

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE AND PENAL HISTORY OF THE PRISON POPULATION AT A FEMALE PENITENTIARY IN THE INTERIOR OF SÃO PAULO STATE

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We aimed to draw a sociodemographic profile and penal history of women imprisoned at the Ribeirão Preto Female Penitentiary, using their trial and health records. The population consisted of 310 women, mostly young, white, from São Paulo State, single, with at least one child, catholic, low education level and related occupations. As to their penal history, involvement with drugs (traffic and consumption) was the most frequent crime. Most fulfilled penalties of 1 to 12 years and were imprisoned for the first time. We noticed that the records were incomplete. Professionals need to recognize the importance of the registers and be encouraged to make them.

Descriptors: Women; Prisons; Violence; Socioeconomic Factors.

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PERFIL SOCIODEMOGRÁFICO E HISTÓRIA PENAL DA POPULAÇÃO ENCARCERADA DE UMA PENITENCIÁRIA FEMININA DO INTERIOR DO ESTADO DE SÃO PAULO

Neste estudo o objetivo foi traçar o perfil sociodemográfico e a história penal das mulheres encarceradas da Penitenciária Feminina de Ribeirão Preto, utilizando o prontuário processual e de saúde. A população foi de 310 mulheres, na maioria jovens, brancas, naturais do Estado de São Paulo, solteiras, com pelo menos um filho, católicas, baixa escolaridade e ocupações relacionadas. Envolvimento com drogas (tráfico e uso) foi o delito mais observado. A maioria cumpria pena de 1 a 12 anos e estava aprisionada pela primeira vez. Percebeu-se que os prontuários estavam com dados incompletos. Os profissionais precisam reconhecer a importância dos registros e ser incentivados a fazê-los.

Descritores: Mulheres; Prisões; Violência; Fatores Socioeconômicos.

PERFIL SOCIODEMOGRÁFICO E HISTORIA PENAL DE LA POBLACIÓN CARCELARIA DE UNA PENITENCIARÍA FEMENINA DEL ESTADO DE SÃO PAULO

La finalidad del estudio fue trazar un perfil sociodemográfico e historia penal de las mujeres encarceladas de la Penitenciaría Femenina de Ribeirão Preto, utilizando su archivo procesal y de salud. La población fue de 310 mujeres, la mayoría jóvenes, blancas, naturales del estado de São Paulo, solteras, con al menos un hijo, católicas, baja escolaridad y ocupaciones relacionadas. Respecto a la historia penal, el involucramiento con drogas (tráfico y uso) fue el delito más observado. La mayoría cumplía pena de 1 a 12 años y estaba aprisionada por la primera vez. Percibimos los registros con datos incompletos. Los profesionales precisan reconocer la importancia de los registros y ser incentivados a hacer-los.

Descriptores: Mujeres; Prisiones; Violencia; Factores Socioeconómicos.

Introduction

Throughout evolution, the human race has invested in ways to incarcerate and punish violence and its many manifestations, in order to protect their citizens from the ones with violent behavior. The expectation is that the punishment represses the reoccurrence of these actions, and that other people commit the same infractions. The penalties start from written and verbal warnings, going through financial punishment (fines) established in codes of conduct, all the way to the need for establishing judicial procedures that can lead to different sentences⁽¹⁾. In those, are included the imposition of limits (or restriction) of contact of the perpetrators with the victims; community service, payment of benefits or reparations and different periods of reclusion in several regimens of deprivation

of freedom to be fulfilled, in institutions (penal colonies, penitentiaries, mandated asylums and others)⁽¹⁾.

It is possible to observe, throughout history, that the existence of prisons outdates the edition of penal laws. It appeared with the objective of controlling and punishing individuals with the total absence of freedom and repression of their violent instincts. Incarceration has, in its essence, the character of transformation in the individuals, therefore recurring, to social isolation, to labor (sometimes imposed in some institutions) and to corrective techniques⁽²⁾. Nowadays, it is known, however, that such measures are ineffective, when the reintegration to society of these individuals is discussed, which leads to recurrence of the crime and consequent return to prison⁽³⁾.

