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***Phronesis*, Moral Judgment, and Ethical Decision Making: Experiences of Public Managers in the Area of Emergency Management**

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to investigate how *phronesis* manifests itself in moral judgment based on the experience of public managers in situations of ethical decisions in the area of emergency management (risk and disaster management). We conducted a literature review on *phronesis* as a virtue of “acting well.” As methodological procedures guided by a phenomenological epistemology and qualitative approach, an in-depth interview, non-participant observation, and document analysis were conducted. The discussion of data was organized into three sections: context and circumstances in the area of emergency management, experience and tacit knowledge of managers, and cognitive, affective, and reflexive composition of *phronesis*. Some elements of *phronesis* are perceptible and contribute to the ethical decision-making process in view of the possibilities of limiting moral judgment, such as the context and contingency circumstances of emergencies, the affective dimension such as empathy, the need for mediation between instrumental aspects and the will to act with compassion, counseling as a reflective element, and memory and learning from past experiences. The conclusion is that, when conditions for moral judgment are not favorable and/or there are limiting factors - such as excess of technical and/or bureaucratic issues, a context of insecurity, and a purpose of protecting human life -, *phronesis* may help to develop an

enlightened knowledge for the individual exposed to reviews, education and clarification about the social, political, and organizational context to which she or he belongs.

Keywords: *phronesis*; prudence; practical wisdom; public management; emergency management.

Introduction

In an attempt to understand how public managers deliberate in face of moral dilemmas, researchers studying theories of moral development point out moral judgment as a means to address ethical issues (Santos, 2019). However, Cooper and Menzel (2013) have warned that the exercise of moral judgment does not seem to be a straightforward process in the environment of public organizations, as they deal with movements, forces, and influences often complex and divergent which characterize the dynamics of the relationship between public managers, moral dilemmas, and the specificities of public administration (Santos, 2019).

According to this interpretation, moral judgment by itself and as a source of decision may not be able to overcome the moral conflict faced by the decision maker (Manti, 2017). This limitation occurs in the practice of moral judgment arising, for example, from the impossibility of discretionary decisions in highly regulated environments, pressure for urgency in decisions, and a single moral perspective as the only alternative for action (Santos, 2019). Therefore, we understand that moral judgment may not be enough to help a manager to make decisions in face of specific and contingency circumstances (Aristotle, 2002; Bachmann, Habisch, & Dierksmeier, 2018; Hermann, 2007), such as in crises and disasters, at the same time being required to obey formal rules and sometimes to suffer regularization of individual behavior in the form of performance standards (Mendieta, 2011).

In view of this problem, we rely on the perception of Morales-Sanchez and Cabello-Medina (2013) and Darnell, Gulliford, Kristjánsson and Paris (2019), who show that the ethical decision-making process may take place through the moral judgment of the individual on a given issue, however only when the judgment is linked to an intellectual virtue called *phronesis*. The authors draw attention to the difference between knowing the right thing to do – regarded as a moral judgment – and putting it into practice within a complex context delimited by regulations and diverse interests, as is the case of public administration.

Despite several efforts, the word *phronesis* still does not have an exact and satisfactory translation into contemporary languages as it once had in the Greek world (Hermann, 2007). In the fields of philosophy, theology, psychology, and administration, expressions such as practical wisdom, prudence, common sense, prudent deliberation, and responsible reasoning can be possible translations of it (Ames, Serafim, & Zappellini, 2020; Bachmann et al. 2018; Caitano & Serva, 2020; Hermann, 2007; Liszka, 2002). For the purposes of this article, we adopted the terms *practical wisdom* and *prudence* as complementary to the understanding of *phronesis* (Ames, Serafim, & Zappellini, 2017, 2020; Corey, 2021). We understand “phronetic” prudence as a manifestation of practical wisdom exercised with the help of rationality and moral judgment which aims to find a middle ground between virtues and excesses/vices or between poles of tension for a good deliberation (Corey, 2021).

Brazilian researchers have studied the intellectual virtue of *phronesis* – such as Karam (2014), Caitano (2017), Santos (2019), Caitano and Serva (2020) and Ames (2020) – to find ways to address the issue of tensions in the praxis of organizations in light of the rationality approach based on Alberto Guerreiro Ramos (1989). This theme is more consolidated in the field of international organizational studies (Ames & Serafim, 2019; Ames et al. 2017, 2020; Bachmann et al., 2018; Ferrero & Sison, 2014), but it is still quite recent in Brazil (Ames & Serafim, 2019; Ames et al., 2017, 2020).

Through this theoretical and empirical debate, views on how moral judgment can be put into practice as moral actions in organizations expand anchored by the virtue of *phronesis*. In this sense, we understand that improving *phronesis* may enable managers to deal with the “particular situations, to have the appropriate emotions about them, to deliberate about what is appropriate in these situations by taking into account the particularities of practice situations, and to act in a responsible way” (Saban & Berdugo, 2017, p. 10).

From this contextualization and problematic, we set for this theoretical-empirical article the aim of analyzing how *phronesis* manifests itself in the moral judgment from the experience of public managers in situations of ethical decisions in the area of protection and emergency management (risk and disaster management). This aim is part of a broader debate on how *phronesis* can be an alternative to the practical, contextual, and organizational limitations of individual moral judgment in public administration (Santos, 2019).

Considering that *phronesis* is a virtue of specific and contingency circumstances (Aristoteles, 2002; Bachmann et al., 2018; Hermann, 2007), we argued for the possibility of studying it in the context of crises and disasters, since these circumstances are defined as unique, specific, peculiar, and unexpected (Kapucu & Ustun, 2017; Kreps & Drabek, 1996). In addition, disasters are recurrent in Brazil; they are chronic problem and a major challenge for governments and communities, although each disaster is unique and peculiar (Valencio, 2014; Pedroso & Holm-Nielsen, 2017). In this sense, the field of study is configured as the public management of risks and disasters – also called emergency management or preparedness (Santos, 2019) – related to the area of civil defense and protection. This is an area that, although quite technical, usually includes professionals with practical experience, that is, experience in risk situations (Santos, 2019). This characteristic allows the study of *phronesis* as practical wisdom and prudent action.

After this introduction, the article continues with a presentation on public management and the area of emergency management, the field of study of this research. Subsequently, we carried out a theoretical review on *phronesis* as practical wisdom and prudent action and on *phronesis* and moral judgment in the decision-making process. Next, we present the methodological procedures and the analysis and discussion of data. We finish with the conclusions, final considerations, and references.

Public management and the area of emergency management

Risk management – acting in a preventive manner – is as important or more important than managing the disaster itself, that is, acting when the disaster occurs (Santos & Serafim, 2020). The management of this type of event translates often into a large, complex, and prolonged operation which involves public and private organizations and is directly linked to the lives of citizens and the

well-being of societies. “In extreme cases, crisis management makes the difference between life and death” (Boin, Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 2005, p. 1). Still in relation to the disaster prevention phase and risk management, Basolo et al. (2009), based on empirical studies on environmental risks and preparedness and prevention actions, concluded that the excessive trust of a certain community in the public manager, that is, in the exclusive responsibility of a public management to provide safety, represents a reduction factor in individual and community self-protection measures in face of risk factors.

