SEXUALIDAD EN LAS CÁRCELES FEMENINAS: SIGNIFICADO E EXPERIENCIA PARA RE-EDUCANDAS

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RESUMO
Objetivo: compreender e a vivência da sexualidade para reeducandas. Método: estudo descritivo-exploratório de abordagem qualitativa realizado nos dois maiores presídios femininos da Paraíba/PB. O instrumento de coleta de dados foi uma entrevista semiestruturada associada a uma ficha de identificação que tinha como objetivo traçar o perfil sócio-demográfico das reeducandas. A amostra foi encerrada em 15 sujeitos, obedecendo ao método de saturação teórica e a análise de dados seguiu a proposta metodológica de Bardin. A pesquisa teve o projeto aprovado pelo Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa, CAAE nº 01340133000-12. Resultados: a partir das falas emergiram duas categorias "Meaning of sexuality for reeducations" e "The sexual experiences in prison". Conclusão: as mulheres reclusas, em sua maioria, vêem sexo e sexualidade como sinônimos e utilizam das relações homoafetivas para vivenciar e suprir carências e desejos. Descritores: Sexualidade; Mulheres; Prisões.

RESUMEN
Objetivo: comprender el significado y la experiencia de la sexualidad para las reeducandas. Método: estudio descriptivo-exploratorio de enfoque cualitativo realizado en los dos mayores cárceles de mujeres de Paraíba/PB. El instrumento de recolección de datos fue una entrevista semi-estructurada asociada a una hoja de identificación que tenía como objetivo trazar el perfil sociodemográfico de las reeducandas. La muestra se cierra en 15 sujetos, utilizando el método de saturación teórica y al análisis de los datos siguió el enfoque metodológico de Bardin. La investigación tuvo el proyecto aprobado por el Comité de Ética en la Investigación, CAAE No 01340133000-12. Resultados: de las líneas emergieron dos categorías "Significado de la sexualidad para las internas" y "Las experiencias sexuales en la cárcel". Conclusion: las mujeres en la cárcel, en su mayoría, ven el sexo y la sexualidad como sinónimos e hacen uso de relaciones homoafetivas para experimentar y satisfacer sus necesidades y deseos. Descriptores: Sexualidad; Mujeres; Prisiones.
**INTRODUCTION**

Crime expands expressively annually, with consequent increases in the prison population, in particular the female.¹ Recent data show that the number of inmates grew 59,86% from 2007 to 2012, which is due to expansion of drug trafficking.²

As are labeled of fragile over to men, especially by their physical differences, women are seen as easy targets for traffickers, because society in general tends not to be suspicious of them, facilitating the work in drug trafficking.³

In the State of Paraíba, until December 2013, 713 women were in custodial situation. Of these, 244 met provisional sentence and 206 have had their sanctioned penalties, totaling 450 inmates in closed regime, beyond these, 95 met the semi-open regime and 172 the open regime.⁴

Despite the increase of inmates because they have transgressed the laws, they do not have adequate space for the fulfillment of their sentence, that because the prison system was designed for men,⁵ corroborating the precariousness of female prison environment, namely: deficient structure, overcrowding, insecurity in hygienic conditions and even shortages in health care.⁶

Associated with these factors, we can see that the female prison population does not receive the necessary attention due to discriminatory factors and the needs of women in seclusion become neglected, such as the experience of sexuality.⁷ This feature of the female prison system can negatively interfer on the quality of life of inmates because sexuality involves biological domains, physical, emotional, social and psychic of the subject.⁷

Sexuality is a central issue of health policies and is inserted in the approach of full care to women’s health. However, this completeness is not effective, since the attention is directed to the objective aspects, as an apparent illness, forgetting what is hidden in the field of subjectivity; however, not less important in the concept of health.⁷

By understanding the importance of sexuality in the quality of life of women and to recognizing the priority formed by the National Agency of Health Research Priorities⁸ for women’s health, the access and quality of health care of women in the prison system; this study was conducted aiming to:

- Understanding the meaning and the experience of sexuality for inmates.

**METHOD**

A descriptive study of qualitative approach conducted from July to October 2013 at the Women’s Penitentiary Maria Julia Maranhão, located in João Pessoa; and Campina Grande Female Prison. These prisons were chosen because they are harboring more women prisoners in the State of Paraíba.

The study subjects were women in these prisons that met the following inclusion criteria: serving sentences in closed regime for a period exceeding six months and have cognitive conditions to answer interview and interact with the researcher. The sample was closed on 15 women, following the theoretical saturation method.