When facing a female prison population, the issue of violence can take on different dimensions. Besides being perpetrators of some kind of violence, these women can be also, victims, throughout their lives and also during the incarceration period. Brazilian studies have shown that this population has the tendency of being Young, low social-economic and educational level, with history of prostitution and alcohol and illegal substance abuse, and in most cases, convicted of involvement with drug trafficking⁽³⁻⁵⁾.

Facing the results of researches regarding women carrying out sentences in Brazilian prisons, the importance in knowing their profile and penal history is evident. In different moments, there can be changes in the characteristics of the imprisoned people. However, the information made available by a profile can be a source for comparison between populations from different prisons, for researchers as well as the professionals, governing bodies and the other responsible parties involved in maintaining these structures. As consequence, this information can be useful in discussions regarding the planning and improvement of the conditions involved in the process of incarceration of these women, especially, regarding their health, based on the recent publication by the Ministry of Health, of public policies regarding this group. Therefore, due to these considerations, there was the motivation to know the social-demographic profile and the penal history of women imprisoned in a female penitentiary in a country city of the State of São Paulo.

Method

This study was designed as an indirect documental research⁽⁶⁾, using primary (documental research) and secondary (bibliographical research) sources. Conducted in the Women's Penitentiary of Riberão Preto, where the inmates (in this institution they are called *reeducandas*) going through sentences deprived of freedom, in closed regimen. This institution has the capacity to house 300 *reeducandas*.

The subjects in this study were 310 *reeducandas*, which fulfilled the total incarceration capacity of the institution, in the data collecting period, from September to November of 2006.

The research Project was authorized by the warden of the Women's Penitentiary of Riberão Preto and approved (Protocol nº0673/2006) by the Ethics Committee in Research of the Nursing School of Riberão Preto, University of São Paulo.

The data collection was made by filling a research protocol created by the authors, contemplating information regarding the social-demographical aspects, reason of conviction, sentence and repeat offense.

Used as source for such records, the primary retrospective records, the is, the records written in the procedural and health files of the *reeducandas*.

The data collected was store in a data base, in Excel spreadsheet. The Epi Info program, version 2000, was used to organize the data and present them according to its

distribution and frequency of appearance.

We adopted the following variables for this study: *age* – in completed years until the end of the completion of protocols; *skin color* – the reference of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) was used, which works with the skin color according to the following categories: white, black, mulatto, yellow and native; *birth place* – distributed by region of the country, according to IBGE: Southeast, Center-West, South, Northeast and North; *marital status* – including information on living arrangements, marital status and the nature of the union, with the categories: single, married/befriended (formal or informal stable union), separated/divorced, widow; *number of children* – variable expressed in Arabic numbers, without considering the gender of the children; *education* – based on the International Standard Classification of Education – ISCED 1976 and considering that, in Brazil, the education is divided in basic education (children education with daycare and pre-school, elementary school composed by 8 grades or 9 years and middle school composed by 3 years, according to Law nº9394, from December 20th of 1996, called Law of Directives and Basis of National Education (LDB) and Law nº11,274, of 2/6/2006, which establishes the increase of elementary school to nine years) and superior school, the following variables were adopted: illiterate, elementary, middle and superior (the last three being incomplete or complete); religion – catholic, evangelical (Protestants and Pentecostal), spiritualism and others (Muslim, candomble); occupation – according to the Great Occupational Groups of the Brazilian Classification of Occupations (CBO – Ministry of Work and Labor): Group 1 – Superior members of the public power, presidents of public interest organizations and of companies and managers; Group 2 – Arts and Sciences Professionals; Group 3 – Technicians with middle school level; Group 4 – Administrative service workers; Group 5 – Service workers, salespersons of stores and markets; Group 6 – Agricultural workers, forest, fishing and hunting; Group 7 – Workers of goods production and industrial services. The following variables were added: student and retired; *reason of conviction* – crime they were convicted of: drugs, non-violent or violent crimes; *duration of sentence* – in years, and *repeat offender* – yes and no.

