THE MEANING OF THE USE AND ABUSE OF ILLICIT DRUGS FOR WOMEN PRISONERS

O SIGNIFICADO DO USO E ABUSO DE DROGAS ILÍCITAS PARA PRESIDIÁRIAS

ABSTRACT

Objective: describing the reasons that encourage the consumption of drugs and the meanings of the use for women prisoners. Method: a descriptive study with a qualitative approach developed at the Women's Penitentiary in Teresina-PI, with 18 inmates. The data were produced from recorded interviews with semi-structured script, and then subjected to Content Analysis Technique. The research project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee, CAAE n° 0164.0.045.000-10. Results: drug use affects the physical and mental health of the user. About 230 million people used some type of drugs in 2010. It is worth noting that the consumption among women is becoming more present among them. By analyzing the data there were formulated four categories: family instabilities; reasons leading to such use; health hazards and expectations to abandon the drugs. Conclusion: it is essential that health professionals focus on rehabilitation and preventive actions to drug use. Descriptors: Illicit Drugs; Women's Health; Prisoners; Nursing.

RESUMO

Objetivo: descrever os motivos que incitam o consumo de drogas e os significados do uso para presidiárias. Método: estudo descritivo com abordagem qualitativa desenvolvido na Penitenciária Feminina de Teresina-PI, com 18 detentas. Os dados foram produzidos a partir de entrevistas gravadas com roteiro de semiestructured, em seguida submetidas à Técnica de Análise de Conteúdo. O projeto de pesquisa teve a aprovação do Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa, CAAE n° 0164.0.045.000-10. Resultados: o consumo de drogas afeta a saúde física e mental do usuário. Cerca de 230 milhões de pessoas usaram algum tipo de droga em 2010. Vale destacar que o consumo entre as mulheres se torna cada vez mais presente entre elas. Ao analisar os dados formularam-se quatro categorias: desajustes familiares; motivos que levaram ao uso; prejuízos à saúde e expectativas quanto ao abandonar das drogas. Conclusão: é fundamental que os profissionais de saúde foquem em ações de reabilitação e preventivas ao uso de drogas. Descritores: Drogas Ilícitas; Saúde da Mulher; Prisioneiros; Enfermagem.
INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines drugs as any substance not produced by the body that has the property of acting on one or more systems, causing changes in its operations.\(^1\) In popular jargon, the term relates specifically to psychoactive drugs and generally illicit drugs.\(^2\)

The illegal nature of some drugs makes these deserve special attention for two main reasons. First, by use entail dependency, namely the need of repeated doses of drug in order to feel well and to avoid bad sensations\(^3\); and second, to represent significant problems for public health in many countries, to the extent that elevate mortality rates and are directly related to rising crime.\(^4,5\)

It is observed also that the increase of drug use is mainly in the segment of the population that is most vulnerable to consumption, so-called risk groups. These groups are characterized by personal factors (age, low educational level, symptoms of mental problems) and interpersonal (drug users friends or adopting maladaptive behaviors, family dysfunction, and drug users parents and peer pressure), which directly or indirectly facilitate contact with the world of drugs.\(^5,6\)

The use of these substances, as well as causing social damage, affects the physical and mental health of the user. Thus, there are many feelings that are present in the lives of addicts, especially with regard to relationship problems, family breakdown and social isolation.

Worldwide, about 230 million people used some kind of drugs in 2010. It is worth noting that consumption among women is about one-third use among men, and is becoming increasingly present among them.\(^7\)

Therefore, it is essential to analyze the increased involvement of women with drugs, and reveal the meaning of use for prisoners, discussing the reasons that led to consumption and its consequences. The following study describes the motives that incite drug use as well as reveal the meanings of illicit substances to inmates.