As collection instrument, there were performed semi-structured interviews with an identification sheet so that the profile of the inmates could be known. The realization of the interview took place individually, with tape recorded to avoiding interruptions and misunderstandings. In order to maintain secrecy and anonymity, the interviews were numbered in order of achievement sequenced and identified by the letter A (Inmate), preceded by a code that identified the penitentiary (P), with knowledge only of the researcher.

Data analysis followed the methodological approach of Bardin,⁹ adopting categorical thematic, where the discourse was transcribed in full and subsequently grouped by central themes present in the reports. The research objectives guided the group of core subjects and, following the proposed theoretical framework, there were three stages of content analysis: pre-analysis, exploration of the material and the processing of results.

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the State University of Paraíba under the General Certificate for Ethics Appreciation - CAAE No 01340133000-12 and followed the resolution of the criteria 466/2012, where the interviewees were informed about the purpose and benefits of the study and signed the Consent and Informed (IC).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

- Characterization of the research subjects

The profile of Paraíba State inmates shows young women, Catholic, heterosexuals, with little schooling, which maintains a stable, with 1 or 2 children and arrested for drug trafficking.
In respect of the age, among the 15 study participants, 60% were between 18 and 29 years old, corroborating the profile released by DEPEN where the age of the women inmates between 18 and 24 years old was 26%, followed by women aged 25 and 29, with a percentage equal to 23%. This data can also be confirmed by a recent study conducted in the State of Paraíba, where 52.4% of women were between 18 and 28 years old.10-11

Regarding education, 53.3% of women had only finished elementary school. The profile of inmates in Brazil showed that 44% had only 1 degree incomplete.10 In Paraíba, in 2013, 59% of women prisoners had just attended the elementary school, confirming the data found.11

The biggest crime committed index was related to drug trafficking, 60%. This same level was found in the national report, and in the State of Paraíba, 52% of women were arrested for drug trafficking, followed by the association crime trafficking, 28.4%,10-11

This data can associate the crime with trying to improve financial condition and quality of life, since most of the inmates were young and low education, referring to women with conditions of work, but without the instruction required by the labor market.

Regarding marital status, 60% claimed to have a stable, different from studies conducted in Brazil, like in prison Aquiraz - CE and the female prison of Ribeirão Preto - SP, where women were in their single majority, 78% and 72.3%, respectively.12-13 The data may differ due to regional differences.

Much said having children, of which 53.3% were between 1 and 2 children. Although the percentage difference, which can be explained in particular because of the number of women interviewed, it was observed that most of the female prison inmates of Ribeirão Preto - SP, 31.1% had 1 or 2 children.13

Regarding sexuality, 60% said to be heterosexual, most observed also in the city of Aquiraz - CE, 76%.12 Regarding religion, 60% said to be Catholic, similar data to that found in Prison Female of Ribeirão Preto, where 58.1% considered themselves Catholic.13

◆ Thematic categories

Through discourse analysis two categories emerged: meaning of sexuality for inmates and the sexual experiences in prison. The first category will portray the understanding of the interviewees about sexuality and the second category will show how women prisoners live their sexuality during imprisonment.

● Meaning of sexuality for inmates

At the end of the 19th Century, there was a deepening of studies about sexuality, with consequent expansion in its sense as no longer perceived solely with the playback function to incorporate pleasure as human need and phenomenon that involves the entire existence of individuals.14

Nevertheless, sexuality remains often understood as a synonym of sexual act; however, it is not just an essence expressed by biological processes of the body or something already inherent in people, but, due to historical, cultural, social and political constructions.15

In contrast to the widespread in society, sexuality and gender does not have the same meaning, sex is within the sexuality and this covers the whole body, affection and self-stimulation. It can be understood as the desire for contact, affection, warmth or love, including looks, kisses and production of orgasms.16-17

Sexuality includes identity, role, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure and intimacy, being perceived through thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviors in relationships, so goes beyond the pleasant feeling through the genitals;56-17
however, to question the inmates about what they understood by sexuality, the prevalence of responses referred sexuality and sexual activity interchangeably, as can be seen in the statements:

But if is a man with a woman, then when thinking about sexuality have to think of children as well or else take the blessed remedy to avoid. There can use sexuality. (P2A4)

Important to me, you know, because I think so a woman cannot live without sex, there's no way, you know. I do not think I have as you know, because many get sick, right? [...] when it gets without sex is stressed. (P1A8)

The statements refer to the sexual act, their reproductive and biological function. Although the sex represent an important dimension of sexuality, these are not synonymous, though the current language treats these two words with a single meaning, the sexual intercourse, with complicated differentiate them in common sense. This may hint at an erroneous or limited understanding of them and may reflect the experience of sexuality and sexual activity.17-18