Results

The results regarding the social-demographical characteristics of the studied *reeducandas* are in Table 1.

Table 1 – Social-demographical characteristics of the *reeducandas* of the Women's Penitentiary of Riberão Preto, SP, Brazil, 2006

Characteristic	f	%
Age		
20 † 30	138	44.5
30 † 40	99	32.0
40 † 50	51	16.5
50 † 60	20	6.4
60 † 72	2	0.6

(continue...)

Table 1 - (continuation)

Characteristic	f	%
Skin Color		
White	172	55.5
Mulatto	100	32.3
Black	38	12.3
Birth Place		
Southeast	271	87.5
Northeast	15	4.8
South	12	3.9
Center-West/DF	9	2.8
North	3	0.9
Marital Status		
Single	224	72.3
Married/befriended	54	17.4
Separated/divorced	18	5.8
Widow	12	3.9
No record	2	0.6
Number of children		
None	42	13.5
1 to 2	96	31.1
3 to 6	64	20.6
More than 6	5	1.6
No record	103	33.2
Education		
Illiterate	15	4.8
Incomplete Elementary	185	59.7
Complete Elementary	22	7.1
Incomplete Middle	43	13.9
Complete Middle	30	9.7
Incomplete Superior	10	3.2
Complete Superior	5	1.6
Religion		
Catholic	180	58.1
Evangelical	83	26.8
Spiritualism	12	3.9
Other	3	0.9
None	17	5.5
No record	15	4.8
Occupation*		
Group 1	12	3.9
Group 2	7	2.3
Group 3	7	2.3
Group 4	21	6.7
Group 5	209	67.5
Group 6	1	0.3
Group 7	20	6.4
Student	24	7.7
Retired	3	1.0
No record	6	1.9

*Occupation/Profession: Group 1 – Superior members of the public power, presidents of public interest organizations and of companies and managers; Group 2 – Arts and Sciences Professionals; Group 3 – Technicians with middle school level; Group 4 – Administrative service workers; Group 5 – Service workers, salespersons of stores and markets; Group 6 – Agricultural workers, forest, fishing and hunting; Group 7 – Workers of goods production and industrial services.

The 310 women that were part of the population of in this study were between the ages from 20 to 72 years old. The range between 20 and 30 years old was more frequent, with 138 (44.5%) of *reeducandas*.

As for the skin color variable, there was a predominance of 172 (55.5%) of the color white. Most of them (271-87.5%) were born in the Southeast Region and, from those, 251 (92.6%) in the State of São Paulo. The single marital status was frequent in 224 (72.3%) of the *reeducandas*. Regarding the number of children data, 103 (33.2%) did not have recorded information in the researched files; 165 (53.3%) had at least one child; and 42 (13.5%) did not have children. Only 110 (35.5%) had an education equal to, or superior to the complete elementary school and 200 (64.5%) were illiterate or did not complete elementary education. The majority (180-58.1%) were catholic.