METHOD

This study is part of the Nursing Course Completion Work at the Federal University of Piauí (UFPI). It has a descriptive character, it represents a deep analysis of reality searched\(^8\) and qualitative approach encompasses the universe of meanings, beliefs, attitudes, values, and the reasons and should not, therefore, be quantified.\(^9\)

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It was developed at the Women's Penitentiary in Teresina, located in the southern capital of Piauí area. The subjects were composed of 18 incarcerated women who used illicit drug at least once in life. This research was carried out in compliance with the saturation point, which is configured when the interviews become repetitive, and there is nothing more to be added to the search.\(^10\)

The instrument used for the production of data was a semi-structured interview guide with open and closed questions related to socio-demographic data (age, marital status, level of education, profession, family income, birth, and origin), obstetric data and habits, such as illicit drug use by inmates. This was subjected to a pre-test with some representatives of the study population, after acceptance of the same. The pre-test is to verify the reliability, validity and operability of the collection instrument in order that anyone who applies gets the same results.\(^11\)

Data were collected after approval by the Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Piauí, with CAAE 0164.0.045.000-10. There was also the endorsement of the women's prison.

The collection occurred from January to February 2011. There were clarified all doubts of prisoners and, after acceptance of participation, the interviews were recorded with a voice recorder and immediately transcribed, ensuring greater reliability for information. To analyze the reports readings of all transcripts were made, and from the detection of the characteristics of speeches, it became possible to grasp the central ideas of the analysis categories that converged by several testimonies.

The data were subjected to content analysis, which is divided into three phases (pre-analysis, material exploration, treatment of obtained results and interpretation) and is to show the units of meaning that make up a communication, whose frequency is the analyzed object.\(^12\)

In pre-analysis, the collected material is organized and becomes a superficial reading of this. The material exploration phase comprises a detailed analysis of the selected material and encoding of data from thematic units. The stage of processing and interpretation of results were obtained and aggregated into thematic categories according to similarities.\(^12\)

This research obeyed all aspects contained in Resolution 196/96 of the National Health Council. It assured, therefore, to the study subjects, the right to privacy, anonymity and the freedom to not participate in the study at
the time they wished. To ensure the anonymity of the interviewees, it was decided to use names of Greek goddesses.

From the interviews, it was possible to learn the main ideas of the four categories of analysis, the first of it “family breakdown” where the testimonies speak of the destruction caused by the drug in the family and in the lives of the interviewees. The second category entitled “dangerous curiosity” stands out mainly the factors that influence the use of drugs.

The third was entitled “the point of no return” where it emphasized the physical and mental impairment of the user. The last category, “time to start again,” emphasizes the desire of women in prison situation to free themselves from drugs and thus re-establish life goals, once destroyed by addiction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Incarcerated women surveyed reported having used illicit drugs at least once in life. The inmates are in the age group from 22 to 34 years old; the use of illicit drugs was initiated between 11 and 28 years old. According to the classification of using drugs, it was observed that most users were heavy, or used drugs daily, when released.1

Most of these women were from Teresina, single, had low education and occupation had as home activities. The family income of these inmates was less than the minimum wage, and one said income thousand reais a day, and another three thousand reais per month. Regarding habits, most were alcoholic and smoker. Among the participants, only one never became pregnant.

In connection with pregnancy, this is one of the worst consequences that use of drugs may result, since, in addition to high incidence of malformations, when these do not occur, bring the world children who live influenced and subjected to conditions that make likely to participate in the world of drugs, addiction and crime.

The most consumed drugs, cited by inmates, were the crack, marijuana, cocaine, hashish and merla. With regard to psychoactive substances, the highlight was the lorax (Roupinol), popularly known as “good night, Cinderella”, followed by benzodiazepine hydrochloride (benflogin). Inhalants and solvents were also remembered.

After data collection and analysis, the results were summarized, thereby obtaining categories which will be explained below. These reports show inmates who were drug users and propose to discuss issues related to the meanings, the reasons and the consequences of these drugs on the health and lives of these women, in addition to future prospects.

♦ Family disorganization

In this first category includes statements regarding the significance of the use of illicit drugs by inmates. According to most stories, drug use results in many negative effects, especially social, moral and affective loss. Therefore, the drug predominantly meant self-destruction, destruction in domestic and healthcare. It is worth mentioning other meanings such as: hallucinations, trauma, regret and suffering.

