

Parental practices under the perspective of incarcerated fathers

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Abstract

This study aimed to evaluate and compare the perception of parenting practices before and during the incarceration of men deprived of liberty. Fifty-seven men aged between 22 and 61 years ($M = 36.16$; $SD = 8.44$) participated in the study, with family income of one to two minimum wages (31.6%), did not complete elementary school (54.4%), were married (73.7%), and had two or more children (73.7%) aged 4 to 16 years. They answered socio-demographic questions and the Parenting Practices Inventory (PPI) for conditions in liberty and in prison. Data were analyzed using descriptive analysis, mean comparison tests and Pearson correlation. Regarding their condition of imprisonment, there was a significant reduction in scores of parental practices of “Discipline”, “Education” and “Social”, but not in “Affection”. The scores for “Discipline” for conditions in liberty and in prison showed a strong correlation. The implications of these results are discussed, limitations and future directions are also indicated.

Keywords: parental practices; parenthood; deprivation of liberty; fatherhood.

Práticas Parentais na Percepção de Pais Encarcerados

Resumo

Este estudo buscou avaliar e comparar a percepção das práticas parentais antes e durante o encarceramento por homens privados de liberdade. Participaram do estudo 57 homens com idades entre 22 e 61 anos ($M = 36,16$; $DP = 8,44$), com renda familiar de um a dois salários mínimos (31,6%), ensino fundamental incompleto (54,4%), casados (73,7%) e com dois ou mais filhas/os (78,9%) com idades de 4 a 16 anos. Eles responderam a questões sociodemográficas e ao Inventário de Práticas Parentais (IPP) para as condições em liberdade e em situação de prisão. Realizaram-se análises descritivas, testes de comparação de médias e correlação de Pearson. A situação de prisão representou uma diminuição significativa em práticas parentais de “Disciplina”, “Educação” e “Social”, mas não em “Afeto”. As pontuações em “Disciplina” para as condições em liberdade e em prisão apresentaram forte correlação. São discutidas as implicações desses resultados, bem como apresentadas limitações e direcionamentos futuros.

Palavras-chave: práticas parentais; parentalidade; privação de liberdade; paternidade

Prácticas parentales en la percepción de los padres encarcerados

Resumen

El presente estudio buscó evaluar y comparar la percepción de las prácticas parentales antes y durante el encarcelamiento de hombres privados de libertad. Participaron 57 hombres de entre 22 y 61 años ($M = 36,16$; $DS = 8,44$), con ingresos familiares de uno o dos salarios mínimos (31,6%), educación primaria incompleta (54,4 %), casados (73,7%) y con dos o más niños (78,9%) con edades entre 4 a 16 años. Los participantes respondieron preguntas sociodemográficas y el Inventario de Prácticas Parentales (IPP) sobre sus condiciones de paternidad en libertad y en prisión. Se realizaron análisis descriptivos, pruebas de comparación de medias y correlación de Pearson. La situación carcelaria representó una disminución significativa en las puntuaciones de las prácticas parentales de “Disciplina”, “Educação” y “Social”, pero no en “Afectividad”. Los escores en el factor “Disciplina” para las condiciones en libertad y en prisión mostraron una fuerte correlación. Se discuten las implicaciones de estos resultados, así como también se presentan las limitaciones y direcciones futuras.

Palabras clave: prácticas parentales; parentalidad; privación de libertad; paternidad.

Introduction

The study of the relationship between fathers/ mothers and children can be carried out through behavioral analysis, involving different types of experiences, affections and cognitions. Parental characteristics, sociodemographic conditions and family

context variables, as well as demographic variables of children, such as gender and education, influence child behavior (Bolsoni-Silva, & Loureiro, 2019).

Parenting practices are composed of dimensions that characterize the levels of involvement and engagement of parents with the child in relation to social, education, discipline and affective activities (Benetti, &

Balbinotti, 2003). Such practices usually integrate raising or parenting styles (i.e., the way in which mothers/fathers participate in the children socialization processes) and, ideally, are directed towards the promotion of autonomy and responsibility (Falcke et al., 2012).

Different behavioral responses are related to parenting practices. Thus, the strategies used by fathers/mothers to educate and deal with their children behavior can play different roles in their socio-emotional development, favoring or hindering such development (Alvarenga et al., 2016). The study by Sebastião et al. (2020), for example, found that children with behavioral problems were more often exposed to negative than positive parenting practices, such as mild discipline, neglect and/or physical abuse.