The variable occupation/profession had the activities in Group 5 as the most frequent in the studied population (209-67.5%). In this group, 135 (43.5%) were dedicated to domestic activities (or house chores), paid or not. The others (74-23.9%) worked as clerks (19-6.1%), travelling salesperson (10-3.2%), sales promoters (3-1.0%), funeral agent (1-0.3%), gas station attendant (1-0.3%), health agent (1-0.3%), washers (9-2.8%), cooks (8-2.5%), kitchen assistants (3-1.0%), waitress (3-1.0%), manicurist (7-2.3%), hairdresser (4-1.2%), babysitter (3-1.0%), recyclable collector (1-0.3%) and sex professional (1-0.3%). Of the 21 (6.7%) *reeducandas* of Group 4 (1.2%) were secretaries, 4 (1.2%) production assistants, 3 (1.0%) general helpers, 2 (0.6%) telemarketing operators, 2 (0.6%) cashiers and the remaining 6 (1.9%) had other administrative capacities (receptionist, office assistant, bank teller, in charge of personal department, typist and collector, respectively one of each occupation). From Group 7, 20 (6.4%) of the participants in this study, being 13 (4.2%) seamstress, 2 (0.6%) shoemakers, 3 (1.0%) in metallurgy, 1 (0.3%) jewelers and 1 (0.3%) motorcycle taxi driver, in which 12 (3.9%) of the research women were merchants (Group 1). Regarding the 7 (2.3%) women that fit in Group 3 of the occupation classification, 6 (1.9%) were nurse's assistant and 1 (0.3%) teacher. From Group 2, from a total of 7 (2.3%), 4 (1.2%) were lawyers, 2 (0.6%) artisans and 1 (0.3%) nurse. Only 1 (0.3%) of the *reeducandas* was a rural worker, belonging to Group 6. Among the women there were 24 (7.7%) students without specification of education level. From the 3 (1.0%) that were retired, there was no information on their occupation/profession. In the files of 6 (1.9%) women, no records were found regarding the variable occupation/profession.

Regarding the penal history, the distribution of the *reeducandas*, according to the reason of conviction (crime they were convicted of) and repeat offence of the crime or not, is on Table 2. The reason of conviction and the duration of the sentence are presented in Table 3.

Table 2 - Distribution of the reeducandas of a women's penitentiary in a country city of São Paulo, according to reason of conviction and repeat offense. Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil, 2006

Reason of conviction	f	%	Repeat Offense					
			Yes		No		No record	
			f	%	f	%	f	%
Drugs, (use, Trafficking, gang formation, people association) and combined with another crime (fabrication, stealing, robbery, use of fake I.D.)	196	63.3	36	11.6	148	47.7	12	3.9
Violent crimes (homicides, assault, robbery, kidnapping, forced confinement, violent sexual assault, robbery followed by serious assault)	74	23.9	15	4.8	56	18.1	3	1.0
Non-violent crimes (stealing, blackmail, fake I.D., help prisoner escape, gang formation, prison mutiny, fencing illegal products)	25	8.0	13	4.2	10	3.2	2	0.6
No record	15	4.8	1	0.3	10	3.2	4	1.2
Total	310	100	65	21.0	224	72.2	21	6.8

The involvement with drugs (trafficking and use) combined or not with another crime was the most frequent offense with 196 (63.3%). In the files of 15 (4.8%) women, no records were found regarding the variable reason of conviction, being that, from those 15, 1 (0.3%) was a repeat offender and 10 (3.2%) weren't, and for the remaining 4 (1.2%) there was no available data regarding this variable.

Regarding repeat offense, 224 (72.2%) were first offenders, that is, no repeat offense, and 65 (21.0%) were repeat offenders. The files of the others (21-6.8%) did not have information whether they were repeat offenders or not.

Table 3 – Distribution of the reeducandas of a women's penitentiary in a country city in São Paulo, according to reason of conviction and duration of the sentence in years. Ribeirão Preto, SP, Brazil, 2006

Sentence duration (years)	Reason of Conviction					
	Drugs		Non-violent crimes		Violent Crimes	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
1 4	108	34.8	12	3.9	3	0.9
5 8	42	13.5	3	0.9	23	7.4
9 12	5	1.6	2	0.6	7	2.2
13 16	4	1.3	0	0.0	7	2.2
17 20	2	0.6	0	0.0	7	2.2
21 24	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	1.6
24 47	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	1.9
Undefined	33	10.6	8	2.6	15	4.8
No sentence record	2	0.6	0	0.0	1	0.3
Total	196	63.0	25	8.0	74	23.5

In this study, from the total of 310 inmates, 205 (66.1%) served a sentence from 1 to 12 years of reclusion and 31 (10.0%) above 13 years. For 59 (19.0%) of the *reeducandas* there was no record of sentence duration (56 undefined and 3 with no record). There was no record on the reason of conviction in 15 (4.8%) of the researched files.