Faced with the occurrence of an adverse event that results in a disaster, emergency and/or disaster management must intervene at once through its multidisciplinary and intersectoral actions. At this phase of action and response, good administration goes beyond “simply mobilizing additional resources, facilities, and personnel,” since “disasters create peculiar problems, rarely faced on a daily basis” (Defesa Civil de Santa Catarina, 2017, p. 105).

The characteristic found in challenges presented by crises and disasters and the way they differ from everyday situations require preventive reflection that prepares public management for the many dilemmas tragedies impose (Santos, 2019; Santos & Serafim, 2020). Therefore, adequate knowledge about risk and disaster management in the public sector is essential, as well as analyses on the actions carried out in the context of public management, especially in a preventive and proactive manner, by public authorities.

On this necessity, the philosopher Zack (2009) – one of the main references on ethics and disasters – argues that adequate preparation for possible disasters concerns what she called mandatory prudence – in the sense of practical wisdom for moral, responsible, and prudent actions in a contingency context. Similarly, the lack of preparation – failures of mandatory prudence – is regarded as a moral issue because it may be negligence on the part of the public manager. Returning to Tomás de Aquino (2014), negligence is characteristic of imprudence and of those who do not choose, of those who act with carelessness in their will and/or actions. In practice, Zack realizes that many managers do not see investment in the area of protection and emergency management as a central concern, sometimes emerging a kind of compensation when disaster strikes, such as in the form of humanitarian aid or charity.

Regarding the main ethical issues found in emergencies, tragedies, crises, and disasters, the main dilemmas occur when managers are faced with questions such as: Who has the authority to make significant ethical decisions? How should ethical decisions be made? What principles and values should guide those involved in ethical processes during disasters? What is responsible action in response to human needs in a context of crisis? (Jenson, 1997). At its core, deliberations on such dilemmas are unclear and susceptible to discussion involving people, organizations, and societies with different worldviews and values. This reinforces the role of analysis and ethical discussion in decisions in the political sphere and in the domain of actions (Saban, 2016; Feldmann-Jensen, Jensen, Smith, & Etkin, 2016).

***Phronesis* as practical wisdom and prudent action**

When exercised in practical life – that is, in contingent and not necessary realities –, the human faculty of reason is referred to as in the Greek classical sense of praxis, being then conceived as the reason of praxis or practical reason. This reason means to know with the aim of changing an

object or a contingent reality; such knowledge refers to *agere* (to act) or *facere* (to operate, to produce, to do). When referring to action – that is, within the scope of *agere* or *praxis* –, it is a knowledge that changes only the agent, and actions have the agent itself as an end/meaning being ourselves its “work,” as it is the case of ethics and politics (Sellés & Gallardo, 2019).

Practical reason is the domain in which the intellectual virtue of *phronesis* is exercised. In its Aristotelian sense, *phronesis* was used as the excellence of practical intellect or practical wisdom. Bachmann et al. (2018) clarify that it was probably Aristotle who first developed a systematic understanding of what constitutes a wise person in a practical sense.

In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle defines practical wisdom as the main rational intellectual virtue that, with technical reason, deals with variable, modifiable realities, contingencies related to human affairs and particular circumstances or concrete occurrences that can be controlled, chosen, started, constructed, changed, or developed. For Aristotle (2002), “we do not deliberate on the ends but on the means” (p. 62). Therefore, the means “have to be found” (Stork & Echevarria, 2011, p. 19). In this process, it is up to prudence to choose the proper means to achieve the ends (Marques, 2000). For this, *phronesis* requires the understanding of each particular situation as it is, the theoretical knowledge and the experience to deliberate, the application of means to action, and the excellence of character to achieve the correct ends (Melé, 2010).

Aristotle considered that the soul (*psyche, anima*) – the vivifying principle of the immaterial faculties of the human being (intelligence and will) – has two cognitive capacities: the first, called science, knows realities that cannot be different from that which really are, that is, they are necessary; the second, called calculative or opinionated reality, knows what is contingent and what can be modified. Ramos (1989) highlights that the Aristotelian concept holds an ingredient of calculation and, in this sense, *phronesis* designates the “calculating or opinionated part of the soul” (Aubenque, 2008, p. 23). However, it is technical reason that calculates the chain of causes expected to achieve the intended result. However, it is up to practical wisdom – *phronesis* – to know how to constantly act on when and how to lead a “good life”, in the sense of *eudaimonia*, for oneself and for the community (Bachmann et al., 2018; Sellés & Gallardo, 2019).

Pitman (2012) explains that the role of *phronesis* does not ensure that the judgment and the subsequent action will, in fact, lead to the best result, since uncertainty is an integral part of professional practice. The author justifies this statement by clarifying that at the bottom of this process of uncertainty is the generation of tacit knowledge. Recognizing that certainty cannot be required as a part of the decision-making process even in an ethical situation, Van Niekerk and Nortjé (2013) claim that *phronesis* is related to the Weberian ethics of responsibility as a way of considering moral intuitions in ethical judgment, but without disregarding rules and regulations to make responsible decisions. Thus, the authors define *phronesis* as “knowing how to act in practical situations of everyday life where the which norms and rules need to be applied” (Van Niekerk & Nortjé, 2013, p. 30).

Thus, as a type of practical knowledge, *phronesis* requires practical experience, since it “allows us to become familiar with the particulars of life and to acquire a certain folk psychology concerning human character and behavior, a grasp of cases, models, and paradigms of decision making” (Liszka, 2002, p. 216). The analysis of the cognitive structure and the process of acquiring

knowledge through experience and its tacit dimension was one of the objects of study of the philosopher Michael Polanyi (Webb, 2013).

For Polanyi (2005, 2009), tacit knowledge is the most intrinsic dimension of individual knowledge that cannot be structured, codified and published, as it differs from person to person. However, it is complementary to explicit human knowledge in cognitive processes. The acquisition of the tacit dimension of knowledge occurs through experience and what is revealed through practice in a particular context. According to Nonaka and Takeuchi (1997) and Nonaka and Von Krogh (2009), deeply rooted individual activities (procedures, routines, actions), emotions, ideas and value assessments are part of the tacit dimension. Its manifestation may occur through consciousness connected to the senses, tactile experiences, movement skills, intuitions, inarticulable mental models, and implicit golden rules.

Although it is not easily explained when an action, decision, or process is carried out using tacit knowledge, we embody such an experience in the body – or extend our body to include it. This process derived from the structure of tacit knowledge was called by Polanyi (2009) “indwelling”. The author also explains that the acceptance of moral teachings and their internalization are also an indwelling process. In this way, internalizing means identifying with teachings, making them function as a tacit ethical knowledge that sets up the structure of moral acts and judgments. Aware of this ethical issue, Malitowska and Bonecki (2015) define ethical tacit knowledge as the ability to have an evaluative attitude towards a situation, but without involving any moral argumentation or explanation.

However, Pitman (2012) warns that such tacit knowledge is a double-edged sword: at the same time that it can manifest itself as a form of situated wisdom, it may also act as a prejudice in action, that is, as mental models already established or as an adherence to the technical requirements of existing protocols. However, sometimes, the individual is not aware of the way by which this tactical structure was acquired or, even, it is not recognized as knowledge by those who hold it (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1997). Thus, the acquisition of this knowledge without making any differentiation or further reflection may result in an insensitivity about morally relevant conduct, that is, not rationally prudent.