Regarding parenting practices and their effects, the study by Sakuramoto et al. (2014), reported a direct relationship between the exercise of educational practices in positive parenting styles with prosocial behavior and inversely proportional to behavior problems and hyperactivity. Leme and Marturano (2014) also indicated a strong and direct correlation of parenting practices of education, affection and socialization, with academic competence and inverse correlation with behavior problems, in addition to disciplinary parenting practices having an inverse relationship with academic competence and a direct relationship with behavior problems. Brito and Faro (2017), on the other hand, found an inverse and moderate association between the exercise of parental practices (i.e., education, affection, social and discipline) with parental stress and an inverse and weak association with perceived stress in the last 30 days.

In a review of studies published in the last three decades on parenting practices, Morris et al. (2013) concluded that, in general, research that sought to identify the effects and styles of parenting practices on the socio-emotional and cognitive development of children and adolescents, indicated that the lack of control and monitoring of permissive fathers/mothers and the negative forms of control used by authoritarian mothers/fathers are associated with low self-esteem, behavioral problems and less empathy in children and adolescents. On the other hand, authoritative mothers/fathers – who use appropriate levels of control and maintain an affectionate relationship with their children – create an environment of open dialogue where they feel safe, contributing to the development of empathic and responsible behavior and to the decrease in delinquency and substance use among children and adolescents (Morris et al., 2013).

Although – increasingly – studies recognize that father involvement influences child development and can act as a protection and optimization factor for this development (Cia & Barham, 2009; Leme, & Marturano, 2014), it is a fact that interest in addressing father participation in the care and education of children, especially in underexplored contexts such as the prison system, contrasts with the massive interest received by motherhood in this same context (Batista, & Loureiro, 2017; Flores, & Smeha, 2018; Soares, et al., 2016).

The exercise of parenthood in a context of deprivation of liberty has unique aspects. In the systematic review carried out by Cúnico et al. (2017) on paternity in the prison context, no study from Brazil was found. The little national production on fatherhood of imprisoned men is not in line with the alarming numbers of the prison population, which are responsible for Brazil reaching third place among the countries that most incarcerate in the world (Depen, 2017).

The importance of talking about fatherhood in deprivation of liberty lies in the observation that the prison experience transforms relationships at all levels, being no different for the father/child relationship. It is worth mentioning that, not rarely, men deprived of liberty have more than one child, the result of different relationships, in addition to numerous cases of paternity generated within the prison (Cúnico et al., 2019). Therefore, it is assumed that the role of father for these men is performed differently with each son/daughter (Arditti, 2012; Ugelvik, 2014).

Arditti (2012) points out that the exercise of fatherhood by incarcerated fathers differs in many ways from that of fathers who do not experience the prison experience. Based on data from the US reality – which tops the list of countries that most incarcerate in the world – the author illustrates that incarcerated fathers tend to be more violent, less educated, more prone to alcohol and/or other drug abuse and with less skills to maintain affectionate relationships. Aspects that can be partially explained by the conditions before incarceration, since most fathers in prison situations come from vulnerable contexts and with a personal and family history of early involvement in situations of violence and conflict with the law. Although there are no descriptive data on the population of incarcerated fathers in Brazil, it is possible to assume that they converge with those presented in the US context, since the Brazilian prison population is characterized by being young, with low education and coming from the poorest strata of the society (Depen, 2017).

Based on an understanding that fatherhood is a sociocultural phenomenon that goes beyond a dyadic relationship, talking about how it is exercised in a context of deprivation of liberty is to meet an expanded and non-essentialist view of the experience of being a father. Therefore, considering the high number of incarcerated men who are fathers in Brazilian prisons, as well as recognizing the importance of father involvement for child development, the objective of this study was to evaluate and compare the perception of parenting practices before and during the imprisonment by men deprived of liberty.

Methods

Participants

The study included 57 men in prison, aged between 22 and 61 years, $M = 36.16$ and $SD = 8.44$. The sample was by convenience, non-probabilistic. Most of them were married (73.7%), with two or more children (78.9%), family income from one to two minimum wages (31.6%) and incomplete elementary education (54.4%). Altogether, the instruments were answered in relation to 76 male children and adolescents aged between 4 and 18 years ($M = 8.96$; $SD = 3.75$) (53.9%). Many of the participating individuals had more than one child with different partners (45.6%). Although there is no restriction on the number of children that each individual can receive as a visitor, the institution allows only one woman to be registered as a companion in the visiting list. Thus, it is common for men to receive visits only from the children of the current wife. In any case, the orientation given to the participants was that they answered the instrument considering only the children who visit them, regardless of whether they were all from the same marital relationship. Table 1 lists the sociodemographic characterization of the sample in terms of age, education, socioeconomic level, marital status, among others.

