the political establishment, thus being able to survive and gain representativeness in democratic regimes. Despite this, the notion of the "general will" may lead to the support of authoritarian tendencies (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2013),

since if the will of the majority is to declare who does not belong to the “homogeneous people”, it means that those people cannot be treated equally, which legitimizes attacks on anyone who questions the “general will”, and democracy principles become fragile.

1.2 Authoritarianism

A further psychosocial process inherent to adherence to radical right-wing ideology is authoritarianism. In the literature on political regimes, the term commonly designates non-democratic systems or leaders. In the study of ideologies, consistently, it refers to a set of shared beliefs and attitudes that society should be organized around strict order, with harsh punishment for those who challenge authority (Mudde, 2019). Within radical right-wing ideology, this belief translates into a preference for hierarchy, obedience and law-and-order responses to social problems, and it is therefore closely tied to the demand for a strong state.

This ideology supporting order and punishment has direct implications for the institutions responsible for enforcing it. Police forces are formal mechanisms of social control endowed with coercive power, namely the power to arrest, search, disperse and use force. In authoritarian contexts, such institutions tend to resort more extensively to coercion, repression, and surveillance, setting aside the retributive nature of these formal institutions in democratic contexts, which can undermine freedom of expression and impose social conformity, or even, give rise to secret police forces (Davenport, 2007; Lagunoff, 2025; Zhu et al., 2025). In these circumstances, the role of the police shifts from safeguarding citizens’ rights towards preserving the established order.

1.3 System Justification

Furthermore, authoritarianism accounts for the preference for order and hierarchy, but it does not fully explain why people defend social systems that are unequal. This gap is addressed by System Justification Theory (Kay & Jost, 2003), which starts from the premise that people are motivated to defend and perceive the existing social, economic and political systems as legitimate and fair (Jost, 2019). This motivation serves epistemic,

existential and relational needs: it helps to make sense of their environment, to feel safer and less threatened, and to sustain a shared sense of reality with others.

Jost and Hunyady (2005) describe these beliefs as "system-justifying ideologies" which include ideas such as belief in a just world and meritocracy, with right-wing authoritarianism being one important example. These ideologies help reinforce and legitimize social systems based on these premises. Authoritarianism is closely linked to this theory because both emphasize the preservation of the current social order, resistance to change, and the value of tradition, religion, and established norms (Lönnqvist et al., 2021). Adherence to radical right-wing should, thus, be predicted by lower levels of justification of the current system, consistent with criticism of the existing democracies.

2. The police as a democratic institution

According to Gutmann (2003), there are three major elements that contribute to a strong democracy. The first is equal freedom, which allows the people to live freely while respecting the freedom of others, guaranteeing freedom of expression, assembly and association. The second is equal opportunity, which ensures access to requirements to live decently, including freedom from discrimination in education and in employment. The third is civic equality, meaning that all citizens have equal standing in the democratic process, with access to accurate information about the society they live in, the right to participate in democratic decision-making and equal protection under the law.

Police forces are among the institutions fundamental to the sustainability of democracies, as they serve the public within democratic systems and are entrepreneurs of the values described above, protecting the exercise of freedom of expression and assembly, ensuring equal protection under the law and acting without discrimination. To do so, the police strike a balance between maintaining internal security and protecting human rights (Cao et al., 2016; Sung, 2006). The police are a state's main instrument of coercion for maintaining order, a power that requires legitimation despite differences across societies, and they are in constant contact with the public as a "visibly coercive arm of the state" (Sung, 2006, p.351). This visibility explains why the police are subject to scrutiny and reform in liberal democratic governance. Bayley (1990) went further

arguing that the nature of the police forces cannot be separated from the nature of the state. Indeed, in many countries, it is recognized the need to create and strengthen democratic police forces (Sklansky, 2007; Sung, 2006).

Being a guarantor of democratic values, however, depends on how the police act. Under authoritarian regimes the police turn repressive, whereas liberal democratic systems impose legal and institutional restraints on their actions (Sklansky, 2007; Sung, 2006). There is thus a fundamental difference between two models of policing. Democratic policing, although with a dosage of coercive power, is preventive and retributive in nature, since it discharges its duties in accordance with the rule of law. Repressive policing, more common in authoritarian regimes, uses coercion to preserve order and control the population (Muntingh et al., 2021). The police may therefore either protect democratic values or be used to undermine them, and what distinguishes the two outcomes is whether their professional mode of action is democratic or authoritarian.

2.1 The Portuguese police forces: The case of *Polícia de Segurança Pública*

As stated by the 272nd Article of the Portuguese Constitution, "the police are responsible for upholding democratic rule of law and ensuring internal security and the rights of citizens" (Assembleia da República, 2005).

The main police bodies in Portugal, which are all the police bodies that exercise functions in certain areas, are *Polícia de Segurança Pública* (PSP), *Polícia Judiciária* (PJ) and *Guarda Nacional Republicana* (GNR). Unlike GNR, a military force, and the PJ, which specializes in criminal investigations, *Polícia de Segurança Pública* is a public police service, with its own organization and personnel, which mostly operates in urban environments and within a policing model characterized by proximity to citizens.

As this police force's mission is to ensure democratic legality, guarantee internal security and the rights of citizens, in accordance with the Constitution and the law, the PSP assumes a broader dimension of its purpose and commitment to citizens to guarantee an environment of peace, tranquility and security, which benefits the regular functioning of democratic institutions, the well-being of the community, thus contributing to the

economic and social development of the country (Polícia de Segurança Pública, 2023). The PSP's actions comply with the rules regulating police activity and are governed by a set of fundamental ethical values: respect for citizens' rights and freedoms; quality public service; responsibility and integrity; impartiality and rejection of any form of extremism and discrimination; and directness and loyalty, the foundations of the police service (Polícia de Segurança Pública, 2023). These characteristics make this police force a relevant case for analyzing the issue of support for the radical right within the security forces, since its mission and professional activity are especially consistent with the aims of democratic regimes, opposing to the extreme-right wing ideology, and thus, consistent with being resistant to right-wing populism. Formal commitment to democratic policing at the institutional level does not, however, guarantee that individual members are immune to extremist beliefs, which is the concern addressed in the following section.

3. Radicalization of the police and the danger to democracy

Although the PSP's values reject extremism, these commitments do not in themselves prevent officers from adopting extremist beliefs. Understanding how this may occur requires first clarifying what is meant by radicalization.

Radicalization refers to the process by which individuals develop extremist beliefs with the objective of changing the current order, which is seen as ineffective (Marwick et al., 2022). Radicalization is particularly serious when it occurs within police forces, since it threatens public trust in this institution's impartiality, professionalism and credibility, and also endangers public safety by the possibility of transferring skills, knowledge and materials for violent extremist and terrorist actions, allowing the chance of eroding the fundament of the democratic rule of law, namely the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of force (Koehler & Filipps, 2024).

At the individual level, if this institution becomes more receptive to far-right ideology, elements of that ideology, such as extreme nationalism or ideas of racial purity, are more likely to become part of the police officers' identity. This may harm vulnerable groups and those deemed politically undesirable (Papanicolaou & Papageorgiou, 2016). Implicit biases and racialized stereotypes may affect the perceptions of police officers

during their jobs, leading them to treat ethnic minorities as potential criminal suspects with negative consequences for their decisions and actions. As mentioned before, implications are considerably more serious when radicalization is organized rather than individual. When officers form networks within the police, they create parallel loyalties to the official chain of command and may act against democratic principles in a coordinated way. Unlike isolated attitudes, such networks can shape collective practices and reinforce shared ideology through the same processes of social contagion described above. In these circumstances, the police cease to be a guarantor of democratic values and may become an instrument for undermining them.

More so, according to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), being part of a group can create a sense of belonging and unity, helping individuals feel that they share experiences and views with others. When people identify themselves as members of a group, they adopt that group's identity and start seeing themselves through its characteristics, rules, and values. This identification often holds emotional significance, and a person's self-esteem can become tied to their membership in the group.

There is a need, however, to understand how these factors manifest and interact in the context of police forces, and, therefore, relevant to reflect on the police occupational culture. This culture is a set of commonly shared attitudes and perspectives that develop in response to their work environment, helps police officers cope with the pressures and challenges that arise from their job conditions (Skogan et al., 2004). Some effects of it may be the reinforcement of attitudes such as authoritarianism, cynicism, aggression, suspicion, conservatism, alienation, and prejudice (Demirkol, 2021), which can be exacerbated when given more power and authority.

Alongside this, it is also important to mention that the police profession has working conditions characterized by uncertainty, unpredictability, danger and the risk of injury and potentially traumatic events, and the use of authority, with conflicting demands combined with high levels of stress and workload, which can cause an excessive use of force among police officers (Koehler, 2025; Queirós et al., 2020; Laguna et al., 2010).

With that in mind, it will now be relevant to move on to a more detailed analysis of the reality of the police profession in Portugal, namely, their relationship with the far-right.