Among the women incarcerated due to crimes related to drugs (use, trafficking and combined with other

crimes), 155 (79.1%) had sentences of up to 12 years, 4 (2.0%) from 13 to 16 years, and 2 (1.0%) from 17 to 20 years, respectively. Regarding the crimes considered non-violent, 17 (68.0%) women were sentenced from 1 to 12 years. Among the inmates, in which the crimes were characterized as violent, 33 (44.5%) had an imposed sentence of up to 12 years of reclusion and 25 inmates (33.7%) had an even bigger sentence. The highest sentence was 47 years, attributed to one woman for a violent crime (homicide).

Discussion

The Brazilian female incarcerated population, in 2006, according to the data from the Report on incarcerated women in Brazil⁽⁵⁾, were of 15,833 women, in which 7,023 (44.4%) were located in the Southeast Region and 4,359 (27.5% of the country and 62.1% of the region) in the State of São Paulo. The Southeast Region is the one that presents the largest number of incarcerated women in Brazil. In the Women's Penitentiary of Ribeirão Preto, in the studied period, the population was comprised mainly of Young women from 20 to 30 years old, with a mean of 31 years, result equivalent to those found in the national literature^(3,5,7-10).

In the researched files, the White skin color was predominant in 172 (55.5%) of the *reeducandas*. The classification adopted to name the races and ethnicities that comprise the Brazilian population, according to IBGE, establishes that the term "black population" includes people of black and mulatto complexions, together. In this study, therefore, 138 (44.6%) of the women were in the black population. These findings differ from the ones found in other researches made in the Southeast Region, for example, in Rio de Janeiro, where from the total of 524⁽³⁾ incarcerated women, 56.4% were black, and in Espírito Santo, 122 inmates, 57.8% were black and 42.1% white⁽⁴⁾. These differences might be explained by regional diversities, seen in the ethnic composition of each one of these populations.

Finding from a study made in Paraná⁽¹¹⁾ corroborate with the hypothesis of regional differences in the ethnic

disposition of the Brazilian population. In this State, of the 332 studies inmates 72% were white, 25.1% were mulatto and the other 2.9% was divided between black and yellow. The conclusion of this research pointed out as justification the strong foreign immigration in the population of the State as a whole, in detriment to the possible absence of racial prejudice. Besides, it has been proven that people living in the slums of Paraná are not only black, but poor white migrants coming from rural areas, where they were driven away.

Similar justifications can explain the results of the present study. After abolishing the slaves in Brazil, there was stimulation for the flow of European immigrants (especially Italian) to the region of Ribeirão Preto. This region is characterized by agricultural-business, with emphasis in sugarcane crops and refining plants, attracting the migration flow of other regions of the country, especially the Northeast. The city of Ribeirão Preto is characterized as beacon of commercial activities and service in the region.

In an article on the Women's Penitentiary of Salvador⁽¹²⁾, from the group of 124 studied inmates, 92.7% were single, 6.5% married and 0.8% separated or divorced. In Rio de Janeiro⁽⁹⁾, 54.4% of the 125 inmates were single, 21.6% married or befriended, 14.4% separated or divorced and 9.6% widows. In Curitiba⁽¹¹⁾, of 332 inmates, 52.5% were single, 32.5% married or befriended, 10.5% separated or divorced and 4.7% widows. On the other hand, data from a women's penitentiary in Espírito Santo⁽⁴⁾ showed a numerical balance between the single women to those with some type of union. Of the 121 participants of said study, 38.8% were married or befriended, 37.2% single, 13.3% separated or divorced and 10.7% widows. The subjects in this study presented a similar distribution to the one in Rio de Janeiro. In this city, the distribution occurred as follows: 224 (72.3%) single women, in which 194 (62.6%) were from 20 to 39 years old and 30 (9.7%) from 40 to 72 years old. 54 (17.4%) married or befriended 36 (11.6%) from 20 to 39 years old and 18 (5.8%) from 40 to 72 years old. Separated or divorced were 18 (5.8%) *reeducandas*, in which 6 (1.9%) were from 20 to 39 years old and 12 (3.9%) between 40 and 72 years old. The widows totaled 12 (3.9%), in which 1 (0.3%) had the age of 31 and 11 (3.6%) between 40 and 72 years old.

