

1. Género, feminismos e estudos sobre as mulheres

OC - (22691) - WOMEN, DRUGS, PRISON PROFILE AND PATHWAYS OF WOMEN INCARCERATED IN ITALY AND IN PORTUGAL

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Introduction

In Europe, women constitute approximately 5% of the prison population. Fewer women than men engage in criminal activities and the types of crimes differ by gender. Women are often incarcerated for drug-related crimes.

Objective

The study examined the profile and trajectories of women facing drug related issues in four prisons in Portugal and Italy.

Method

This study employed a mixed method, including questionnaire to all incarcerated women in prison in Milano, Porto, Torino, and Venezia, in-depth interviews with selected inmates, informal interviews with staff and research diaries.

Results

A total of 309 questionnaires were completed alongside 48 in-depth interviews. Most women were nationals of the countries where the prisons were located; around one fifth were foreigners; 22% identified as ROMA. Women were on average 42 years old, were married or divorced and 82% had children. 43% of women were imprisoned for drug-law offences and an additional almost 20% were in prison for acquisitive crimes to support their drug use. A significant number of women had used substances in their lives. Between 24% and 34% of respondents had experienced some form of violence, including sexual abuse. These adverse experiences were related to their future mental health problems and deviant trajectories. For many, entering prison was challenging; however, for some, it signified an opportunity to break free from chaotic lives and make changes.

Discussion

Social marginalization and adverse experiences, including sexual violence, were common among many women, although they were not a homogenous group. The prison's role was an experience of isolation and additional marginalization, but it was seen also as an opportunity.

Conclusions

The study concluded with a proposal of a gender-transformative approach in health and social interventions within and outside prison to improve the conditions and facilitate the reintegration of incarcerated women with drug-related problems.

Palavras-chave : droga, mulheres, prisao