3.1 How the far-right in Portugal targets police officers

In the Portuguese context, all political parties in the Parliament propose, in their election platforms, with more or less consensual points, measures to strengthen the dignity and rights of law enforcement professionals. However, the far-right party *Chega* has a discourse strongly focused on defending and protecting the police, offering significant support to law enforcement and the repression of crime. This party raises several points regarding the need to make the career more appealing, ensuring salary reviews, increased recruitment, the provision of subsidies, a focus on mental health, criminalizing hate speech against police officers, and recognizing the right to party membership and to strike, among other measures (Chega, 2025). *Chega*'s proposals for law enforcement are based on a central idea: to increase officers' authority, operational capacity, and legal protection.

This discourse may respond to a perceived devaluation of the police profession by reinforcing the sense that police officers perform an essential function and that their rights and needs must be protected, thereby creating a positive distinction in identity between police officers and those who devalue and threaten them. By advocating for greater authority, this discourse may also help legitimize a representation of police identity associated with authority and order, which could lead to the reinforcement of needs for more repressive police actions.

Having said that, some of the main factors that may justify a greater adherence of police officers to far-right parties such as *Chega* will the analyzed next.

3.2 Populist communication strategy regarding police work

Chega's communication style connects with people who feel disappointed, excluded, unfairly treated, or disadvantaged by mainstream politics or social change.

Populists often use emotional, confrontational, patriotic, tabloid-style and harsh language to appeal to dissatisfied citizens (Block & Negrine, 2017; Muis & Immerzeel, 2017). As such, our predictions on what makes police officers adhere to far-right parties in Portugal, mostly derive from the most touched up points made by *Chega*, which we believe to be effective stimuli to enact radicalization psychosocial processes.

3.2.1 Social Recognition

One aspect frequently mentioned by *Chega* is the recognition and dignity of the police profession, and the need for these institutions to receive the recognition, dignity, and respect they deserve.

As mentioned earlier, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) sheds light on this phenomenon by explaining how the radical party *Chega* utilizes the identity of police forces, making the group and, therefore, the members who identify as part of it, more susceptible to the way this party highlights external threats to their identity. Furthermore, if society views police officers negatively, their professional image and identity may be compromised (Carvalho et al., 2025). As Taylor and Taylor (1994) point out, a person's identity is partly shaped by whether others recognize them or not, as when recognition is denied or misrepresented, it can cause harm and act as a form of oppression, trapping someone in an inaccurate or diminished version of who they are.

3.2.2 Victimization

In addition to the previous point, *Chega* continues to adopt a discourse strongly characterized by its defense of law enforcement and its apparent hatred for the rest of the government, claiming that other parties in Parliament view police officers as enemies and consider them expendable.

Members of the public and certain sectors of the government call out structural issues within police forces, such as abuse of force, police violence against marginalized groups, and a lack of security and fear of the police (Davenport-Klunder et al., 2026; Reis & Silva, 2025). Brown and Benedict (2002) argue that public hostility toward police

forces can affect police officers' performance, as negative perceptions can contribute to a cycle of declining police effectiveness, rising crime, and a further loss of trust in the police. On the other hand, the rhetoric of ineffectiveness of the justice system spreads the idea that criminals are acquitted, criminality is on rise, and anomie installs within society (Ameri al., 2019; Sindall et al., 2012). Police forces, as institutions within this system, are also blamed for not "punishing criminals" and are pressured to do so.

As it has been previously stated, police officers often work in social pressure, uncertain, stressful, and difficult situations where mistakes can occur. As Farrow (2024) affirms, when this happens, they may face personal blame and various negative consequences, which strongly affect how they carry out their duties. As a result, they can become defensive and develop a strong sense of solidarity with colleagues when their actions are questioned. This attitude is reinforced by a tendency to place responsibility on individual officers for mistakes that may stem from broader organizational problems, rather than examining failures within the institution itself (Farrow, 2024).

3.2.3 Insecurity

The inherent risks of the police profession are also criticized, as *Chega* mentions that members of security forces regularly face highly tense, risky, stressful, and violent situations, which can threaten their physical safety and even their lives. It also denounces the mental health crisis plaguing the security forces, as reflected in the suicide statistics.

Policing today is widely recognized as a highly stressful profession, requiring officers to constantly cope with danger, uncertainty, and unpredictable situations (Queirós et al., 2020). It is important to understand this level of risk and stress because it has a direct impact on officers' health and overall well-being. Experiencing serious or life-threatening incidents in the line of duty can shape how officers perceive, respond to, and prepare for job-related pressures, ultimately affecting their performance. As job stress continues to rise, it can contribute to burnout, psychological and mental health disorders, and, in extreme cases, even suicide (Perez-Floriano & Gonzalez, 2019; Queirós et al., 2020).

Given the level of risk associated with this profession, members of law enforcement have repeatedly called for better working conditions, higher pay, and an increase in the duty and hazard pay allowance (Godinho, 2025; PSP e GNR em protesto, 2026).

3.2.4 Job satisfaction & Relative Deprivation

The final point we consider important, which *Chega* also mentions, concerns working conditions, specifically issues related to salaries, benefits, and labor rights.

Job insecurity (which will be addressed as 'job satisfaction' in this study) refers to a person's uncertainty about the continuation of their current job relation (Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). Economic hardship and insecurity can shape people's political views, attitudes, and policy preferences in many areas. Job insecurity has been linked to negative views of political institutions and leaders. Zhirnov and colleagues (2024) suggest that feelings of insecurity can increase support for populist attitudes and parties. Similarly, financial vulnerability may lead to anger and frustration, which are often associated with stronger support for radical and populist political movements (Marx, 2020).

According to relative deprivation theory, people feel unfairly treated or insufficiently rewarded when they compare their situation to that of others or to a certain standard. Since deprivation is relative, those who are objectively the most disadvantaged are not always the ones who feel the most deprived (Crosby, 1976). Personal relative deprivation specifically refers to feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction that arise when individuals believe they are unfairly denied outcomes they think they deserve compared to others (Callan et al., 2011).

4. The present study

Regarding the rise of the radical right-wing populism around the world and, particularly, in Portugal, it is interesting to assess how formal institutions are able to protect themselves, or risk to embrace radical political movements towards a more authoritarian social order. This way, this study aims to investigate the occurrence of

radical right within one Portuguese police force, *Polícia de Segurança Pública*, and to explore the factors that may be associated with greater adherence to this ideology, and namely their sensitivity to engage in psychosocial processes that may be enacted by *Chega*'s rhetoric.

First, in case of effective influence by *Chega*'s rhetoric we should observe a higher (H_1) percentage of PSP officers voting for this political party as compared to the general society. The aim of this study is to compare the distinct processes that predict voting for this political party, as opposed to those that vote for political parties aligned to the current social order. With *Chega* and its current leader, André Ventura, placing as much or even more emphasis than other parties in Parliament in such a conspicuous way and addressing key issues of concern to police forces, it is possible that police officers will give more support to "those who truly support them." Even though the sample is not aimed at being representative of the PSP professionals, it will be informative to assess how many and who are interested in participating in this study.

Although significant, we theorize that these socioprofessional attitudes are not reason enough to be the main predictors on why police officers vote for *Chega* because all police professionals are submitted to the same job conditions, but motivation to radical movements should hardly be generalized. Thus, we assume that ideologic attitudes toward the system play a part in this decision, as when considering the radical right as an ideology and the process of radicalization, it is expected that certain ideological elements will arise, such as populism, deriving from the populist radical party and ideology, authoritarianism as a concept for a more authoritarian and repressive system or leader, and system justification for the defense and legitimization of the existing system. This way, we expect (H_2) participants that vote for *Chega* to agree more with populist and authoritarian attitudes and to justify the current system less, as compared to participants that vote in other political parties. We also propose (H_3) that such attitudes should be the mediators processes between perceptions of police work and voting for the right radical political party *Chega*.

Method

1. Participants

The sample is composed of 104 police officers from the *Polícia de Segurança Pública* (Public Security Police) affiliated with the *Associação Sindical dos Profissionais da Polícia* (ASPP/PSP, Police Professionals' Union), aged between 21 and 65 years old (M = 49.63, SD = 8.24). Of these, 6 (5.8%) are females and 98 (94.2%) are male participants, from six Portuguese regions: 46.2% North of Portugal; 5.8% Center of Portugal; 26.9% Lisbon and Tagus Valley (*Vale do Tejo*); 1.9% Alentejo; 14.4% Algarve; 4.8% Azores. Regarding the police officers' current positions, 40.4% are agents, 9.6% are chiefs, 1.9% are officers, 6.7% work on administrative services (such as office), 13.5% work on patrolling, 6.7% on special police units, 14.4% on criminal investigation and 6.7% on traffic. When it comes to the type of service, 74.0% have a predominantly operational role, 10.6% have an administrative role and 15.4% have both. Job experience in the Portuguese National Police varied between 3 and 43 years (M = 27.21, SD = 7.32).

Regarding the political spectrum (1 = *Left* to 7 = *Right*), the participants tended to be center-toward right-leaning (M = 4.74, SD = 1.62).

2. Procedure

The online survey was distributed to PSP officers via the social media channels of the ASPP/PSP between early February and early April 2026. The questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first section included sociodemographic questions, such as sex, age, the Portuguese region the officers work at, years of service and their positions and type of service within the Police (as described above).