Thus, we understand that, **more than individual practical wisdom related to the ethical tacit knowledge formed by the person, when “put into action” *phronesis* – as a virtue of “acting well” – manifests itself as a prudent action.**

It is worth mentioning that, throughout the modern age, the notion of prudence has gotten a more mundane meaning and was reduced to a type of technical intelligence and cunning – devoid of ethics – for the effectiveness of actions and/or caution when making decisions (Aubenque, 2008; Lauand, 2014). Ramos (1989) points to the historical moment in which this occurred: “Machiavelli systematically distorts theoretical language by stripping it from any ethical substance... with Machiavelli, prudence takes on an unknown connotation. His idea of prudence is devoid of ethical content” (p. 58). This situation began to change during the last decades, when a remarkable number of philosophical approaches has provoked a growing interest in this subject in its classic conception, among whom the following stand out: Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Max Scheler and Alasdair MacIntyre (Ames et al., 2020; Bachmann et al., 2018).

Delving into Hans-Georg Gadamer's studies on *phronesis*, Hermann (2007) highlights that this "... prudent deliberation, as a practical understanding, may help to face the tension generated in the educational process between the creation of the singular self and the integration into the community (common ethos)" (p. 365) taking into account the contingencies and complexity of contexts, the situation of the other, the particularities of moral action, and the singularities of the self-individual with its own beliefs. In this way, practical wisdom integrates correct thinking, correct desire, and correct action (Aquino, 2014) and harmonizes reason, emotions, and behavior (Ferrero & Sison, 2014).

Thus, practical wisdom balances different modes of moral reasoning. By integrating the specific particularities of context and circumstance into a comprehensive view of good and value, practical wisdom comprises a teleological dimension: it is concerned with how the given action is performed, under what circumstances, and by whom considering moral principles and duties but at the same time virtuous people as models for its practical application (Bachmann et al., 2018). Thus, "the prudent man makes use of precaution, foresight, and circumspection" (Marques, 2000, p. 43).

In the context of public management, Saban and Berdugo (2017) understand that the ability to reflect and act in a meaningful way in the public interest involves the use of practical wisdom. For the authors, "particular situations, to have the appropriate emotions about them, to deliberate about what is appropriate in these situations by taking into account the particularities of practice situations, and to act in a responsible way" (p. 10).

Likewise, Melé (2010) argues that practical wisdom is adequate for understanding the circumstances or significant consequences of each case, since it deals with particular situations. Practical wisdom thus helps the decision maker to discover the human good inherent to an action, including cognitive aspects arising from experience and universal principles, as well as other cognitive aspects generated by the specific situation.

The virtue of *phronesis* and moral judgment in ethical decision-making processes

Proposed by the psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg, the theory of cognitive moral judgment has been widely adopted in the field of ethical decision-making. It has influenced authors to develop their models of ethical decision-making, such as that of James Rest, who considers moral decision-making to be composed by four basic components: (a) moral conscience: identification of the moral nature of a problem; (b) moral judgment: what course of action to take; (c) moral intention: prioritization of moral values over other values; and, (d) moral action: execution and implementation of moral intention (O'Fallon & Butterfield, 2005).

In addition to these components, the phases of deliberation, choice, decision, and moral action are part of an ethical decision-making process (Boin & Hart, 2003; Santos, 2019). According to Aristotle (2002) "deliberation concerns things that generally happen in a certain way, but whose outcome is obscure, and those in which it is indeterminate... We do not deliberate on ends, but on means" (p. 62). In this sense, deliberation refers to the establishment of the intention to act (desire and will for an end) and considers the various existing goods as means - distinguishing goods that are appropriated from those that are not to the solving of a practical project -, and ends with the

judgment (choosing the best alternative among possible ones) and the decision of action, which induces precisely to act dealing with the means - how and when to do it - with a view to an end, that is, a concrete good to look for and the evils to avoid.

As one deliberates well, over time one acquires the virtue of *eubulía* (knowing how to deliberate). As one judges/chooses well – which in current language can be called purposes –, the virtue of *synesis* (knowing how to judge, or wisdom) is perfected. The virtue of *phronesis* is an intrinsic disposition of the person. It is acquired as one experiences this entire process (deliberating and judging well) and if one acts well in a constant way, dealing with the “how and when to do it” that lead to the intended end. In other words, we acquire the virtue of *phronesis* if we are constant in fulfilling good purposes (Sellés & Gallardo, 2019).

Commonly, the steps of an ethical decision-making process are inserted into a model, that is, an ideal proposal for action. In practice, however, it may not be possible to follow each step easily and in the expected order. Among the possible limitations in ethical decision-making models, Morris (1998) highlights that “an especially interesting feature of pressures against ethical decision-making, prominent in corporate life, is that most of them involve the limitation of thought, a constriction, or a reduction of the sphere of our concerns” (p. 143). Regarding the limitation of thinking, Morris warns that problems “are always the result of the beliefs and values through which we look at life, as it were a lens” (p. 153). In this sense, there is a set of factors that may influence the decision-making process, such as other opinions, personal training, family and social relationships, and political and religious options.

Also within these factors that affect the ethical decision-making process, Morris (1998) highlights the role of rules. According to the author, for a long time philosophers believed that the effective decision-making process followed rules associated with a profession and life in general. In this approach to ethics, conformity is emphasized. However, as limitations to this conception, the author argues that (a) it is not possible to define specific rules for all situations that we identify as ethical situations, (b) the rules can be conflicting and incompatible and, thus, one should question how to find the solution, and (c) all rules must be interpreted.

Another influential factor within the ethical decision process is highlighted by Burke (2001), when he says that, several times, the public agent goes through choices not necessarily related to helping or not someone, or even who to help, but through the definition of the limits of such a help or ethically determining when to end assistance. Regarding this process, Lauand (2014) warns that one of the most dangerous ways of renouncing to face reality in a prudent way is to exchange a fine sensitivity of discerning what reality requires in a concrete situation “for rigid operational criteria, as in a 'manual of moral scout' or, in the field of law, in a narrow legalism on the fringes of justice” (p. 11).

Within this context, ethical decision-making in crisis situations, such as disasters, makes a certain degree of discretion and tacit knowledge essential for professionals to improvise and do what is necessary to save people who are at risk, which sometimes can be synonymous with breaking down bureaucratic and/or hierarchical barriers (Boin & Nieuwenburg, 2013). In light of these considerations, Morris (1998) argues that rule-based conduct may serve to express, at least, the main parameters of the expected behavior of people, defining a basis for acceptable behavior.

Another issue of understanding moral judgments is the coherence between judgment and moral action, that is, the correspondence and consistency between the level of moral judgment and the action (Marques, 2000; Santos, 2019). Despite the relevance of moral judgment, Manti (2017) found a limitation in its concept and practice. For the author, “the moral decision implicates a judgement that merges rationality requests with moral sentiments, the biographical dimension and the experiences of each of us, and the context where it has to be made” (p. 467). This context, within the scope of action of the public agent, in addition to having to deal with informal rules of social morality and its conventions, needs to obey formal rules, legally sanctioned norms. Formal institutions and public organizations, thus, foster regularity in individual behavior in the form of standards, since the logic of adequacy ends up affecting the responses to moral choices (Mendieta, 2011).