Sexuality settings already incorporate pleasure, eroticism and even self-stimulation.19 However, in this study, one can show that despite the inmates suggest a relationship between sexuality and pleasure,
meaning remains reduced to intercourse and reproduction as seen the reports below:

Everyone likes to feel pleasure. To me that's sex. It is an intimate relationship, having sex with who you like and feel pleasure. Because, if does not feel pleasure, what is the function of sex? (P2A1)

I think everything that brings pleasure to the body, can be sex. I say this because it has several ways, ways of doing [...]. I know that thanks to sexuality people reproduce, have children, and raise a family. (P2A3)

The inmates bring in their speeches the feeling of pleasure, but pleasure elucidate be related exclusively to sexual intercourse. The theme sexuality is assigned the same values of sexism, sexuality summarizing the sexual act between two people, ignoring the love or even plans for the future. However, it should be considered that the greatness of sexuality goes far beyond the physical satisfaction of desire and feeling of pleasure achieved and should not sex be appointed as the exclusive means of obtaining happiness; the link should be strengthened by respect, love, care, leading to a more pleasurable intimate relationship, and thus satisfying involved. Some respondents were able to express it in their speeches:

Well, I think it's a form right of people enjoy, the people be loved, and certainly love also, build a family, and as far as possible, with the passage of time, right indulge in, be a housewife and build a family. (P1A2)

Sexuality to me means love, there is no sex without love, to me has to have love, you must have affection, let me see what else, not all the same, love, affection, understanding, both part because if it is not love and sexuality without love does not roll with me not. (P1A3)

Manifestations of affection expressed through gestures as affection and actions involving be played in the right place and feel the companion are part of sexuality; therefore, recognize the importance of understanding, conversation, understanding and dialogue as a means to feel out the other in relationship.

The statements of feelings associated with the presence of affection in getting the pleasure described in the reports show that sexuality is one of the dimensions of the human involving gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, eroticism, emotional involvement, love and reproduction, may be experienced or expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, practices, activities and relationships.

Thus, we can say that sexuality to be part of the human being is constituted as required for its biopsychosocial and spiritual wholeness, as it refers not only to a biological dimension, but also a universe endowed with subjectivity, that is underpinned personal and interpersonal relations.

Adds further that sexuality is part of the daily lives of people not limited to the design, because the human pleasure is independent of reproduction, extrapolating the organic aspects and being associated to the biopsychosocial factors.

In this perspective, sexuality is not limited to the genitals, because any region of the body is likely to sexual pleasure, provided it has been eroticism invested in one's life plus that sexual satisfaction can be achieved without the genital union, for it has several forms, characterized by being versatile, exceeding the physiological need and relating with the symbolization of desire.

Seen it, we see the historical influence of repression of female sexuality lasting to the present day, causing many women, including inmates, think sexuality only associated with sexual activity and reproduction. Nevertheless, despite the conservative scenario still present in society, some women prisoners managed to express the presence of pleasure when they reported what they understood by sexuality, extrapolating intercourse and including love, affection and understanding.

- The experience of sexuality in the prison

When asked about the experience of their sexuality and how they perceived the experience of sexuality of other inmates was possible to understand that many referred the homosexual relations as the main way of obtaining pleasure, which can be found in the statements below:

I have my mate; it's been ten years since I live with her and between her and me is quiet. (P1A6)

There are some that are with her husband and others that make with women even, know? I have nothing against, I think it is a moment of grace, right, grace, and then also I think there are many who have curiosity. There ing that private place ends up happening it right? (P1A3)

Although some inmates do not agree with this way of experiencing sexuality, refer homo-affective relationships as the way the other women prisoners get pleasure:

Those who like woman do very well and have many entering woman and leaves man after the penalty. And have other entering woman out woman, but sleeps with a woman; will understand. (P2A2)
There are people for everything. They do things between them, can?! Steal, kill, to understand. But lie with woman [pause] nam! Come into my head no. I find that even naughtiness. I think absurd. But they live here happily and say, that's my girlfriend. It can?! (P2A3)

Homosexuality can be understood as the seclusion coping strategy to preserve affections, as many women have their first homosexual relationship in prison. Due to the difficulties to relate to husbands or partners adopt a shift in sexuality to take gay postures due to imposed situation where pervasive loneliness and emotional dependence, not featuring a natural process.  

You can then consider that homosexuality would appear as a break with the extramural universe and a temporary reaction to incarceration, so that homosexuality in prison would be a result of the deprivation of heterosexual contacts and abandonment that is commonly experienced by inmates.  

Following this assumption, the conjugal relations between women are marked by similar characteristics present in social relations of friendship, such as: companionship and mutual psychological support; and does not constitute sexual pleasure as what's most important between the couple, and primary communication, tenderness, warmth and delicacy.  