The drug means a lot of bad, destruction of my family, two children raped, fell in prison because of drug trafficking, the ‘friends’ disappeared by the time I most needed it. What I can say is that the drug only brought misfortune in my life. Great misery. (Pandora)

Destroyed me, I left my service, walked only fighting was confusion over confusion (…). I even spoiled, took the meaning of my head, it seems that was eating my brain. (Iris)

These negative feelings associated with the lack of support and trust of the society make the preventing drug use and social recovery following the abandonment of the prison environment even more difficult.

It’s destruction in the life of any human being. Only miss is the freedom that we do not have the growth of the children that we do not see near and trust of society that we have no more. The drug has no future; it destroys everything that a person has, including his family. It even destroys himself with his own hands, when we will look it’s late. (Sofia)

The end of life, a curse. This crack drug brings everything bad in the life of people. Just destruction. Who has not used, it should be well away from it, because it’s hard to stop using. (Diké)

Similar meanings were found in a study of drug users, in which aimed to analyze the perception they had about drugs; all respondents rated the drug as a negative and disruptive of their lives, leading to isolation from family, religion, friends, and loss of material goods.13

Prolonged use of illicit drugs may also lead the individual to depression, anxiety, irritability, panic attacks, suicide attempts, social isolation, frequent lung infections, etc.14

♦ Dangerous curiosity

In the second category there are expressed the reasons that led the inmates to consume illegal drugs. Among the main misses reported by interviewees there are the bad companies and curiosity about the drug.
Friendships. I got involved with bad company that only took me into the world of crime, just around wearing. (Medusa)
I even went to this, I met colleagues who did not use, only trafficked, went after them, there bought and used; but none ever gave me anything for free, had to do wrong to buy. (So(a)
Curiosity and the influence of older friends. I new right? He calls. You want? You want to smoke a stone? Then grabs, so on. Then I fell and did not return, so that now I am here in this stuck place. (Selene)

It appears therefore that there are several factors that lead to involvement with drugs. Some lay the responsibility on friendships, others reveal that the initial use was given by curiosity and own initiative. It is noteworthy that in dysfunctional homes, the incidence of drug users is higher, since the relationship with parents loses importance so that the positive or negative influence of friends stands in relation to his conduct. That is, the higher the ratio in a couple maladaptive behaviors, the greater the probability for consumption.5

Study of adolescents in Rio Grande do Sul found that 93.3% of glimpsed had family problems due to drug use. Also, 46.7% of non-users also reported the same problem, which become vulnerable to the use of such substances.15

Either by influence or vulnerable situations, these women were exposed to risk factors for drug use, ie conditions that exposed and made them more vulnerable to addiction. The predisposition for consumption may be related to premature stages and moments of instability, such as adolescence, have friends and drug users parents, mental health problems, media influence, attend environments where is consumed drug, as well as cultural factors.16

Friendships. A colleague of mine saying to me smoke, then caught, smoked, liked and was wanting more and more and has not smoked? In the ballads. (Athena)

♦ The path of no return

The following speeches emphasize use of drugs consequences with regard to the physical, mental and social impairment. Among the most relevant, we can focus on the loss of freedom, the breakdown of family ties and the acquisition of diseases.

Since 18 years old I have been suffering in the justice, chain, division, home. I don’t see the growth of my children; my life is more in prison than outside. Destroyed home, lost the confidence on the people, would not hear of friendships, advice, he lived only for drugs and ready. A lot of people tried to get me out of crime, but there was no way. (So(a)

Much destruction in my life and in my hospitalization. I was disturbed the head, there was need to do treatment in Psychiatric Hospital Areolino de Abreu. (Athena)

What gave was that my legs are all spoiled because of drugs, almost lose my leg, my friend lost his leg and I almost lose mine, look at the big hole in my leg, they are full of holes, I have problem movement, no right way, my leg hurts. It was supposed to be cut, but I did not let the doctor cut. (Artemis)

Drug users often suffer discrimination, either as he was not in his normal state and not keep a dialogue, or behave improperly and inconveniently and sometimes even dangerously. Moreover, the criterion values of a drugged are changed. That is, if you have no money to buy the drug, will not bother stealing, whether their own family, be friends.