Also seeking to identify limitations regarding moral judgment in the praxis of real situations, Nielsen (1988) identified that (a) just as freedom of expression can be limited in many organizations, ethical reasoning as a strategy of action can also be; (b) mental illness or psychological distress, even if temporary, may limit the effectiveness of moral competence; (c) pressures of urgency may not allow time to make an adequate moral judgment; (d) cultural differences in values/principles may limit the common ground needed for moral judgment; and (e) when, for some people, ethics is based on an intuitive and/or mystical process, moral judgment may be limited.

Specifically in the context of public administration, Cooper and Menzel (2013) consider that one of the most neglected and least developed perspectives in the “operationalization” of moral judgment is the ability to link moral thinking to ethical conduct within the organizational context in which they occur. This is because simply saying that ethical competence means understanding formal laws and rules and applying them uniformly seems too simplistic. On the other hand, trusting the manager's moral principles or its duty of responsibility may turn the concept of ethical competence into a very vague expression within a formal organizational context (Cooper & Menzel, 2013).

In this context we propose in this article, as presented in the introductory section, that the virtue of *phronesis* can be an alternative to the practical, contextual, and organizational limitations of individual moral judgment in public administration.

Methodological procedures

In order to empirically analyze *phronesis* in public management, we adopted methodological procedures that allowed us to identify the elements and the characteristics presented in the previous sections. To this end, we opted for methods guided by a phenomenological epistemology that allowed us to encompass the individual's experience with practical wisdom and prudent action in the ethical decision-making process, that is, in the stages of deliberation, choice, decision, and moral action (Boin & Hart, 2003; Santos, 2019). Phenomenology helps to describe the complexity of moral dilemmas, analyze the interaction between their elements and understand in greater depth the particularities of the behavior of individuals when experiencing them (Richardson, 1999).

As already stated in the introductory section, we chose to study *phronesis* in a context in which its characteristics were more evident so that there was no displacement of reality (Pieranti, 2008). Thus, we consider this research in the context of unique and peculiar disasters in the area of

emergency management, in which risk and disaster management is carried out. This is an area whose professionals usually have extensive technical experience, but also practical experience in crisis situations (Santos, 2019). This trait makes it possible to study *phronesis*. We defined the State of Santa Catarina as the field of study, since it was the third-ranking Brazilian state with the highest number of events of environmental disasters in the last twenty years and the place with the greatest diversity of disasters in relation to the other Brazilian States. It has also been hit by the only recorded hurricane in the recent history of Brazil (Federal University of Santa Catarina, 2016).

As a source of observation of evidence of *phronesis* in this area, we chose public managers from Santa Catarina whose work is or has been related to risk and disaster management. In a qualitative approach, we called the strategy we used "life experience;" it is an adaptation of the so-called historical research and/or the oral history method (Alberti, 2005) and is defined as such drawing inspiration from phenomenology. Through this strategy, we seek to understand the trajectory of the research participants, their circumstances (personal, professional, and organizational), thoughts, reflections, and actions involved in disaster situations or administrative management related to disaster prevention or care. We understand that historical perspectives allow the researcher to establish trajectories and designs through which it is possible to concatenate the different elements that make up the phenomenon under study based on the speeches of participants (Alberti, 2005).

We used in-depth interviews as a data collection technique, based on the phenomenological proposal of Seidman (2006), non-participant observation, and document analysis. The purpose of this type of interview is not to obtain answers to questions nor to test hypotheses, but to seek to understand in depth the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience through their life history (Seidman, 2006). We conducted a field research between August 2017 and June 2018 in two phases: the first, an exploratory field study, was carried out through observation and document analysis. The second stage, collection of data directly with managers, was conducted through in-depth interviews. The exploratory phase allowed a first approach to the field of study, greater specific knowledge of risk and disaster management and its functioning, identification of individuals to be interviewed, and proximity and openness to inviting managers to take part in interviews.

Based on the literature on ethics in emergency management as well as on the observations made during the exploratory phase of the research, we defined topics for the interviews, as Table 1 shows. These themes helped to keep focus while conducting the interviews by previously researching issues that could be discussed with the interviewees, in addition to serving as a criterion in the selection of participants.

Table 1
Themes for interviews

Risk and disaster management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of humanitarian assistance items • Organizational and legal structure of public management (hierarchy, flexibility, autonomy, and discretion) • Management of public/community shelters • Alert management and communication • Donation management • Rescue, evacuation, and occupational hazard

Source: Prepared by the authors based on Feldmann-Jensen et al. (2016), Jenson (1997), Kapucu and Ustun (2017), Kreps and Drabek (1996), Saban (2016), and Zack (2009).

The selection of interviewees took place according to the position they held and their relationship with an organization that worked in the area of emergency management, such as the municipal and state emergency management organizations of Santa Catarina, the fire department, municipal governments, and the state military police. In addition, all of them should have some relationship with the remarkable disaster events in the State of Santa Catarina, such as the Hurricane Catarina in 2004, the tragedy of floods and landslides in the Vale do Itajaí in 2008, and the Xanxerê tornado in 2015. The inclusion criteria for the participants were (a) public actors who were, under any circumstances, directly involved in decision-making processes, and (b) managers and former managers who are or were active in the area of protection and emergency management in the State of Santa Catarina or its municipalities.

Regarding the in-depth interview, considering Seidman's (2006) three-stage interview proposal, we prepared a general thematic guide (Figure 1) divided into three sections: (a) manager biography, (b) case reports including ethical decisions, and (c) interviewee's reflections. Based on this guide, we also developed a script with questions to be asked to interviewees. It was adapted for each interviewee according to information from participants and their organizations (collected during the exploratory phase through participant observation and documentary analysis).

We conducted eighteen interviews. The group consisted of seven civilians and eleven military personnel. Regarding gender, fourteen participants are men and four are women. Participants were not introduced by name, but through codes formed by the letter I of interviewee plus an identification number: I1, I2, I3 and so on.

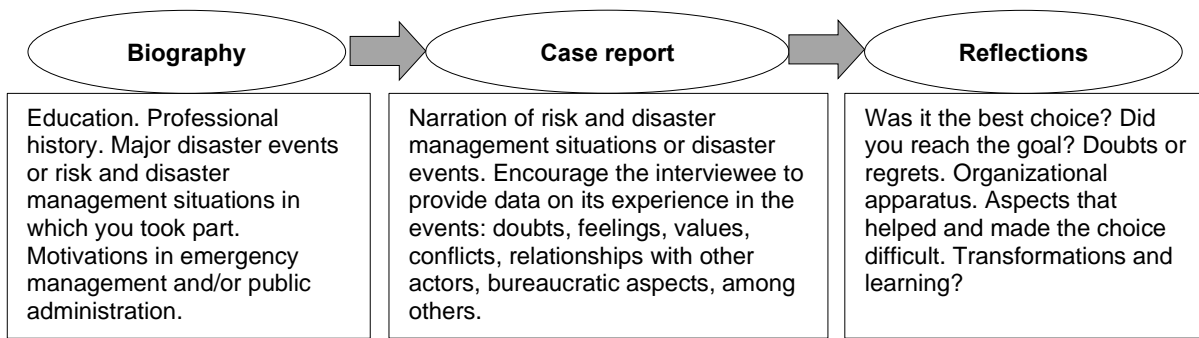


Figure 1. General guide to in-depth interviews

Source: Prepared by the authors based on Seidman (2006).