In the second section, the survey contained questions regarding participants' perceptions about their job and professional class, that is, socioprofessional attitudes, such as relative deprivation (comparing the current situation with a desirable/ideal one), job satisfaction (satisfaction with the police working conditions), job insecurity

(perceptions of job instability, stress, and threat), perceived social recognition (how police officers perceive their own job through others' eyes), and ingroup victimization (perception of being stigmatized), as well as their position on social and economic values, and political orientation.

The third section included three validated scales related to perspectives on societal and political systems, that is, attitudes toward the system: system justification (justification and legitimization of the existing social system), authoritarianism (adherence to traditional and conservative values), and populist attitudes (critics of the current state of social structures and the elites).

The fourth section ended with one multiple-choice question asking participants about their voting choices in the last legislative election in May 2025, in which each option represented a political party that currently holds at least one seat in parliament.

3. Measures

We present the measures by section, explaining the reasoning beyond the decision to include each particular measure in the instrument (see Appendix A). Participants were asked their level of agreement for all measures (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*)

Relative Deprivation. To measure participants' perception of fairness regarding their current professional activity, class, and situation as compared to ideal ones, we adapted the Personal Relative Deprivation Scale of Callan et al. (2011) to the PSP professional group. We translated this 5-item scale into Portuguese through the Spanish version of the scale (Navarro-Carrillo et al, 2025): (example) "I feel at a disadvantage when I think about what I have as a member of the PSP, compared to what I think would be fair to have".

After conducting a Principal Component Analysis (PCA), the items loaded onto a single component that explained 67.85% of the total variance and a reliable consistency (Cronbach's α = .88; M = 5.83, SD = 1.09). We averaged these items into a single Relative deprivation score.

Dissatisfaction with structural job characteristics. To measure the participants' job satisfaction regarding salary, working conditions, and career advancement, a 3-item scale was created, based on the works of Spector (1985) on job satisfaction, to gauge professionals' opinions about their work, particularly regarding labor rights, career advancement, incentives and benefits, and salary: (example) "I feel that PSP police officers have fewer labor rights than other government employees".

After conducting a PCA, the items loaded onto a single component that explained 61.97% of the total variance. We averaged all three items into one single score of Dissatisfaction (Cronbach's α = .69; M = 5.70, SD = 1.16).

Subjective perceptions of work: job insecurity. To measure the participants' perception of the insecurity they experience when doing their jobs, characterized by feelings of job instability, stress, threat, and exposure to violence, a 9-item scale, loosely inspired by the Operational Police Stress Questionnaire (PSQ-Op), developed by McCreary and Thompson (2006), was created: (example) "I worry about having to work alone at night or in high-risk areas".

After conducting a PCA, the items loaded onto a single component that explained 57.29% of the total variance. These items presented strong internal consistency (Cronbach's α = .87; M = 5.89, SD = 0.96) and we averaged these items onto an Insecurity score.

Social perceptions of work: social recognition. To measure the participants' perceived social recognition of their job, related to the supposed opinions of the government and society about the police profession, a 6-item scale was created[1], based on Alfaro and colleagues' findings of occupational prestige of law enforcement officers: (example) "The current government does not adequately recognize the role of the PSP in society".

After conducting a PCA, the items loaded onto a single component that explained 59.53% of the total variance, also showing a good consistency of the scale

[1]After conducting a PCA, three items were removed because their Measures of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) values were < .70. During the reliability analysis, one item was removed to improve Cronbach's alpha.

(Cronbach's α = .83; *M* = 1.87, *SD* = 0.87). A score of Social recognition was computed, corresponding to the average of the six items, where higher scores indicated lower levels of perceived social recognition.

Social perceptions of work: ingroup victimization (stigmatization). To measure the participants' perception of being considered the scapegoat in certain narratives by society (stigmatization and victimization of the police), a 5-item scale was created, based on the work of Davenport-Klunder and colleagues (2026) about anti-police sentiment: (example) "When incidents involving citizens occur, the blame tends to be automatically placed on PSP officers".

After conducting a PCA, the items loaded onto a single component that explained 67.57% of the total variance, also showing a strong scale consistency (Cronbach's α = .87; *M* = 5.94, *SD* = 1.04). A final measure of Victimization was constructed, corresponding to the average of the five items, where higher scores indicated higher levels of perceived victimization.

Ideological predictors: *System Justification.* To measure the participants' perceived fairness, legitimacy, and justification of the existing social hierarchical system, the 6-item System Justification Scale, originally by Kay and Jost (2003) and translated to Portuguese by Carvalho et al. (2025), was used[2]: (example) "Generally speaking, I believe that Portuguese society is fair". Following authors' indication, we computed a System justification score corresponding to the average of the six items, where higher scores indicated higher levels of system justification tendencies (Cronbach's α = .74; *M* = 3.23, *SD* = 1.06).

Ideological predictors: *Authoritarianism.* To measure the participants' endorsement of traditional and conservative values, the 6-item short scale of the Right-Wing Authoritarianism, using the short scale developed by Zakrisson (2005) and adapted to Portuguese by Carvalho et al. (2025), was used[3]: (example) "Portugal needs a strong

[2]During the reliability analysis, three items were removed because of reliability concerns.

[3]During the reliability analysis, five items were removed because of reliability concerns. After conducting a PCA, the items loaded onto a single component.

leader to combat the radical and immoral trends that prevail in today's society". A final measure of Authoritarianism was constructed, corresponding to the average of the six items, where higher scores indicated higher levels of authoritarian attitudes (Cronbach's $\alpha = .70$; $M = 4.42$, $SD = 1.06$).

Ideological predictors: ***Populist Attitudes.*** To measure the participants' support for populist ideals, focusing on people-centrism and anti-elitism, the 8-item scale of the Populist Attitudes Scale, by Silva et al. (2018) was used[4]: (example) "Portuguese politicians should always listen carefully to the people's concerns". A final measure of Populist attitudes was constructed, corresponding to the average of the eight items, where higher scores indicated higher levels of populist attitudes (Cronbach's $\alpha = .79$; $M = 5.72$, $SD = 0.85$).

Voting behavior. To acknowledge the participants' voting choices, relevant to the study in regard to the radicalism of the parties in the Portuguese Parliament, one multiple-choice question was posed to the participants asking them to choose which party they voted for, with the options being: (1) "Aliança Democrática (AD)"; (2) "Chega (CH)"; (3) "Partido Socialista (PS)"; (4) "Iniciativa Liberal (IL)"; (5) "Livre (L)"; (6) "Coligação Democrática Unitária (CDU)"; (7) "Bloco de Esquerda (BE)"; (8) "Pessoas-Animais-Natureza (PAN)"; (9) "Juntos Pelo Povo (JPP)"; (10) "Outro" (*Another*); and (11) "Prefiro não responder" (*I would rather not answer*).

Of 104 participants, 3 (2.9%) voted for *Livre*, 5 (4.8%) voted for *Iniciativa Liberal*, 10 (9.6%) voted for *Coligação Democrática Unitária*, 10 (9.6%) voted for *Partido Socialista*, 13 (12.5%) voted for *Aliança Democrática*, 14 (13.5%) preferred not to answer, and 46 (44.2%) voted for *Chega and* 3 (2.9%) voted for another party.

This measure was further used to distinguish between two groups for comparison: one group which consisted of *Chega*, a radical right-wing party, and another group with the rest of the democratic parties (excluding other votes and those who chose not to answer).

[4]Five items were removed from the original measure due to reliability concerns.

Results

1. Preliminary results: Descriptive analyses

Before assessing the differences between the two proposed groups, preliminary analyses were conducted on the full sample to provide a general view of the data.

Participants reported high levels of relative deprivation (M = 5.83, SD = 1.09), suggesting that participants experienced a sense of disadvantage and unfairness when comparing their current professional activity and class to the ideal situation they envisage their work should meet. Similarly, high levels of dissatisfaction (M = 5.71, SD = 1.16) further revealed negative perceptions regarding their working conditions, showing that participants feel a strong dissatisfaction with structural job characteristics. Participants reported low levels of social recognition for their profession (M = 1.87, SD = .87), indicating that they perceived both the government and society as failing to recognize or understand their work and needs. Participants also reported elevated levels of insecurity in their work daily-life (M = 5.89, SD = .96), characterized by feelings of job instability, stress, threat, and exposure to violence. Victimization scores were high (M = 5.94, SD = 1.04), indicating a pronounced sense of injustice and a perception of being blamed or unfairly treated by society.

Taken together, these results depict a profile of considerable occupational strain, combining dissatisfaction with concrete working conditions, a sense of being disadvantaged relative to what is considered a fair standard, and low perceived social recognition for their profession, alongside a marked feeling of being unjustly scapegoated. This combination aligns closely with the conditions under which system-justifying beliefs are expected to weaken: system justification theory predicts that when a system fails to meet basic needs for security, esteem and fair treatment, its capacity to be perceived as legitimate is undermined (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Consistent with this expectation, participants reported low system justification (M = 3.23, SD = 1.06), indicating that they view the current social system as unfair, inadequate and unable to guarantee equal opportunities.

