

Social Research Call

Title:

Women behind bars – Female Portuguese inmates' characterization and gender-specific needs assessment



Acronym: WOMENBHIND#

Project leader: Andreia de Castro Rodrigues

Host organisation: Ispa

Main purpose of the project: Conduct an extensive characterization of women in custody within the Portuguese context, assessing these women's criminogenic and non-criminogenic needs and features, to be able to improve the penal responses and psychological interventions to women that committed crimes, prior, during and after justice involvement.

Design/methodology/approach: Based on a cross sectional study, using a self-report protocol with a random sample, representative of all participants in female prisons, and three focus groups with a subsample of that group, we will map the underlying vulnerabilities of female offenders in relation to crime perpetration and the imprisonment process.

Potential results: We will describe female prisoners in socio-demographic, legal-criminal, and psychological variables; understand the dynamics of crime among female offenders; assess the impact of family-related variables, type of crime, and childhood adversity on psychological variables; analyze the relationship between socio-demographic, legal-criminal, and psychological variables on women's mental health and prison adjustment.

Social relevance of the research: WOMENBHIND# will gather data that can improve the effectiveness of penal sanctions and psychological interventions, by feeding the rethink of current policies and practices regarding the sentencing of women that commit crimes. Ultimately improving the well-being of these women during custody, facilitating their successful reintegration into society, and preventing recidivism.

Originality/value of the project: Worldwide female imprisonment rates have been increasing. International studies have highlighted important gender differences, relating to criminality and vulnerability before the commission of crimes, during imprisonment, and after release. This project bridges the gap related to the insufficient representation of female offenders in criminological studies, within the Portuguese context.