For the analysis of collected data, we developed a protocol and an analysis matrix (Table 2) based on the theoretical framework of the previous sections. The protocol consisted of three phases: pre-analysis (organization of transcribed interviews), categorization (use of Atlas Ti® software, following the components of the analysis matrix), and theoretical-empirical analysis and discussion.

Table 2.
Analysis matrix of *phronesis*

ANALYTICAL CATEGORIES	EMPIRICAL COMPONENTS
Contexts and circumstances of the area of emergency management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human affairs • Particular circumstances • Uncertainty, doubt • Lawfulness of the action • Prudent action
Experience and tacit knowledge of managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rooted knowledge ("indwelling") • Unique, exclusive, individual knowledge • Improvisation/Creativity • Practical wisdom
<i>Phronesis</i> composition – reflective part	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-educational action • Counseling • Moral judgment
<i>Phronesis</i> composition – cognitive part	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience and memory • Technical intelligence • Caution, providence, and sagacity
<i>Phronesis</i> composition – affective part	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Docility • Appropriate emotions • Empathy

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the references on *phronesis* presented in this article.

The analysis matrix is composed of three analytical categories: (a) circumstances and contexts of manifestation of *phronesis* and prudent actions, (b) experiences and tacit knowledge of practical wisdom formation, and (c) composition of *phronesis* through three-dimensional analysis. Bachmann et al. (2018) presented these dimensions and their elements in a review of studies that approached *phronesis* from philosophical, theological, psychological, and managerial perspectives. As a result, the authors proposed four characteristic dimensions: (a) the reflective, which uses

intuition and introspection and is then linked to moral judgment, counseling, and self-education; (b) the cognitive, centered on experience and intelligence, promoting precautionary and sagacious behaviors; (c) the affective, which comprises empathy and compassion through docility and appropriate emotions in each context; and (d) the religious. Considering that the fourth dimension is not the focus of our study proposal in the field of public management, we chose to disregard it. However, it is important to emphasize that the dimension of religiosity is not less important than the others and has been included in several studies on *phronesis* and the moral theory called "virtue ethics."

Analysis and discussion of data

The theoretical-empirical discussion of *phronesis* in the experience of public managers was organized into three sections based on the analysis matrix proposed in the methodological section: (a) context and circumstances of the area of protection and emergency management, (b) lived experience and tacit knowledge of managers, and (c) cognitive, affective, and reflexive composition of *phronesis*. However, prior to that, we present a brief context about the State of Santa Catarina and its reality in the area of public management of risks and disasters.

The State of Santa Catarina is located in the southern region of Brazil. It has a population of more than six million inhabitants in an area of 95 thousand square kilometers. It is divided into eight main regions: Coast, Northeast, North Plateau, Itajaí Valley, Serrano Plateau, South, Midwest, and West. Within the national context, Santa Catarina corresponds to the third state with the highest number of environmental disaster events and it is the place with the greatest diversity of disasters in relation to other Brazilian states. These include droughts, floods, hail, mass movements, winds, tornadoes, and coastal erosion, in addition to being hit by Hurricane Catarina, the only one recorded in Brazil. However, floods and droughts are the most common events (Federal University of Santa Catarina, 2016).

The main events of greater magnitude that have recently hit the state are Hurricane Catarina in 2004, 2008 landslides and floods ("2008 Tragedy"), floods in the Itajaí Valley in 2011, flood in 2014 in Itapocu Valley, and electrical storms and hail in the West and in the Serrana region in 2014 (Federal University of Santa Catarina, 2016). Currently, public management of risks and disasters in Santa Catarina is coordinated by the emergency management service, whose mission is "to coordinate and articulate prevention, mitigation, preparation, response, and recovery actions, avoiding or mitigating disasters, with the purpose of protecting the life and the patrimony of the citizen of Santa Catarina, establishing a more resilient society" (Defesa Civil de Santa Catarina, 2017). However, each Santa Catarina municipality must have its own emergency management structure.

Contexts and circumstances of the area of emergency management

The literature on disasters shows that their management can be marked by a degree of subjectivity and uncertainties, with the coexistence and conflict of emotions and challenges, sudden decisions and limited information, in face of scenarios marked by unique, peculiar problems and unknown situations (Santos, 2019). As one of the main proofs of the "unexpected element" that characterizes disaster and unknown situations in Santa Catarina, it is possible to remember that the

Hurricane Catarina - the first ever recorded in the history of Brazil - was completely unusual and even discredited because of the absence of any previously record of hurricanes on the south coast of the Atlantic Ocean.

One of the interviewees (E1) reports that, in the revision of the National Disaster Code, he suggested that government added snow as a possible meteorological occurrence in Brazil and one of his colleagues from another state questioned: “*Why include snow? There's no snow in Brazil.*” The manager from Santa Catarina corrected his colleague by saying that indeed, in Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul it snows. Still unconvinced, his colleague argued: “*You're crazy, but when will there be a snow disaster?*” This possibility was not included in the document and the following year there was a blizzard in Santa Catarina. Some municipalities even declaring a state of emergency due to the damages that the blizzard caused.

These events, although caused by climatic conditions, had direct repercussions on human affairs, that is, they changed the lives, well-being, and safety of individuals, families, communities, and/or municipalities, which could be affected by a disaster or that had already been affected by disasters. In addition, they also affect professionals who work directly in the management of these situations and who sometimes share the position of those who need their work, as some managers reported:

We are also human beings, we put ourselves on another's shoes, knowing that this person will have to go to a shelter at times, that they have nowhere to stay and so on. It's a complicated situation; you leave your comfort zone and go to a community place, you'll have to deal with rules, sometimes these people are not used to that. We all know that this is difficult, but we, the emergency service personnel, preserve human life, material goods as well, but the main thing is human life. (I3, 2018)

I, the emergency service, an emergency service professional, say to a person: 'leave and go to a shelter.' It's a huge level of responsibility, because welcoming the person at the shelter is my responsibility, food is my responsibility, the care is comprehensive: health, physical, mental, religious, [it] is my responsibility, the valuables the person left behind is my responsibility, it's big like that. (I9, 2018)

Although the human dimension has been highlighted, referring to a more substantive perception of management actions with a view to the public interest and common good, in all interviews carried out the element of the lawfulness of the action was also highlighted as a guiding instrumental pillar. Although some managers did not agree with specific legal issues, no case was reported that showed a lack of respect for the legal system of the public administration. Regarding this perception, manager I17 explains that:

. . . in emergency management spaces, [the person] has to have a lot of technical knowledge. It has to know what the law allows and what the law doesn't allow. You can't do anything else in public management. Without it, you can't do anything. You may have an enormous sensitivity for having been victimized by hundreds of disasters, but that cannot make you go beyond what the technical possibilities allow you. (I17, 2018)

Even so, although such emergency management actions are dictated by the principle of isonomy and legality, as highlighted by manager I17 (*"when we think of disaster management itself, we think of universal management for all subjects who are subjected to disasters"*), some managers explained that, in order to provide humanized care, it is necessary to recognize differences in particular circumstances:

Disaster is a totally different situation than any other decision-making process, because if you choose someone because of a political flag, you are leaving a citizen in need.