Scores on right-wing authoritarianism were moderate (M = 4.42, SD = 1.06), reflecting a tendency to endorse (or at least tolerate) more traditional values and a more repressive society, and the need for authoritarian leadership. Finally, participants demonstrated high levels of populist attitudes (M = 5.72, SD = .85), indicating strong criticism toward current societal structures and elites.

All in all, these results support a tendency for high criticism towards the *status quo* and negative perceptions about how their profession is perceived and treated by society. Overall, these results are consistent with a profile in which occupational strain and a sense of being an unfairly blamed and unrecognized group converge with dissatisfaction with the broader social and political system, alongside a continued preference for order and authority and an antagonistic stance towards the establishment. This configuration is precisely the one theoretically expected to increase susceptibility to right-wing populist ideology, insofar as such ideology typically promises to restore the status and legitimacy of groups that perceive themselves as disadvantaged and stigmatized while offering an authoritarian, order-restoring alternative to a system regarded as illegitimate.

2. Attitudes by Radicalism

The sample was then divided into two groups based on the responses to the final question of the questionnaire, which addressed the voting behavior of police officers. The first group, designated "Radical behavior", consisted exclusively of officers who had voted for the far-right party Chega (N = 46, 52.9%) in the last legislative elections, the radical political party of the Portuguese Parliament. The second group, "Non-radical behavior" (N = 41), included those who had chosen alternative parties, but all alternatives valuing the current democratic regime. Participants who "preferred not to answer" or "selected the other" options were excluded from the subsequent analyses (the final sample was, then composed by N = 87). We tested how these groups differentiate in attitudes towards socioprofessional perceptions and attitudes toward the system. We wanted to explore which types of determinants would predict voting behavior intention in the radical right-wing populist political party.

To assess the statistical significance of any potential differences between the Radical behavior and Non-radical behavior groups in the measured variables, we conducted independent-sample t-tests. Moreover, to explore the association between these measures by Radicalism, we explored Pearson moment-product correlations (Table 1; see Appendix B).

As shown in Table 1, significant differences were found between the Radical behavior and Non-radical behavior groups on Social recognition, $t(85) = 2.02$, $p = .046$, $d = .87$; System justification, $t(85) = 3.71$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.00$; Authoritarianism, $t(85) = -4.31$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.02$; and Populist attitudes, $t(85) = -3.59$, $p < .001$, $d = .80$. These results indicate that participants who voted for radical populist party reported lower levels of perceived professional social recognition and perceived justification of the existing social system than those who voted for non-radical parties, and higher levels of endorsement of right-wing authoritarianism and support for populist ideals than their counterparts. We found no significant differences between these groups regarding relative deprivation, dissatisfaction, insecurity and victimization. These results are consistent with our second hypothesis by showing that lower system justification, and higher authoritarianism and populist attitudes, as predicted, are associated to those participants who voted for the radical right-wing populist party.

The partial exception of social recognition is noteworthy, as it is conceptually closer to the ideological variables than the other occupational measures, since it concerns a judgement about the profession's social standing and validation rather than an objective feature of daily working conditions, which may explain why it patterns with system justification, authoritarianism, and populist attitudes rather than with the remaining occupational perceptions.

From a general perspective, as also shown in Table 1, the correlation analysis indicated that most variables were significantly correlated with one another across both groups.

All socioprofessional attitudes were correlated in both groups. Attitudes towards the system, nonetheless, enact particularly distinctive preliminary results. In the Non-radical behavior group, the variable System justification was not correlated with any other

variable. Authoritarianism was also not correlated with Relative deprivation and Dissatisfaction. Interestingly, in the Radical behavior group, Dissatisfaction was not significantly correlated with any other variables except for Relative deprivation.

As expected, Relative deprivation and Dissatisfaction are, in both groups positively correlated (r_{RB} = .36, $p \leq .05$; r_{NRB} = .61, $p \leq .001$), which means that the more dissatisfied the participants are with their working conditions, the more they experience a sense of disadvantage in comparison to others. Also as expected, Social recognition and Victimization are negatively correlated in both groups (r_{RB} = -.65, $p \leq .001$; r_{NRB} = -.76, $p \leq .001$), meaning that the less recognition they perceive coming from society, the more they will perceive themselves as victims and scapegoats. Victimization and Insecurity are also highly positively correlated (r_{RB} = .79, $p \leq .001$; r_{NRB} = .72, $p \leq .001$), signifying that the more insecure they feel when doing their job, the more they view themselves as victims.

3. Mediation analyses

These results encouraged us to proceed with the predicted mediation analyses. Fifteen simple mediation models were conducted using Model 4 (PROCESS 5.0 version, with 5000 bootstrap samples; Hayes, 2022), each examining a distinct predictor (socioprofessional variables) of Voting behavior (Non-radical behavior group (1); Radical behavior group (2)): Relative deprivation, Dissatisfaction, Social recognition, Insecurity, and Victimization. In each model, the respective socioprofessional variable served as the independent measure and Voting behavior as the dependent measure. Three models were estimated for each of the five independent variables, using System justification, Authoritarianism, and Populist attitudes as single mediators across all models[5] (Table 2; see Appendix B).

Relative deprivation. The direct effects are not significant for any of the models, as the effects are all lower than [b = .21, SE = .21, 95% CI [-0.22, 0.63]. The indirect effect is significant on System justification (b = .17, SE = .13, 95% CI [0.007, 0.52]),

[5] Because these mediators are highly correlated with one another, parallel mediation models were not conducted, as multiple models would risk multicollinearity.

Authoritarianism (*b* = .31, *SE* = .13, 95% *CI* [0.12, 0.64]), and Populist attitudes (*b* = .38, *SE* = .19, 95% *CI* [0.11, 0.84]), emerging as significant mediators of the association between Relative deprivation and Voting behavior.

Dissatisfaction. The direct effects are not significant for any mediator, as the effects are all lower than [*b* = -.08, *SE* = .21, 95% *CI* [-0.49, 0.33]. The indirect effect is significant on Populist attitudes (*b* = .28, *SE* = .17, 95% *CI* [0.05, 0.70]), but not significant on System justification (*b* = .08, *SE* = .15, 95% *CI* [-0.10, 0.50]) and Authoritarianism (*b* = .17, *SE* = .13, 95% *CI* [-0.03, 0.49]). Populist attitudes emerges as a significant mediator of the association between Dissatisfaction and Voting behavior.

Social recognition. The direct effects are not significant for any mediator, as the effects are all lower than [*b* = .03, *SE* = .39, 95% *CI* [-0.74, 0.80]. The indirect effect is significant on Authoritarianism (*b* = -.51, *SE* = .25, 95% *CI* [-1.19, -0.20]) and Populist Attitudes (*b* = -.65, *SE* = .25, 95% *CI* [-1.20, -.22]), but not significant on System justification (*b* = -.19, *SE* = .36, 95% *CI* [-1.23, 0.07]). Authoritarianism and Populist attitudes emerge as significant mediators of the association between Social recognition and Voting behavior.

Insecurity. The direct effects are not significant for any mediator, as the effects are all lower than [*b* = .06, *SE* = .25, 95% *CI* [-0.42, 0.55]. The indirect effect is significant on System justification (*b* = .23, *SE* = .19, 95% *CI* [0.02, 0.75]), Authoritarianism (*b* = .45, *SE* = .16, 95% *CI* [0.21, 0.83]), and Populist attitudes (*b* = .53, *SE* = .23, 95% *CI* [0.20, 1.09]), emerging as significant mediators of the association between Insecurity and Voting behavior.

Victimization. The direct effects are not significant for any mediator, as the effects are all lower than [*b* = .22, *SE* = .23, 95% *CI* [-0.23, 0.66]. The indirect effect is significant on Authoritarianism (*b* = .45, *SE* = .18, 95% *CI* [0.20, 0.88]) and Populist attitudes (*b* = .58, *SE* = .22, 95% *CI* [0.24, 1.10]), but not significant on System justification (*b* = .14, *SE* = .23, 95% *CI* [-0.06, 0.79]). Authoritarianism and Populist attitudes emerge as significant mediators of the association between Victimization and Voting behavior.

4. Moderation analysis

We also tested the moderator effect of radical attitudes on the association between the independent variables (Relative deprivation, Dissatisfaction, Social recognition, Insecurity, and Victimization) and attitudes towards the system as dependent variables (System justification, Authoritarianism, and Populist attitudes). Fifteen simple moderation models were conducted using Model 1 (PROCESS 5.0 version, with 5000 bootstrap samples; Hayes, 2022). In all models, the dichotomous variable Voting behavior was specified as the moderator of the association between the independent variables and the dependent variables[6].

Relative deprivation. Results indicate that Voting behavior emerges as a significant moderator only regarding System justification. This model is significant, $F(3, 83) = 7.61$, $p < .001$, explaining 22% of the variance found in System justification. The main effect of Relative deprivation on System justification is not significant ($b = .53$, $SE = .31$, 95% CI [-0.10, 1.15]). However, the interaction Relative deprivation X Voting behavior is significant ($b = -.44$, $SE = .19$, 95% CI [-0.81, -0.06]). Relative deprivation is negatively associated with System justification among participants that voted on the radical party ($b = -.34$, $SE = .12$, 95% CI [-0.59, -0.10]), showing that for these participants, the more they feel relative deprived, the more they perceive society as less fair and legitimate. This association is not significant for those that voted on non-radical parties ($b = .09$, $SE = .14$, 95% CI [-0.19, 0.38]). This means that the more the participants who support radical parties compare their current situation with the one they could have, the more they perceive society as unfair.