In analyzing the variable number of children, 165 (53.3%) of the *reeducandas* had at least one child. Of those, 52 (31.5%) were married, befriended, widows or divorced/separated, in which 25 (15.1%) were from 20 to 39 years old and 27 (16.4%) were from 40 to 72 years old. The others, 113 (68.5%) were single, 93 (56.4%) were between the ages of 20 and 39 and 20 (12.1%) between 40 and 72 years old. In Rio de Janeiro, according to the Report on incarcerated women in Brazil⁽⁵⁾, 84% of the inmates had children. No reference data was found for this variable in studies made in other States, in order to establish comparisons.

Affiliation to the Catholic Church was expressive in this study: 180 (58.1%) of the *reeducandas* claimed belonging to this religion. This data is in agreement with

the research made in the women's penitentiary in Rio de Janeiro, where 41.2% of the women claimed to be catholic, this percentage being double the one for the evangelicals⁽³⁾. In a study made in the city of São Paulo⁽¹⁰⁾, 94 (26%) were catholic and 151 (42.0%) evangelic, before prison. In the data collected during incarceration, 201 (56.2%) claimed to be affiliated to evangelic churches, number considered surprisingly high by the authors. Conversions toward evangelic religions, according to the researchers, can be explained by the increasing and permanent actions of evangelization groups, especially Pentecostal, inside and out of prison systems^(3,10).

Over the last decade, there was an improvement in the educational situation in the country. In the year 2000, women reached the same level of literacy, with a slight advantage, when this level is compared to the situation of literate men⁽¹³⁾. Despite this sensitive improvement in the educational condition of the female population, assured by article 18 of the Law of Penal Prosecution⁽¹⁴⁾, in a situation of incarceration there are several studies that confirm a higher incidence of low levels of education^(3-4,9). According to the Report on Incarcerated Women in Brazil⁽⁵⁾, 65% are either illiterate or did not complete elementary school. This reality was confirmed in the findings of the present study, in which 200 inmates (64.5%) did not attend school or did not complete elementary school. However, it cannot be inferred, in this study, that the low education is related to entering the penal system. There are other reasons that can justify the fact, such as: untimely marriage, lack of incentive, drug use, involvement with crime, health problems, distance from school or being expelled from it and living in the streets⁽³⁾.

Studies with the Brazilian population reveal that the occupation segmentation is one of the most evident, especially when it comes to female labor⁽¹⁵⁾. It is clear that their activity is concentrated in a few activities in service providing, like personal services, public administration, health, teaching, community service and communications. The women dedicated to the area of service providing represent 29.4%, while 13.7% are found involved in agricultural activities, 17.4% in social services, 17.0% domestic activities, 13.5% in sales and 9.0% in industry⁽¹⁵⁾. In this study, there was a predominance (67.5%) of women that practiced activities from Group 5 of CBO, in which 43.5% were dedicated to domestic activities being paid or not. One of the explanations for this finding can be the low education of the *reeducandas* (64.5% did not attend school or did not complete elementary school), this could have directly influence the type of occupation these women had. Low education can also corroborate with alcohol abuse and other drugs, racial prejudice and other macro-social problems like unemployment and poverty, related to committing or taking part in crimes^(9,15-16).