...

One plus one equals two, don't say it equals three because it doesn't; but it is not so in disasters. One plus one equals three. It is different because, sometimes, you arrive in a community like this: a basic food package is enough for four days for four people; however, I may have a person breastfeeding, I may have a disabled person, I may eat more than another person eats. The country is of a continental size and this decision-making process has to respect the cultural issues of each region, religion . . . Don't treat the different as equals because they are not, they are different. (I1, 2018)

Finally, we emphasized that, because disaster is characterized as a unique, exclusive situation in which each event is different from the other, the elements of uncertainty and doubt are usually present, as manager I9 reported about his experience in the 2008 Tragedy, the biggest disaster in Santa Catarina, with loss of lives, landslides, and high-impact floods. According to him, the management took place *"without a logic of crisis, of work, without documentary production, with absolutely nothing, everything with an empirical [stance], giving a feeling of great amateurism..."* This element of uncertainty, according to Pitman (2012), is part of the context in which prudent actions occur. The author argues that the uncertainty process integrates the generation of tacit knowledge, as shown in the following section.

Manager's experience and tacit knowledge

In order to verify how the experience lived by the interviewed managers was absorbed and turned into tacit knowledge, we searched in the reports for references of a unique, exclusive, and individual knowledge that was practical and rooted, that is, that *"dwelt"* in their existence. Furthermore, this knowledge could result in impulsive decisions and improvisation actions and/or could occur through creativity.

However, the manifestation of these elements, by itself, could not be directly related to the manifestation of *phronesis* because the acquisition of this knowledge without any type of further reflection - judgment and moral reasoning - might result in insensitivity about the relevant moral conduct, as in the case of it occurring only by custom or tradition. Thus, we analyzed whether experience, more than promoting the formation of tacit knowledge to the manager, contributed to the development of an ethical tacit knowledge (Malitowska & Bonecki, 2015). In general, we saw that decisions were more guided by a technical, legal, and/or bureaucratic analysis than essentially based on ethical tacit knowledge. In this sense, we perceive more manifestation and preference for

technical knowledge, regarded as that formed by pre-established methods and processes rather than by the tacit reflexive.

This perception seems to be directly related to the possibility of administrative discretion and flexibility – its limitation, in fact – in the context of Brazilian public management. Cox and Pyakuryal (2015) argue that the exercise of discretion in non-routine activities, within an ethical context such as that of crises, requires judgment of events and circumstances to then act following such judgment. For the authors, one of the bases of this judgment would be individual tacit knowledge. Thus, we believe that, because few decisions were made in a discretionary way, the elements that could show a tacit ethical knowledge of the manager were not so clear in the interviews, which referred to a limitation of the exercise of moral judgment (Darnell et al., 2019; Morales-Sanchez & Cabello-Medina, 2013).

On the other hand, in the few decisions found in which there was an act of impulse or improvisation, past experience helped to look for means to solve the dilemmatic situation, a type of rooted practical wisdom, as seen in the following statement about one interviewee's follow-up of those affected by the 2008 Tragedy and who were awaiting rescue:

Of course, and I didn't bring the solution. I had to make up some stories to ease their tension, pretend I was talking on the radio and my team listened to me. There was no communication; I said: guys, let's keep calm, I've already made the announcement, the aircrafts are coming. And I had not announced anything . . . (I5, 2018)

Likewise, the manager I1 says that he has a *feeling* that, according to him, helps to make decisions under pressure: *“I never knew everything; I actually think that, in a way, I had a snap, a feeling that gave me the opportunity, sometimes, to decide under pressure and decide correctly”* (I1, 2018). In his perception, this feeling is associated with his life experience:

The brain presents you with a solution based on past experience. We have here a lot of information that, when you come across [that event], it says something like this . . . your brain quickly says, look: “this situation is stuck, dead end, you have to come out with the solution,” and your life does that. Well, what's my advantage? It's just that I have my life and other lives of experience, so my subconscious works with my experience, the lives I've seen, the people I've lived with, because you don't just keep everything you lived, but what others lived also. (I1, 2018)

However, with regard to personal and professional experience in disaster situations, the interviewee I9 understands that, in the same way that it helps, it may also be prejudicial:

Because it may compromise your ability to evaluate. Because if you start dealing with very similar situations, you bring out your anguish, your fears, your feelings... And it may compromise your decision making, because you may oversize [the event] and, in fact, the

people who are right there in the moment, who need to be rescued, don't need an emotionally affected person. (I9, 2018)

The warning pointed out in the report above is in line with Pitman's (2012) statement that tacit knowledge can be a “double-edged sword”. As mentioned by the interviewee, experience may compromise the individual's judgments and ability for perception and discernment. Sometimes, this occurs without the person realizing and being aware of interference in its actions (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1997). In this way, ethical tacit knowledge is not constructed, as there was no process of reflection and dwelling on the experience as a resource for its ethical deliberation (Santos, 2019).

Cognitive, affective, and reflexive dimensions of phronesis

This section is based on three of the four dimensions of the composition of *phronesis* identified by Bachmann et al. (2018) and discussed in the analysis matrix of this work, namely (a) cognitive dimension, focused on experience and intelligence, (b) affective dimension, which includes empathy and compassion, and (c) reflective dimension, which considers intuition and introspection. The fourth dimension, which encompasses questions of religiosity, was not detailed here because it is a dimension that, although very important, is beyond the scope of this work.

The cognitive dimension is directly related to the calculation and legal legitimacy of an action, which are taken into account in *phronesis* and the process of acquiring knowledge and interpreting situations. Therefore, the elements of experience and memory, technical intelligence, precaution, providence, and sagacity are part of this dimension, as a capacity – also an intellectual virtue – to understand/interpret what is not clear and then anticipate situations.

As elements that make it possible to know the past, experience and memory act as a self-educational action to create precaution, providence, and sagacity. As interviewee I7 comments, “*the past serves as a reference for us to understand the present and prepare for the future*” (I7, 2018). Likewise, the manager I4 reflects: “*I see that the recurrence of events makes us go through an experience that contributes to these situations and that are not provided for in a plain recipe*” (I4, 2018). These brief statements show two essential functions of *phronesis*: (a) using experience as a self-educational and precautionary action for future situations, and (b) creating the necessary sagacity to, with technical intelligence, form a tacit knowledge that allows the manager to better deliberate in particular situations. Thus, experience and memory help to collect information in environments of uncertainty and urgency as a manifestation of prudence as a virtue.

Regarding the learning generated in this process, the manager I4 reports that the Emergency Management Service of Santa Catarina gains with the experiences of disasters, such as the greatest experienced in the state, the 2008 Tragedy. After this event, risk management became more relevant, errors were analyzed, and the institution developed from failures. Not only at the state level but also at the municipal level, this self-educational process and the sharing of experiences and technical knowledge began: “. . . [it] also forced municipalities to have a strong emergency management service, not just a commission that only appears when there is a tragedy, because now the emergency system is called in . . .” (I6, 2018).