Dissatisfaction. Results indicate that Voting behavior emerges as a significant moderator only in relation to Populist attitudes. This model is significant, $F(3, 83) = 11.99$, $p < .001$, explaining 30% of the variance found in Populist attitudes. The main effect of Dissatisfaction on Populist attitudes is significant ($b = .76$, $SE = .23$, 95% CI [0.31, 1.21]), as well as the interaction Dissatisfaction X Voting behavior ($b = -.31$, $SE = .13$, 95% CI [-0.58, -0.05]). Dissatisfaction is positively associated with Populist attitudes among participants that voted on non-radical parties ($b = .44$, $SE = .11$, 95% CI [0.23,

[6] For space concerns, we only indicate models that emerged as significant.

0.65]), showing that these participants, the more they are unsatisfied with working conditions, the less they support populist ideals (b = .13, SE = .08, 95% CI [-0.03, 0.29]).

Social recognition. Results indicate that Voting behavior emerges as a significant moderator regarding System justification. This model is significant, $F(3, 83) = 13.08$, $p < .001$, explaining 32% of the variance found in System justification. The main effect of Social recognition on System justification is significant (b = -1.24, SE = .33, 95% CI [-1.91, -0.58]), as well as the interaction Social recognition X Voting behavior (b = 1.03, SE = .23, 95% CI [0.57, 1.49]). Social recognition is positively associated with System justification among participants that voted on radical parties (b = .82, SE = .18, 95% CI [0.45, 1.18]), contrarily to those that voted on non-radical parties (b = -.21, SE = .18, 95% CI [-0.49, 0.06]). This means that the more the participants who support radical parties perceive society as not recognizing the importance of their job, the more they perceive society as unfair.

Insecurity. Results indicate that Voting behavior emerges as a significant moderator in relation to System justification. This model is significant, $F(3, 83) = 9.54$, $p < .001$, explaining 26% of the variance found in System justification. The main effect of Insecurity on System justification is not significant (b = .57, SE = .32, 95% CI [-0.08, 1.21]). However, the interaction Insecurity X Voting behavior is significant (b = -.54, SE = .20, 95% CI [-0.94, -0.14]). Insecurity is negatively associated with System justification among participants that voted on radical parties (b = -.51, SE = .14, 95% CI [-0.79, -0.23]), contrarily to those that voted on non-radical parties (b = .03, SE = .15, 95% CI [-0.26, 0.32]). The more the participants who support radical parties perceive insecurity when doing their jobs, the more they perceive society as unfair.

Victimization. Results indicate that Voting behavior emerges as a significant moderator only in relation to System justification. This model is significant, $F(3, 83) = 9.86$, $p < .001$, explaining 26% of the variance found in System justification. The main effect of Victimization on System justification is significant (b = .85, SE = .29, 95% CI [0.26, 1.43]), as well as the interaction Victimization Voting behavior was significant (b = -.68, SE = .20, 95% CI [-1.07, -0.29]). Victimization is negatively associated with System justification among participants that voted on radical parties (b = -.52, SE = .15,

95% *CI* [-0.82, -0.23]), contrarily to those who voted on non-radical parties (*b* = .16, *SE* = .13, 95% *CI* [-0.09, 0.42]). The more the participants who support radical parties perceive themselves as the scapegoat in certain narratives, the more they perceive society as unfair.

Regarding the third hypothesis, results show that attitudes towards the system emerged as significant mediators of the association between social perceptions of police work and voting behavior, as predicted. A further exploration of the moderator role of voting behavior on the association between social perceptions of police work and system justification attitudes indicates that professionals that voted in the radical political party associated more social perceptions of police work to system justification attitudes.

Discussion

As mentioned earlier, the radicalization of police forces is a significant issue in the current context, not only nationally but also internationally, due to concerns that these institutions are aligning themselves with current antidemocratic trends.

Although the findings concluded by Rego and Alizade (2026) indicate that there is no evidence that security forces support far-right parties more than the general electorate does, as directly confirmed by the question on voting behavior in the questionnaire, a relative majority of participants (44.2%) indicated that they had voted for the radical right-wing party *Chega*. It is worth noting that the sample under study is not representative of the general population of police officers; therefore, the results serve only to characterize the collected sample, verify the presence of radical voting behavior among the participants, and interpret the associations between studied variables. The results of this sample poll for the radical right-wing populist party *Chega* are highly significant and, already, worth discussing. This percentage (44.2%) is a value that, if confirmed in representative samples, would be higher than that observed among the general Portuguese

population in the last legislative elections. This fact takes on particular significance in light of the argument developed in the previous sections: since this is a professional class whose role is, by definition, to uphold the values and functioning of democratic institutions, the presence of significant support for a party that openly challenges central elements of that democratic framework constitutes a troubling, albeit preliminary, indicator of the police institution's susceptibility to radical ideologies.

This finding should not be interpreted as evidence that the PSP, as an institution, is committed to this ideology, nor that the vote in question necessarily translates into undemocratic or even radical professional practices. Nevertheless, the result is consistent with the reviewed literature on radicalization within police forces, which identifies precisely this type of ideological permeability as a risk factor for the erosion of fundamental democratic values, such as impartiality and non-discrimination (Koehler & Filipps, 2024).

As for the second proposed hypothesis, significant differences were indeed found between the groups of those who voted for radical parties and those who voted for non-radical parties on the variables of Social recognition, System justification, Authoritarianism, and Populist attitudes. On the other hand, the remaining variables, Relative deprivation, Dissatisfaction, Insecurity, and Victimization, did not show significant differences.

In fact, the results regarding perceived social recognition are, generally, and without distinguishing between the two groups, very low, particularly among the group that voted for the radical party. According to the results, police officers feel a lack of understanding and recognition of their profession on the part of the general public; they perceive that they are not respected by either the public or the current government, suggesting that they believe the public holds a negative view of police forces. It is worth noting that these beliefs do not stem directly from the public or the government, who may or may not find the work of these professionals more or less appropriate, but rather from the police officers' perception of how others view them. In other words, they believe that, through actions or words coming from outside sources, the public and the current government do not properly recognize their profession and their services.

The results also show low levels of perceived justification for the current social system; that is, participants do not believe that the current social order is fair, particularly those who reported voting for the radical right-wing populist party. As for the results regarding authoritarian attitudes, participants showed moderate levels of adherence to right-wing authoritarianism overall, although there were significant differences between the groups that voted for radical and non-radical parties. These findings indicate that police officers tend to value traditional values, a more repressive society, and the need for more authoritarian leadership, especially those who voted for the radical right-wing populist party.

Regarding populist attitudes, the results show that participants exhibit high levels in this area, indicating strong criticism of the current state of social structures and the elites. There are significant differences between the groups, with the group that voted for the radical right-wing populist party showing higher scores than the other group. This is consistent with the findings of Santana Pereira (2024), who found an association between populist attitudes and voting for André Ventura, the current leader of *Chega*.

Regarding the variables that did not show significant differences, we can generally consider the total sample. The results show, then, that participants report high levels of a sense of disadvantage and injustice when comparing their current professional situation to what they consider to be the ideal situation. In addition, levels of job dissatisfaction are also high, indicating that police officers are dissatisfied with various aspects of their work, such as salary and incentives, working rights and conditions, and career advancement.

We can also see, based on the high levels of insecurity, that participants feel insecure while performing their work, as they are concerned about their physical safety; this also reflects the level of stress they experience while on duty, a finding consistent with the literature, since the police profession is considered one of the most stressful due to its nature (Gershon et al., 2002).

Finally, we also found high levels of victimization among the participants; that is, they tend to feel stigmatized and like scapegoats for society and the government, especially when there are issues in society. They feel that their work is often undervalued and that they are blamed when certain incidents occur.

These results suggest that participants tend to be more guided by a conception of police work rooted in beliefs in institutional effectiveness and retributive justice reflected in traditionalism, authoritarianism, and the belief that the social system guarantees justice, rather than by a conception of proximity and community safety, which corresponds to the institutional definition of democratic policing.

1. **Attitudes by Radicalism**

By examining the relationship between these measures by Radicalism, we found that, in general, socioprofessional attitudes are correlated with one another, as are attitudes toward the system. Furthermore, most socioprofessional attitudes are also correlated with attitudes toward the system.

The measures of Relative deprivation and Dissatisfaction are strongly and positively correlated with each other in both the Radical behavior and Non-radical behavior groups, suggesting that the more dissatisfied police officers are with their working conditions, the more they feel they are at a disadvantage compared to others in reference groups. This association can be explained by the combined sense of injustice regarding professional conditions, since both measures refer to work-related factors such as working conditions and financial resources.