It brings a lot of trouble, especially head, no doctor? Then the person is not the same, she turns and think of evil in steal, to steal the family and others in order to have it, because when you’re smoking, is satisfying, but it ends and then you want more and not which has to take, so the solution is to steal, right? Another consequence is jail, not be in the middle of society, like I’m stuck here today, do not respect the family, not to be “normal”. And so it ended my life, it’s all over, my whole being she ended. (Selene)

There are described as consequences of the use of drugs physiological changes, especially changes in the state of sleep, appetite, and other health problems, especially on the central nervous and cardiovascular system.

I came to feel bad, put the blood out through the nose because of drug. Began to cause problems within myself, I began to experience chest pain, shortness of breath, lost weight too, neither eating nor drinking, had no desire for anything, just want to smoke drugs. (Hestia)

Psychotropic drugs act in the CNS changing its operation, and consequently causing serious risks to health and life, to change the level of consciousness and behavior and can generate practical risky as sex unprotected, sharing syringes and other materials, able to transmit diseases and can lead to imprisonment and even death.

Many bad things. Family clearance and others. The person is needy, do not have anyone to talk to, there ends moving away more and more. The drug stirs the nervous system, we feel agony, get sleep, do not eat. The more a person uses, more wants to use, It is a drug even in one's life. Because if
The person does not stop, it's a chain, then death. (Aphrodite)

They are still reported episodes of anxiety, fear, memory lapse and audiovisual hallucinations when in contact with the drug. The consequences are many, for example, chain health problems. I got all trauma, fear, panic attacks, depression, forgetfulness, everything. When I smoked, I saw and heard things. (Dikė)

Besides revealing compromising on health, the interviewees mentioned low self-esteem, emotional losses, especially in relationships with friends and family, as well as financial losses, culminating in the sense of destruction.

The consequences in the life of the individual, resulting from its use are numerous and serious, as well as contribute to the growth of spending on medical treatments and hospitalizations, increases traffic accident rates of urban violence, premature deaths and suicides. Thus, drug use has caused social, economic and losses of great importance to health.16

♦ Time to start over

In this category, it is worth emphasizing the desire that women have of frees themselves from drugs showing an interest in pursuing an effective treatment for the recovery.

I'm 27, I am going, surviving, and those who have died! At least I have a chance to get out, recover and return to society (Sofia).

I'm just drink, the rum and ready. Then the staff: “We will use drugs!”, “Boy, I will not anymore. (Artemis)

In agreement with this finding, a study of users of a Psychosocial Care Center for Alcohol and Drugs (CAPSad) reveals that, despite the problems that permeates the use of psychoactive substances, all members reported motivation for life and change of hope.18

The analysis of the discourses made possible to identify the drug users who have experienced a process characterized by the difficulty of moving away from the substance, while recognizing the physical, mental and social damage resulting from its use. And often, especially when it comes to women, this process of recovery is combined by numerous relapses, which requires a specific follow-up, in which it seeks the gradual social reintegration.

The user experiences losses in various spheres of their daily lives, the difficulty of breaking free from the addiction. The addiction is considered incurable, or may stabilize, but will always be present, requiring occupations so that users are kept away from

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CONCLUSION

Drug use, for users, means self-destruction, family separation, the children, and also provide links to the criminal world. The negative influence of friends and the attempt of disinterest from personal problems lead a significant number of people to step into the world of drugs and therefore the world of crime.

There is a clear need for more effective prevention of the government in order to implement policies to take preventive action to combat drug use, as well as investing in the recovery of those who unfortunately already addicted and cannot leave the issue alone.

It is important that both healthcare professionals, as managers have a major influence on performance in schools, promoting family and social integration. It is necessary, therefore, to develop immediate measures to combat this very serious problem; otherwise, the traffickers take the addictive function indiscriminately, more and more in children and adolescents. And the prisons will be increasingly filled with victims of this evil.

It should be noted that it is of extreme importance the role of the professional nurse in planning health actions, especially against drug use, since it is a potential educator and should be prepared to take responsibility for making educational guidance programs for prevention and clarification regarding the use of these substances. Therefore, it is believed that the nature of this study provide subsidies for implementing preventive strategies to minimize the consequences of abuse and dependence on drugs to individuals, families and society.

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