If only the cognitive dimension were considered – with the elements of experience and memory, technical intelligence, and precaution presented so far –, prudence could not be considered an intellectual virtue. As Ramos (1989) shows, in the modern period there was a distortion of *phronesis* and its classical meaning, now regarded as a calculus of consequences, an ability devoid of any ethical substance. In this way, the so-called prudent actions would be those based, essentially, on an instrumental rationality. However, going beyond this instrumental sense of prudence, Zack (2009) includes the moral dimension when dealing with what he called the mandatory prudence of the public agent.

We realize that this type of responsibility is not only a formal obligation of the manager, but also a moral obligation due to the manager's position of responsibility in face of the public interest as a mandatory moral prudence. In this sense, elements of technical intelligence, precaution, and providence presented in this article as part of the cognitive dimension of *phronesis* assume an ethical character as they are directly related to the lives of citizens and their well-being and may even be a differential between life and death situations (Boin et al., 2005).

We now discuss the affective and reflexive dimensions, which are directly related to each other. Ryus and Baruch (2018) studied the role of emergency managers and other professionals in disaster management and argued that these people are often forced to make challenging and painful decisions in conditions of physical and emotional exhaustion. Therefore, it is also important for this professional to be careful, that is, to be psychologically prepared to deal with disasters. The manager I4 says that in the municipality where he works, there is care for the caregiver:

Work is currently being carried out by a psychologist from the Health Department with professionals. So, we absorb a lot of stress, there is a lot of pressure on the professionals during events and, many times, we don't really have an escape valve. Sometimes you stay there for a whole week working directly under that pressure and then the event ends, you go home, and you have your demands from home too and of the life that goes on. (I4, 2018)

This care for those in decision-making positions, in addition to promoting personal well-being, also allows them a pause to reflect on experiences and conscious understanding, approaching the reflexive dimension of *phronesis*. Boin et al. (2005) explain that post-disaster stress does not necessarily have to impair the manager's cognitive and psychological performance; on the contrary, the experience may strengthen the person in order to face new stressful situations.

As an example of how the development of *phronesis* makes it possible to harmonize reason, emotion and behavior (Ferrero & Sison, 2014), during one of the disasters in which he acted as an operations manager (commander) the interviewee I9 says that he had to direct professionals to actions that put their lives at risk. In this selection process, which could be purely technical, he chose to use other elements as a selection criterion but without revealing it to his team. When questioned by one of them, the commander replied: *"I have my reasons, it's not professional [ones], you can be sure of that. You don't need to go there now, wait a little bit, wait two more days . . ." (I9, 2018).*

When explaining his criteria, he confessed that, due to the high risks, he used empathy – an element of the affective dimension of *phronesis* –, reflecting on the professionals' families and the

individual situation of each one of them. In an example such as this, practical wisdom is perceived to balance different forms of moral reasoning: particularities and specific circumstances and a comprehensive view of good and value (teleological dimension) and the way by which the respective action is carried out considering moral principles and duties (Bachmann et al., 2018).

Another example reported by the manager I9 seems to integrate reason, emotion, and behavior through the use of empathy, appropriate emotions, and docility. He says that, in his years of work at the operational and management level, he learned to develop the ability to use his body posture, tone of voice, and appropriate words to deal with people in situations of vulnerability, fear, or denial of care.

Thus, as important as considering the technical aspects is to realize that the complexity of the situation involves subjective dimensions of human nature and that subjectivities also need to be trained so that docility and appropriate emotions help in the best possible way development in face of critical situations, when ethical issues of risk exposure and vulnerability clash with individual freedoms and choices, for example (Feldmann-Jensen et al., 2016). Larkin and Fowler (2002) point out this balance in choosing when and how to communicate in emergencies as a manifestation of virtuous prudence. Although techniques on these postures can be learned as a tool, it is their incorporation through empathy, appropriate emotions, and life experience that will highlight its real affective dimension, in that sense of “indwelling” as referred to by Polanyi (2009). This indwelling will form ethical tacit knowledge as a source of self-education for *phronesis* (Santos, 2019).

Finally, we also saw in some accounts of interviewees counseling as a self-educational training – reflective dimension – of *phronesis*. Several participants reported having friends and/or co-workers with whom they shared demanding situations, fears, and insecurities. Among the eighteen interviewees, five of them explicitly mentioned the name of a same professional from the Emergency Management Service of Santa Catarina as a reference and a counselor for issues involving human affairs, as the manager I7 stated: “*When we get together, he always brings up this humanized process, always brings up this specific action. He has a very interesting view*” (I7, 2018).

The dialogical character of *phronesis* and its self-educational posture allow the development of the moral agent as a virtuous individual. It may be promoted by seeking advice or references that support or promote ethical behavior (Treviño & Nelson, 2010). In this way, it is possible to develop a thought based on care and integrity without disregarding the legal principles and the results of actions through systems of checks and balances (Pina and Cunha & Rego, 2015), seeking the best possible choice given the circumstances that are experienced by the individual.

Conclusions and final considerations

In order to achieve the aim of this theoretical-empirical article of investigating how *phronesis* manifests itself in moral judgment based on the experience of public managers in situations of ethical decisions in the area of protection and emergency management (risk and disaster management), we initially identified the context of action of the area of protection and emergency management, the field of study of this research. We realized that, although efforts were made to explain disaster situations better – generally using authority resources, formality, bureaucratization, protocols, manuals, and techniques – we still note the existence of subjectivities, uncertainties,

coexistence, conflicts of emotions, and challenges, as well as sudden decisions made with limited information in a context of uncertainty.

Next, we verified whether the experience the interviewed managers had gave rise to tacit knowledge that contributed to the formation and manifestation of the virtue of *phronesis* in their practices related to disaster management and the exercise of moral judgment. However, we were aware that the manifestation of experience, by itself, might not be directly related to the virtue of *phronesis*. For that, it would be necessary to reflect and dwell on this experience as tacit ethical knowledge, that is, that it be practical knowledge based on moral judgment. Although we analyzed actions based on a technical and protocol aspect, which are a striking feature of emergency management, we still realized that this experience - whether in the personal or professional life of the interviewed manager - enabled the formation of a moral sensitivity in their professional activity together with crises and disasters, that is, the affective dimension of *phronesis*. Thus, not only the normative aspect was present in the ethical decision-making process along with moral judgment, but there was also a morally sensitive practical wisdom that contributed to prudent action.

To illustrate the conclusions and results of the research, we return to the analysis matrix presented above (Table 2), prepared based on the theoretical framework. However, we now include the perspective of the data analyzed in a consolidated manner (Table 3). With this, we seek to establish a relationship between the theories and the research findings.