The Victimization and Insecurity measures are also strongly and positively correlated with each other in both groups, suggesting that the more concerned police officers are about their physical safety and the stress associated with performing their duties, the more they perceive that their work is treated unfairly and that they are held responsible or blamed for issues and incidents that occur in society. This association seems to suggest a kind of professional vulnerability, not only physically but also socially, as they are exposed to risks while on duty and subject to public scrutiny.

The measures of Social recognition and Victimization are strongly and negatively correlated with each other in both groups, which means that the less recognition, respect, and understanding police officers feel they receive from the public and the government regarding their profession, the greater their perception tends to be that they are unfairly held responsible or used as scapegoats for issues or incidents that occur in society. This association may suggest that the perception of a lack of social recognition is related to a

greater sense of injustice regarding how the profession is viewed and evaluated externally. When police officers feel that their work is not properly understood or valued, they may also perceive more intensely that they are the target of criticism, blame, or accountability for negative events.

When we examine the Radicalism groups separately, we note that in the Non-radical behavior group, the System justification measure does not correlate significantly with any of the other measures; that is, regardless of socioprofessional attitudes, as well as authoritarian and populist attitudes, this does not necessarily imply that police officers question or reject the existing social and political system. Furthermore, in this group, the measure of Authoritarianism is not associated with Relative deprivation and Dissatisfaction, meaning that higher or lower levels of right-wing authoritarianism are not associated with perceptions of injustice and disadvantage, nor with job dissatisfaction. In the Radical behavior group, however, the Dissatisfaction measure is not significantly associated with any other variable except Relative deprivation. One explanation for this phenomenon may be that job dissatisfaction is more closely related to specific aspects of working conditions, such as salary, incentives, rights, working conditions, or career advancement, rather than to broader perceptions regarding the relationship between the police, society, and the political system.

The associations thus suggest that the relationship between socioprofessional attitudes and attitudes toward the system varies somewhat depending on the level of radicalism. The mediation analyses added a sophisticated layer of complexity to our understanding of these results.

Mediation models with both independent variables of Relative deprivation and Insecurity, considered individually, suggest that the three mediators of attitudes toward the system are predictors of the association between the two variables and Voting behavior, indicating that when there is a greater perception of disadvantage in relation to others in reference groups, and when there is a greater perception of insecurity regarding police work, there is a lesser tendency to justify the system, a greater tendency to value a more authoritarian society and leadership, and a greater tendency to criticize existing

social structures and elites, which is, in turn, associated with a greater tendency to vote for radical parties.

In the mediation analyses with the independent variable Victimization, only two mediators, Authoritarianism and Populist attitudes, are predictors of the association between that variable and Voting behavior, that is, when police officers have a greater perception that they are unfairly blamed for problems occurring in society, there is a greater tendency for them to favor traditional values and a more repressive society, and to criticize the *status quo*, which is associated with an increased tendency to vote for radical parties.

For the independent variable Social recognition, only the same two mediators mentioned earlier are predictors of the variable with the dependent variable Voting behavior, but in this case, the association is negative, meaning that when police officers perceive that they are not professionally recognized and understood by the government and the public, they are more likely to agree with authoritarian attitudes by the system and to criticize elites and social structures, which in turn is associated with a greater tendency to vote for radical parties.

On the other hand, the independent variable Dissatisfaction had only Populist attitudes as a predictor in its association with Voting behavior, suggesting that when police officers feel professionally dissatisfied, they are more likely to be critical of society and the elites, which in turn suggests an increased tendency to vote for radical parties. These results are consistent with the literature showing that individuals with high levels of authoritarianism are more likely to vote for far-right parties, and that this tendency is even stronger if they have weaker ties to political convictions and values widely accepted in society, as explored by Tillman (2021).

The association between police officers' low perception of social recognition, combined with high levels of perceived blame, and high levels of authoritarianism might reflect a need for a society with more traditional values that "once again respects" the police profession. According to Eliasson (2023), police officers are often perceived as untrustworthy, which can impact the public's perception of the police's legitimacy. This lack of recognition and a possible loss of authority on the part of police officers may be

associated with police cynicism, which can, in turn, lead to a collective nostalgia for more authoritarian times (Cao & Sun, 2016).

If we analyze the situation in Portugal, we see that the radical party *Chega* is putting forward proposals to address this perceived lack of social recognition among police officers, as the party places great importance on valuing, dignifying, and respecting law enforcement, advocating for the strengthening of police authority and greater protection for officers in the performance of their duties, which may help explain voting behavior.

In the moderation analyses, the results indicate that Voting Behavior moderates the relationship between Relative deprivation and System justification. This means that the more participants compare their current situation with the one they could have, the less they view the system as fair, especially those who vote for radical parties. Similarly, Voting behavior also moderates the relationship between Insecurity and System justification; that is, the more insecure participants feel while carrying out their work, the less they view the system as fair, especially those who vote for radical parties. Following this logic, Voting behavior also moderates the relationship between Victimization and System justification; that is, the more participants view themselves as scapegoats in certain social narratives, the less they consider the system to be fair, especially those who vote for radical parties. Conversely, Voting behavior moderates the relationship between Social recognition and System justification; that is, the less recognition participants feel their profession receives from society, the less they view the system as fair, especially those who vote for radical parties. On the other hand, Voting behavior moderates the relationship between Dissatisfaction and Populist attitudes. One way to interpret this is that the more satisfied participants feel professionally with various aspects of their work, the less they criticize the current state of social structures and the elites, especially those who vote for non-radical parties.

In general, moderation analyses indicate that the more negative socioprofessional attitudes are, in this case, the more police officers feel they are being treated unfairly in their current situation, the more insecure they feel about performing their duties, and the more they feel that society blames them, and the less recognized they feel by the public

and the government, the less likely participants are to defend and legitimize the existing system; as this association is stronger among participants who voted for radical parties. Conversely, the more satisfied police officers are with their labor rights and compensation, the less they criticize the current state of social structures and the elites, and this association is stronger among participants who voted for non-radical parties.

Accordingly, the analyses indicate that participants who vote for radical parties show a stronger role of socioprofessional attitudes as predictors of attitudes towards the system, concluding that attitudes associated with radicalization are distinct predictors of support for radical parties and their rhetoric, thereby confirming the third hypothesis.

The fact that participants who voted for a radical party are the ones least supportive of the current system may be due to the fact that the party *Chega* proposes drastic change. People, in general, are motivated to perceive the current system as fair and legitimate, since this motivation helps them feel more secure and less threatened in their daily lives (Kay & Jost, 2003). If people already exhibit low levels of support for the system, and if a radical party puts forward proposals to change the social system, as is the case with the radical right-wing party *Chega*, as stated in its electoral platform, "PS and PSD have had the Portuguese people's trust at the vote for the past 50 years, and nothing has changed. It is time to break definitively with this system and give a chance to the only political force capable of restoring a prosperous, safe, and dignified country to the Portuguese people." (Chega, 2025, p.3), the likelihood of voting for that party increases.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the presence of the radical right-wing populist movement within a Portuguese police force, in this case, *Polícia de Segurança Pública*, and to explore the factors that might be associated with greater adherence to this ideology. In fact, we found that a high percentage of the police officers who participated in the

study had voted for the Portuguese radical right-wing populist party, which already holds seats in parliament. After analysis, we concluded that the police officers who participated in this study identify significant constraints regarding their working conditions, both in terms of labor rights and in terms of perceptions of insecurity while on duty, social recognition for their work, and the tendency for society and the current government to blame this police force. These constraints are identified by the sample as a whole, regardless of whether they voted for the radical right-wing populist party or another democratic party, suggesting that these constraints, despite significantly contributing to the dissatisfaction they feel and their perception of injustice regarding their profession, do not serve as distinctive predictors of a vote for this populist party. Predictive factors for this vote are more ideological in nature, namely the belief in the urgent need for change and restructuring of the Portuguese justice system, as well as authoritarian ideologies among these professionals. On the other hand, this particular sample shows a high percentage of voters for this populist party, a percentage significantly higher than that found in the Portuguese population.

This study has limitations regarding the size of the sample analyzed, as it relied solely on responses from 104 police officers who are members of ASPP/PSP, a labor union; this means that even the sample collected is specific to the larger organization that is *Polícia de Segurança Pública* as a whole. Membership in a professional union, an institution clearly characterized by a mission, objectives, and democratic principles, would suggest that its members would have greater faith in the strength and effectiveness of democratic institutions; it is therefore surprising that a high percentage of participants who are members of this union voted for radical right-wing populist parties. It would be very interesting to assess the level of trust these professionals have in democratic institutions, as one might expect a lower level of trust among those who voted for this party. Consequently, the sample size and the lack of representativeness call for caution when generalizing these results to the entire institution; however, they do not diminish the importance of highlighting this finding and exploring it further in future research using larger and more representative samples.

Qualitative research would also be relevant, as it would provide a different perspective, interpretation, and depth to the data, delving deeper into the relationship between radical right-wing ideologies and attitudes toward the system, as portrayed in

this study, and the motivations for choosing this profession, that is, the mission they believe the PSP should have in a democratic society. According to the results of this study, since police officers are so critical of the current system and government, it is possible that they believe the police should play a more retributive and vigilante role rather than, perhaps, one that promotes values of community engagement with the public.