It is important pointing out that homosexual stance in prison causes relational consequences; women adopt new clothing, gestures and even a new language. In addition, inmates who take the role of a man carry with them the possibility of polygamy, violence and aggression, granting women “transformed” in men privileges socially attributed to males.  

It should also discuss the instances where inmates have placed themselves as homosexual prior to imprisonment, such that sometimes the national scene has not guaranteed the right to receive conjugal visits from partners, and it can denote discrimination and homophobia.  

However, the State of Paraíba is moving forward on April 2012, Prison Administration of the State of Paraíba guaranteed equality to all reeducation, where homosexual relations may be possible to lesbians, bisexuals, transsexuals and transvestites.  

Although it was observed the predominance of obtaining pleasure through homosexual relations, there were lines of women who said they used masturbation for this:

As I do not receive husband’s visit, I turn around just the same. I prefer not to be intimate with anyone here. (P2A1)

Have a there it says it does that thing there [masturbation]. (P1A11)

The prolonged period of imprisonment provides sexual discoveries, such as masturbatory practices, which are related to the discovery and body awareness, promoting sexual performance and providing new ways to get pleasure. However, masturbation, highlighted for performed by women, is characterized as a practice belonging to an unnatural behavior both by moral precepts and religious or which, if practiced, it should not be discovered that the woman is not disrespected because of their lack modesty.  

This fact leads to a reflection, because few women reported using masturbation to obtain pleasure. However, no one knows for sure if women do not use masturbation for believing in this abnormal behavior, or the use, but think it is a matter of an intimate nature that should not be shared with others.  

Another relevant point is that some women claimed not experiencing sexuality in any way, by abandoning his companion or even by the same be reclusive:

Not at all because I have no partner, my partner does not come. Six months ago I did not have sexual intercourse, and so, as I also do sex with a woman, then I feel no pleasure at all. (P1A10)

Got no right to practice as a year and six months, he’s stuck there and I here, we have no way. (P1A3)

Few women receive visits, because most of them do not have husband/partner in freedom, restricting their emotional and sexual relationships. In some of the country’s prisons are offered to married women and that fellow inmates are also the possibility to go visit her husband in the male prison.  

The output of inmates to visit their fellow inmates is not an available condition in the State of Paraíba while the absence of visits because the companion is deprived of his freedom is a reality in women’s prisons in the state, since among the interviewees, only three said visitors, of which only one receives foreign visit of her companion and the other two are inmates who keeps a homosexual relationship inside the prison and has its intimate encounter in a given day.  

Considering this, the experience of sexuality in prisons in any form of experience, is favored by the legal provision of conjugal visits. Among the women interviewed, even though reduced the number of receiving conjugal visits, all knew the regularity of its
operation and some reported difficulties concerning this subject. On being asked about how the visits occurred, at what times and the space reserved for it, the following results were obtained:

Every Wednesday and every Sunday she comes to visit. In the cell. Who has conjugal visit stays in the cell, who has not come out. (P1A9)

Space has. But do you see. In know how I could have sex with my husband. It's hard, it's just a cloth separating the cell a bed the other knows, if you noize everyone knows. Cannot do much mischief, or talk, it's all hidden. Agents respect that is. But the place does not help. Blame them not right because when the visit comes recipient does not come outside and receiver goes to cell [pause] and line up. (P2A1)

Although permitted, according view of the interviewees, the conjugal visits cannot keep a family tie or preserve the idea of love. Several inmates consider sexual intercourse, as is made inside the prison, devoid of emotional content, may cause a feeling of humiliation during the time of the visit; however, they do to try to keep their marital relationship built out of the prison environment, opting to carry out the wishes of the partner.26

Women inmates do not feel content with what is given them in terms that involve affection, affection and when sex is the main issue, is precluded by structural terms, as some prisons have small rooms to occur intimate visits, but in most cases, the site is improvised and the cell destined to such activity is covered with sheets. This condition leads to a constraint on the part of apenada and partner, inhibiting the realization of the sexual act.27

Therefore, in this reality researched the experience of sexuality during imprisonment has the more common practice homosexual relationships, even considering many heterosexual or denying this act, either by fear or shame of exposure. There are even women who prefer not to engaging with others and for reasons beyond their will does not maintain continuity in the relationship with their partners and obtain the pleasure of using masturbatory practices.

Other respondents say they are heterosexual and do not use any of the aforementioned ways to obtain pleasure, they mention spend in detention suffering from withdrawal and pose as justification to fellow imprisonment or abandonment suffered by him. As for conjugal visit, benefit provisions of Law, was very small number of women who used this feature to be satisfied.

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