Table 3
Analysis matrix of *phronesis* and search results

ANALYTICAL CATEGORY	EMPIRICAL COMPONENT	FIELD RESEARCH CONSIDERATIONS
Contexts and circumstances of the area of emergency management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human affairs • Particular circumstances • Uncertainty, doubt • Lawfulness of the action • Prudent action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions sometimes marked by subjectivity and uncertainties • Coexistence of technical and affective/emotional conflicts • Unknown and/or unexpected situations • Coexistence of personal and professional life • Rescue of the legal and technical perspective in the decision-making process
Experience and tacit knowledge of managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rooted knowledge ("indwelling") • Unique, exclusive, individual knowledge • Improvisation/Creativity • Practical wisdom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions primarily based on technical, bureaucratic, and/or legal analysis • Rare situations in which administrative discretion and flexibility are used; however, when those occurred, they were related to tacit knowledge and life experience. • Limitation of moral judgment due to the characteristics of the Brazilian public administration • <i>Feeling</i> as rooted practical wisdom that aids to make decisions under pressure • Experience as a "double-edged sword": it may compromise the manager's judgment
<i>Phronesis</i> composition – reflective part	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-educational action • Counseling • Moral judgment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to reflect on experiences • Strengthening for performance in stressful situations • Reference person (a co-worker, an example of a good person and a skilled professional) as an advisor for situations where there is humanization
<i>Phronesis</i> composition – cognitive part	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience and memory • Technical intelligence • Caution, providence, and sagacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past as a reference for the present and preparation for the future • Experience as an aid to deal with unforeseen circumstances • Mandatory prudence as a moral dimension of the public manager
<i>Phronesis</i> composition – affective part	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Docility • Appropriate emotions • Empathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for the "caregiver to also be cared for" (psychological aspects of the manager) • Harmonization between reason, emotion, and behavior

Source: Prepared by the authors based on references on *phronesis* presented in this article and on the findings of the field research.

From the results of the field research systematized in Table 3 and reflecting on the broader debate in which this article is inserted, that is, the possibility of *phronesis* being an alternative to the practical, contextual, and organizational limitations of moral judgment individual in public administration (Santos, 2019), we noted that these limitations may have occurred due to (a) little possibility of discretionary action and/or flexibility even in situations where there was no clear

protocol to be followed mainly due to the bureaucratic and technicist characteristics of public management in the area of emergency management; (b) the military *ethos*, which is broadly spread in risk and disaster management because the staff is composed almost entirely of military professionals; (c) the need to have regulations on all actions and protocols of action even if the disaster is unexpected and/or has different characteristics from other events; (d) fear of actions with justifications not accepted by the superiors or control bodies; (e) little ethical reflection on situations experienced that could be transformed into ethical tacit knowledge used as an element for decision-making; (f) the deontological characteristic that stands out in the bureaucratic actions of the Brazilian public administration (Santos, 2019; Zappellini, 2020) which, on the one hand, requires that everyone be treated as equals and, on the other hand, reduces the possibility that specific situations that require a differentiated look to be perceived and attended to.

As an alternative to exercising moral judgment in actions related to ethical decisions in public risk and disaster management, we understand that some elements of *phronesis* are perceptible and could contribute to the ethical decision-making process and prudent moral action. Among these elements, we highlight (a) the context and contingency circumstances of unforeseen and urgency in dealing with matters related to human life in situations of extreme risk; (b) the affective dimension of *phronesis*, when sentimental aspects are considered in deliberation and decision-making, such as empathy; (c) the need for mediation – the search for a middle ground – between instrumental and/or bureaucratic aspects of public management and the willingness to act with compassion in specific situations of human fragility, such as the urgency to alleviate the suffering of someone who is a victim of a disaster; (d) counseling – when there is time for decision making – as an element of the reflective dimension of *phronesis*; and (e) memory and learning through previous experiences, which relates to the cognitive dimension of *phronesis*.

In face of the perception of these elements, we conclude that, when conditions for moral individual judgment are not favorable and/or there are limiting factors - such as excess of technical and/or bureaucratic issues, a context of insecurity, and a purpose of protecting human life -, *phronesis* may help to develop an enlightened knowledge for the individual (knowing of oneself) exposed to reviews, education and clarification about the social, political, and organizational context to which she or he belongs. This enables them to better deal with mental routinization, stultification, and alienation (Ramos, 1989), which are typical of bureaucratic organizations, as is still the case of public organizations in the area of emergency management in Brazil.

In this sense, for a good deliberation and ethical decision-making, *phronesis* also means prudent mediation, which was manifested in the reports of the interviewed managers (a) by the memory of the past (experience of previous experiences, although lacking in ethical reflection), (b) by the examination of the circumstances of the situation in which they were acting (which differ from a moral conduct considered a priori, even if they cannot directly change the pattern of action), and (c) by counseling, in the sense of making inquiries to find the middle ground and act for their own good (their own safety and integrity considering the risk context) and that of the community (public good and those that the professional is responsible for protecting and/or helping).

How do you learn and develop *phronesis*? It may be in two ways: (a) as it is a certain type of “knowing how to do/act”, one learns it by being prudent and seeking to further improve oneself. In this case, the guidance of a tutor, master, or teacher in the first and the following attempts to be prudent is essential. Hence Aristotle's advice: to learn prudence, ask the prudent person, the one

who has this virtue already perfected (Sellés & Gallardo, 2019); (b) like any learning activity, prudence requires adequate space and time for its development. In organizations that have a high degree of prescriptive norms and very little space for decisions based on virtues and where time is linked solely to the effectiveness/efficiency parameter of organizational goals, prudence has little chance of developing. When we see individuals making prudent decisions under such conditions, it is likely that they have learned and developed this virtue in various existential spaces, such as the family, religious communities, community and cultural activities, friendships etc., that is, they have experiences in spaces that Ramos (1989) called as isonomy and phenomeny.

Regarding the limitations of this study, we are aware that *phronesis* is widely studied by researchers – mainly outside of Brazil – dedicated to virtue ethics and business ethics (Ames & Serafim, 2020), topics not discussed in this work. In this sense, we present as a limitation the non-inclusion of other intellectual and moral virtues for the discussion about ethical decision-making process and moral judgment. We justify this choice – of working only on the virtue of *phronesis* – because it is studied in Brazil within the field of studies known as approach or field of study of rationality in organizations (Santos, Serafim, Pinheiro, & Ames, 2019), to which we intend to contribute with this article.

Due to its limitations, in this work we briefly address the affective aspects of *phronesis* and moral judgment, as in the case of the empathy that managers show when relating to people who need their work and in discussing how this aspect affects their ethical deliberation. From this example, we suggest deepening the role of emotions and feelings, as well as will and intention, in the formation of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) and analyzing how these aspects may affect the development of moral imagination (Godwin, 2015; Moberg & Seabright, 2000).

Finally, as a suggestion to further the debate, it seems appropriate to research how to promote and educate *phronesis* in public management. As we evidenced in the discussion and data analysis, some organizational characteristics and especially the public administration itself can create a type of barrier or limit for actions based on the individual moral reasoning (moral judgment) of the manager. In this sense, the promotion, education, and improvement of *phronesis* can enable managers to deal with dilemmas between the technical and specific regulations of the profession and the public administration and individual moral judgment about the ethical decision-making context. For this, it seems promising to consider the variety of organizational environments (Serafim, 2006) or the law of adequate requirements (Ramos, 1989) as fundamental categories for a broad understanding of the learning dynamics and improvement of *phronesis*, as they are in less bureaucratic enclaves where the necessary conditions for the development of prudence can be exercised: guidance/mentoring from a virtuously prudent person and adequate space and time to – little by little – proceed with prudence.

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