Despite these limitations, this study contributes to a better understanding of the relationship between socioprofessional attitudes, attitudes toward the system, and voting behavior among police officers, and how these may manifest as a set of beliefs and a tendency to support more extremist ideologies. In fact, as previously mentioned, the data from this study made it possible to identify the factors that predict more radical voting behavior, as well as to understand how the current sociopolitical and professional landscape of the Portuguese police force can fuel sentiments that, during a period of greater vulnerability and discontent within the force, facilitate support for the policies and promises of a more radical right wing.

Given the current context of the radical right becoming increasingly popular and the growing discontent and unrest within police forces, it is urgent to understand the risk factors and debilitating psychosocial processes that encourage a drift away from the current system or regime and that may lead to radical attitudes among police officers. Furthermore, in addition to these findings, it is important to highlight the risks that the politicization of the police can pose to a democratic society.

In its campaign platform, *Chega* proposes recognizing the right of membership in political parties for members of the security forces (Chega, 2025), thereby seeking to overturn current legislation through a constitutional amendment, since Article 21 of the Political Parties Act (*Lei dos Partidos Políticos*) currently stipulates that active-duty law enforcement officers are prohibited from joining political parties (Assembleia da República, 2003).

Pereira (2014) defines the politicization of the police as the establishment of a covert alliance between law enforcement officers and elected government officials. Thus, it is possible to understand that the politicization of law enforcement agencies can lead to critical consequences, such as the interference of the political ideologies of elected parties in policing practices and the justice system, which may, in turn, lead to negative attitudes regarding targets that are perceived as threats to “an ideal social order” (political elites or

minorities), in the case of radical parties, or even the violation of individual rights such as the right to equality before the law, among others, since authoritarian systems and leaders seem more appealing than current system. That said, there is an emerging need to understand the mass association and adherence of police forces to radical ideologies in order to reduce the existing risk factors that could lead to this politicization.

It is clear, then, that we need to discuss the radicalization of this professional class in the future and how its politicization might impact on the society in which we live. Only by exploring these processes and debating them will the true need arise for measures to prevent antidemocratic attitudes within an institution that swears to protect our democracy.

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Appendix

Appendix A - Survey

consent info

Informações sobre o estudo e Consentimento Informado

Introdução e contexto: O presente estudo está a ser desenvolvido no âmbito de uma dissertação de mestrado em Psicologia, na Faculdade de Psicologia e Ciências da Educação da Universidade do Porto (FPCEUP).
Objetivos do estudo: Este estudo tem como objetivo compreender a opinião de uma amostra de agentes da Polícia de Segurança Pública (PSP) sobre a sua profissão e sobre questões políticas e sociais relevantes na atualidade.
Procedimentos: A participação neste estudo envolve a resposta a questões políticas e sociais relevantes. Ser-lhe-ão também pedidos alguns dados de caracterização sociodemográfica, como idade e sexo. Também vamos solicitar informações relativamente a escolaridade, situação profissional e orientação política. Em nenhum momento lhe será pedido o nome, endereço eletrónico ou outro dado que o/a possa identificar pessoalmente.
Elegibilidade: Poderá participar neste estudo qualquer agente da PSP.

Riscos e benefícios: Pode haver riscos menores associados à participação neste estudo. Alguns participantes podem sentir algum desconforto ao responder a certos assuntos. Neste sentido, se desejar terminar a sua participação, pode decidir fazê-lo a qualquer momento e sem quaisquer consequências. Embora este estudo não o(a) beneficie pessoalmente, esperamos que os resultados ajudem a conhecer melhor certos processos psicológicos associados a alguns fenómenos sociais importantes. Esperamos também que a participação neste estudo seja interessante e informativa, e/ou lhe permita refletir sobre questões importantes do dia-a-dia.

Pagamento ou compensação: Não irá receber qualquer tipo de recompensa material pela participação neste estudo.

Participação voluntária: A participação neste estudo é totalmente voluntária. É livre de recusar participar ou de parar de responder a qualquer momento, para isso, basta fechar o browser.

Confidencialidade e Proteção de Dados: O questionário encontra-se implementado numa plataforma gerida pela Qualtrics, sujeito às condições da licença subscrita pela FPCEUP. As suas respostas serão descarregadas da plataforma para o computador da investigadora onde serão analisadas de forma agregada, ou seja, em conjunto com as respostas dadas por todas as pessoas que respondem ao estudo. Cada participante apenas será identificado(a) com um

código alfanumérico atribuído de forma automática e aleatória pela plataforma do questionário. Além disso, a investigadora responsável compromete-se a tratar toda a informação de forma confidencial. Os dados serão armazenados e conservados apenas pelo período necessário para cumprir as finalidades que motivaram a sua recolha e tratamento, ou até cinco anos após a conclusão da recolha de dados.

Finalidade do tratamento de dados e disseminação dos resultados: A recolha e o tratamento de dados são realizados, exclusivamente, para fins de investigação científica. Os resultados finais do estudo poderão ser publicados em revistas científicas e jornais académicos, apresentados em seminários, conferências, aulas ou outras atividades com fins académicos, nos quais serão apenas mencionados os resultados de forma agregada e nunca de forma individual. A investigadora responsável assegura que os seus dados não serão tratados para outras finalidades que não as previamente indicadas.
A base de dados de tratamento estatístico poderá ser eventualmente exigida pela revista científica para publicação dos resultados. Nesse caso, a base de dados de tratamento estatístico terá de ser partilhada com acesso livre, não sendo possível, em caso algum, identificar os participantes.

Contactos: Para esclarecer qualquer questão acerca deste estudo poderá contactar a investigadora responsável Daniela Ramos, através do endereço eletrónico up202108098@fpce.up.pt.

Gostaria de participar neste estudo? Ao avançar está a indicar que leu e compreendeu as informações fornecidas anteriormente e que pretende participar no estudo.

info demográfica

Idade:

Sexo:

- ○ Masculino
- ○ Feminino

Qual a localização do seu posto de trabalho?

- ○ Norte
- ○ Centro
- ○ Lisboa e Vale do Tejo
- ○ Alentejo
- ○ Algarve
- ○ Madeira

- ○ Açores

Por favor, indique a sua posição profissional atual:

- ○ Agente
- ○ Chefe
- ○ Oficial
- ○ Administrativo (ex.: Comandante, Secretaria)
- ○ Patrulha
- ○ Unidades Especiais de Polícia
- ○ Investigação Criminal
- ○ Trânsito
- ○ Prefiro não responder
- ○ [ ] Outro

O serviço onde exerce a sua profissão tem um serviço predominantemente:

- ○ Operacional
- ○ Administrativo
- ○ Ambos

Quantos anos de serviço tem?

cenas

Abaixo encontrará uma série de afirmações sobre a forma como se posiciona em comparação com o que considera que seria justo ter.

Por favor, leia as afirmações e expresse o seu nível de concordância numa escala de 1 (Discordo totalmente) a 7 (Concordo totalmente).

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
Sinto-me em desvantagem quando penso no que tenho enquanto membro da PSP, por comparação com o que acho que seria justo ter.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Quando penso no que deveria ter enquanto membro da PSP, sinto que deveria ter privilégios que não tenho.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
Incomoda-me ver como deveria estar a ir bem financeiramente e não estou. Quando comparo o que tenho com o que deveria ter, percebo que estou em pior situação financeira do que seria justo.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sinto-me insatisfeito com o que tenho enquanto membro da PSP quando comparo com o que tinha direito a ter.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sinto que me faltam certos recursos materiais quando comparo as condições que tenho enquanto membro da PSP com o que seria importante/ necessário ter.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

De seguida, irá ler algumas afirmações sobre a satisfação com a sua profissão.

Por favor, expresse o seu nível de concordância com as

seguintes afirmações numa escala de 1 (Discordo totalmente) a 7 (Concordo totalmente).

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
Sinto que o salário dos profissionais da PSP compensa o risco e a responsabilidade do trabalho.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sinto que os polícias da PSP têm menos direitos laborais do que outros profissionais do Estado.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
A ausência de incentivos financeiros desmotiva os profissionais da PSP para o trabalho.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
A profissão policial (PSP) oferece pouca estabilidade e poucas perspetivas de progressão.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
As condições laborais dos polícias da PSP são satisfatórias.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
A política de progressão na carreira na PSP gera frustração entre os polícias.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Como se posiciona quanto a valores sociais (ex.: igualdade, inclusão)?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Conservador	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Liberal

Como se posiciona quanto a valores económicos (ex.: defesa do setor privado, mercado livre)?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Conservador	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Liberal

Como se posiciona conforme o nosso espectro político nacional?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Mais à esquerda	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Mais à direita

escalas

De seguida, irá ler algumas afirmações sobre a perceção de segurança durante o seu serviço.

Por favor, expresse o seu nível de concordância com as seguintes afirmações numa escala de 1 (Discordo totalmente) a 7 (Concordo totalmente).