Over the last few years, there were a considerable number of women incarcerated due to involvement in drug trafficking, for dealing them as well as using. This type of crime corresponded to 32.6% of women incarceration in 1988, increasing to 56.1% in 2000⁽⁸⁾. The involvement with drugs (dealing and using), combined or not with another

crime, was the felony with the most occurrence among the *reeducandas*, with a frequency of 196 (63.3%). Most of those women (155-79.1%) were serving a sentence of up to 12 years of reclusion. In literature, there are data that indicate difference between man and woman regarding criminality⁽¹⁷⁾. Women participate in lower number in felonies than men and also in subordinate positions, of less importance. Considered to be emotional and influenced by physiological states, they tend to be qualified as dangerous, unreliable and capable of treason.

Regarding repeat offenders, of the 310 incarcerated women in this study, 65 (21.0%) were repeat offenders and 224 (72.2%) first offenders. Data from the Report on Incarcerated Women in Brazil⁽⁵⁾ showed that 72% of these women were first offenders. A study with inmates in Rio de Janeiro⁽⁹⁾ showed that, from a total of 125, only 16 (12.9%) were repeat offenders. In the 2005 Report of the Judicial Department of the Women's Penitentiary of Paraná⁽¹¹⁾ states that, from a total of 332 inmates, 34 (10.2%) were repeat offenders. On the other hand, in Bahia⁽¹²⁾, 30% of the inmates were repeat offenders. The data in literature regarding repeat offenders is, therefore, similar to the findings in this study. Researchers have tried to suggest possible causes to justify the repeat offense in the female population. The lack of opportunity in the wheels of the employment system contributes to their return to prison^(12,18). Social discrimination due to the stigma of always being an ex-convict can, also, contribute to repeat offenses^(12,18-19).

Criminality can be related to two factors, personal and environmental⁽²⁰⁾. The first results from characterizes intrinsic of the individual, constitutional or introjected. The second is influenced by the social-cultural means in which the individual is found and the actions of the ecosystem upon such individual. Humans are subject to feelings of frustration and reacts on this feeling with different attitudes and intensity, according to their personal characteristics⁽²¹⁾. Frustration is known as the main cause for outbursts of violence. It comes and it is enhanced by society's competitiveness, by the difficulty of accessing sources of gratification, by the constant increase in cost of living, by the increase of uncertainty and fear of consequent unemployment, factors combined with the impossibility of planning the future. These differences aggravate the envy and rivalry in a world divided by rich and poor, feeding this frustration that, again, leads to violence and criminality⁽²⁰⁻²¹⁾.

Final considerations

In this study, it was possible to know the profile and the penal history of the *reeducandas* of the Women's Penitentiary of Ribeirão Preto. It is a women's population comprised mainly by young, white, born in the State of São Paulo, single, with at least one child, catholic, poorly educated and occupations related to domestic activities. The involvement with drugs (dealing and using), combined or not with another crime, was the most seen felony. Most of them carrying out sentences from 1 to 12 years of reclusion and they were first offenders.

We believe, with the presentation of the findings in this study, it will be possible to develop researches that has as objective to identify the knowledge of the *reeducandas* on the violence issue (types and nature), clarify the living conditions or situations to which these women were exposed and that might have contributed to their incarceration, characterize life in prison and know the results of the existing rehabilitation programs.

It is known that in studies using documents as research sources can have losses, like the consequence in the lack of information records. In this study, it was seen that the consulted writings, besides being incomplete, could have been improved, especially regarding the health file. Therefore, we suggest, the inclusion of information that can be relevant like the untimely nature of marriage or not, housing conditions, the incentive and motivation to study and seek professional training, the behavior and school performance, drug use, family income, history of victimization and the prior participation in violent acts.

Another addition that could be interesting would be the creation of a space in the reports for the free manifestation of these women, regarding their own perception as to their prison situation and the circumstances that led them into reclusion. Therefore, it is imperative that the professionals realize the importance of well kept and made records and that they be motivated to do them.

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