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
Preocupo-me se tenho de trabalhar sozinho(a) à noite ou em zonas de risco elevado.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sinto uma maior necessidade de me proteger fisicamente por ser membro da PSP.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sinto que a minha integridade física está frequentemente em risco no desempenho das minhas funções.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Já fui alvo de ameaças ou insultos durante o serviço.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
O meu trabalho é uma fonte constante de stress.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
Preocupo-me com a possibilidade de ser agredido(a) durante o serviço.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Preocupo-me com a possibilidade de ser atingido(a) durante o serviço (ex.: armas de fogo, armas brancas, armas improvisadas).	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sinto que tem havido mais violência nas ruas.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Acredito que a violência contra as forças de segurança tem aumentado.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Serão agora apresentadas algumas afirmações sobre o reconhecimento social associado à sua profissão.

Por favor, expresse o seu nível de concordância com as seguintes afirmações numa escala de 1 (Discordo totalmente) a 7 (Concordo totalmente).

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
Os cidadãos comuns apreciam o trabalho da PSP.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
As pessoas reconhecem o esforço e os riscos que o trabalho da PSP implica.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
As pessoas confiam na PSP.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Os sucessivos governos têm ignorado as necessidades e preocupações da PSP.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
O governo atual reconhece que o trabalho da PSP é importante e que merece ser apreciado.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
O governo atual não reconhece devidamente o papel da PSP na sociedade.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
A imagem pública da PSP é negativa.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Gostava que o governo atual mostrasse mais respeito e apoio público pela PSP.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
Sinto que a PSP já não é tão respeitada como era no passado.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
A sociedade tem cada vez menos respeito pela PSP.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
A população não compreende o trabalho da PSP.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

De seguida, irá ler algumas afirmações sobre a profissão policial.

Por favor, expresse o seu nível de concordância com as seguintes afirmações numa escala de 1 (Discordo totalmente) a 7 (Concordo totalmente).

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
Quando ocorrem incidentes com cidadãos, a culpa tende a ser automaticamente atribuída aos polícias da PSP.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
O discurso negativo público sobre a PSP é muitas vezes influenciado por visões políticas enviesadas.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Certas narrativas sociais colocam injustamente os polícias da PSP como culpados de problemas estruturais da sociedade.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
O trabalho policial da PSP é muitas vezes criticado de forma injusta por motivos ideológicos.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sinto que alguns setores políticos não apoiam devidamente o trabalho da PSP.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

extrema direita

Ser-lhe-á agora pedido que responda a algumas afirmações sobre a forma como a sociedade portuguesa funciona atualmente.

Por favor, expresse o seu nível de concordância com as

seguintes afirmações numa escala de 1 (Discordo totalmente) a 7 (Concordo totalmente).

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
De uma maneira geral, considero que a sociedade portuguesa é justa.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
De uma maneira geral, o sistema político português funciona como deveria.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
A sociedade portuguesa precisa de ser radicalmente reestruturada.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Portugal é o melhor país do mundo para se viver.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
A maioria das políticas em Portugal servem um bem maior.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Toda a gente tem uma oportunidade justa para obter riqueza e felicidade em Portugal.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
A sociedade portuguesa está a ficar pior a cada ano.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
A sociedade portuguesa está configurada para que as pessoas obtenham geralmente aquilo que merecem.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Iremos agora apresentar algumas afirmações tendo em conta opiniões sobre a sociedade.

Por favor, indique o seu grau de concordância com as seguintes afirmações, numa escala de 1 (Discordo totalmente) a 7 (Concordo totalmente):

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
Portugal precisa de um líder forte, a fim de destruir as correntes radicais e imorais que prevalecem na sociedade atual.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Portugal precisa de pensadores livres, que terão a coragem de enfrentar o tradicionalismo, mesmo que isso incomode muita gente.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
O tradicionalismo e os "valores antigos" ainda são a melhor forma de viver em Portugal.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Portugal estaria melhor se mostrássemos tolerância e compreensão por valores e opiniões diferentes (não convencionais).	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
Os princípios bíblicos sobre o aborto, pornografia e casamento devem ser rigorosamente seguidos em Portugal antes que seja tarde demais.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Em Portugal, transgressões devem ser punidas severamente.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Portugal precisa mostrar abertura para com as pessoas que pensam de forma diferente, em vez de um líder forte.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
Em Portugal, as pessoas deveriam dar menos atenção à Bíblia e à religião. Em vez disso deveriam desenvolver os seus próprios padrões morais.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
Em Portugal, há muitas pessoas radicais e imorais a tentarem arruinar as coisas; a sociedade deveria detê-las.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
As evidências mostram que temos de ser mais duros contra o crime e a imoralidade sexual, a fim de defender a lei e a ordem em Portugal.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
A situação atual em Portugal melhoraria se os desordeiros fossem tratados com humanidade.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

populismo

De seguida, irá ler algumas afirmações sobre a política em Portugal.

Por favor, indique o seu grau de concordância com as seguintes afirmações, numa escala de 1 (Discordo totalmente) a 7 (Concordo totalmente):

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
Grandes corporações portuguesas acumulam riqueza ao explorar o povo.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Os políticos portugueses deveriam sempre ouvir com cuidado os problemas do povo.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Os políticos portugueses não estão muito interessados no que o povo pensa.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Na democracia em Portugal, a vontade da maioria deve prevalecer.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
Os políticos portugueses estão na verdade interessados no que pessoas como eu pensam.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
O governo português é dirigido por alguns grandes interesses que só se importam consigo mesmos.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Os membros do governo português usam o seu poder para tentar melhorar a vida das pessoas.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Os políticos portugueses não precisam de passar muito tempo entre as pessoas comuns para fazerem um bom trabalho.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
A vontade do povo deve ser o princípio mais alto na política em Portugal.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Várias pessoas que lideram o governo português são corruptas.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
	Discordo totalmente 1	2	3	4	5	6	Concordo totalmente 7
É importante que um líder político seja parecido com as pessoas que representa.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Eu prefiro políticos que digam as coisas como são.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
O governo português é atualmente dirigido em benefício de todas as pessoas.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Se estiver confortável em responder, em que partido votou nas últimas eleições legislativas (maio de 2025):

- ○ Aliança Democrática (AD)
- ○ Chega (CH)
- ○ Partido Socialista (PS)
- ○ Iniciativa Liberal (IL)
- ○ Livre (L)
- ○ Coligação Democrática Unitária (CDU)
- ○ Bloco de Esquerda (BE)
- ○ Pessoas – Animais – Natureza (PAN)
- ○ Juntos Pelo Povo (JPP)

○ Outro

○ Prefiro não responder

Desenvolvido pela Qualtrics

Appendix B – Table 1

Table 1

Summary of Means, Standard Deviations, and Pearson Moment-Product Correlations Between Variables by Radicalism

		Radical behavior		Non-radical behavior								
	Variable	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Relative deprivation	5.96	1.16	5.56	1.05		**.36***	**-.46****	**.46****	**.52*****	**-.40****	**.33***	**.43****
2	Dissatisfaction	5.67	1.32	5.67	0.10	**.61*****		-.07	.18	.10	-.28	.18	.22
3	Social recognition	**1.72**	0.73	**2.10**	1.01	**-.41****	**-.60*****		**-.66*****	**-.65*****	**.60*****	**-.41****	**-.69*****
4	Insecurity	5.94	0.99	5.67	1.02	**.60*****	**.43****	**-.50*****		**.79*****	**-.51*****	**.36***	**.67*****
5	Victimization	6.07	0.93	5.73	1.16	**.43****	**.58*****	**-.76*****	**.72*****		**-.49*****	**.30***	**.61*****
6	System justification	**2.84**	1.00	**3.63**	0.99	.10	.12	-.22	.03	.19		**-.32***	**-.60*****
7	Authoritarianism	**4.87**	1.01	**3.93**	1.03	.28	.26	**-.41****	**.44****	**.53*****	-.03		**.39****
8	Populist attitudes	**6.06**	0.77	**5.44**	0.84	**.53*****	**.58*****	**-.62*****	**.42****	**.64*****	.12	**.49****	

Note. Correlations for the Non-radical behavior group (n = 41) are below the diagonal; and correlations for the Radical behavior group (n = 46) are above the diagonal.

$^{*}p \leq .05$; $^{**}p \leq .01$; $^{***}p \leq .001$

Appendix C – Table 2

Table 2

Mediation Models, Considering Socioprofessional Variables as Independent Measures, Voting Behavior as the Dependent Measure, and System Justification, Authoritarianism, and Populist Attitudes as Mediators of the Associations

		Mediators								
		System justification			Authoritarianism			Populist attitudes		
	Independent variable	*b*	*p*	R^2	*b*	*p*	R^2	*b*	*p*	R^2
1	Relative deprivation	-.22	.0333	.05	.35	.0008	.12	.38	<.001	.25
2	Dissatisfaction	-.09	.3227	.01	.18	.0704	.04	.25	.0008	.13
3	Social recognition	.25	.0489	.04	-.57	.0000	.20	-.64	<.001	.44
4	Insecurity	-.30	.0086	.08	.46	.0001	.17	.47	<.001	.30
5	Victimization	-.18	.0908	.03	.47	<.001	.20	.51	<.001	.40

A view on the radical uniform: A study on the radicalization of police officers

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