Procedures

The research was carried out in a male prison institution, located in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, which has a contingent of more than four thousand men, who are convicted or remand prisoners. The collection took place from January to May 2019. After a pilot study, the criteria for participation were that they had been imprisoned for more than six months and that they had school-age children visitors.

It should be noted that in the prison institution studied, visits by children take place once a month and may extend for up to two shifts, which is the only face-to-face contact that prisoners have with their children. However, other forms of contact are made, such as sending and receiving letters or even phone calls and through the psychosocial support service professionals. Calls via cell phone and internet contact are constant, even though they are options not legally authorized in the country.

With the application of the pilot, the impossibility of applying the instruments in groups was also identified, since most participants had difficulty in reading and understanding the questions, requiring constant help from the applicators. Thus, the application took place in pairs, both applicators and incarcerated men. The instruments were self-applied, with the exception of those cases in which the participant could not read or when the institution did not authorize the removal of the handcuffs. In these cases, the questionnaire was answered by the applicators themselves, who read the questions aloud to the participants.

This study was carried out after approval by the Superintendence of Penitentiary Services (the body responsible for prison institutions in the state of Rio Grande do Sul) and subsequent approval by the ethics committee for research with human beings at the universities involved (CAEE: 01390918.0.0000.5348). Those who participated in the study, after being informed of the objective of the research and the ethical implications through the Informed Consent (IC), agreed to contribute and gave their consent by signing the term.

Instruments

Participants answered a sociodemographic questionnaire, prepared by the authors, which contained questions about age, income, education, marital status, religion, among others, in addition to the original version of the Parenting Practices Inventory (PPI) and a version adapted for the condition of imprisonment. Elaborated by Benetti and Balbinotti (2003), this instrument seeks to assess the socialization practices employed by fathers and mothers, based on their perceptions. It consists of 16 items that assess parental involvement in four dimensions, each consisting of four statements: "Affection" (e.g., "I hugged and kissed my child"), "Education" (e.g., "I talked about issues that she/he needs to know about life"), "Discipline" (e.g., "It was very difficult for me to get him/

Table 1.
Sociodemographic Characteristics of the sample

Characteristic	<i>n</i> (%)
	Total (N = 57)
Family income <i>n</i> (%)	
Less than a minimum wage	16 (28.1)
Between one and two minimum wages	18 (31.5)
Between two and three minimum wages	12 (21.1)
Between three and four minimum wages	6 (10.5)
More than four minimum wages	5 (8.8)
Education level <i>n</i> (%)	
Incomplete Elementary School	31 (54.4)
Complete Elementary School	9 (15.8)
Incomplete High School	7 (12.3)
Complete High School	10 (17.5)
Marital status <i>n</i> (%)	
Married/Stable union	42 (73.8)
Single	14 (24.6)
Widower	1 (1.6)
Number of children <i>n</i> (%)	
One	12 (21.1)
Two	20 (35.1)
Three	11 (19.2)
Four	7 (12.3)
More than five	7 (12.3)
Children from the same relationship <i>n</i> (%)	
Yes	24 (42.1)
No	26 (45.6)
Not Informed	7 (12.3)
Current sentence time in months <i>n</i> (%)	
From 10 to 32	5 (8.8)
From 60 to 99	8 (14.0)
From 104 to 135	4 (7.0)
From 140 to 168	8 (14.0)
From 186 to 238	6 (10.5)
From 240 to 316	8 (14.0)
From 336 to 588	8 (14.0)
No conviction	10 (17.6)

her to obey me”) and “Social” (e.g., “I participated in games/activities with my child). In the original study, the reliability of the scale dimensions was computed using Cronbach alpha, ranging from 0.55 to 0.82

(Affection, $\alpha = 0.76$; Education, $\alpha = 0.82$; Discipline, $\alpha = 0.55$; Social, $\alpha = 0.58$).

The items were answered in relation to parenting practices for the condition of liberty and for the

condition of prison. The answers for the prison condition were given in relation to adapted versions of the items, in which the verbal tense of the statements was changed from the past to the present, for example, the item “I had friendly conversations with my child” became “I have friendly conversations with my child”. Participants were asked to indicate the frequency in which the situations described in the items occurred (liberty condition) or occur (prisoned condition) using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). Factor scores were computed by the average of the 4 items that compose them, thus, they ranged from one to five. The internal consistency for the application regarding the prison period was good for all dimensions (Affection, $\alpha = 0.82$; Education, $\alpha = 0.71$; Discipline, $\alpha = 0.76$; Social, $\alpha = 0.75$) and the same was found for the reliability of the dimensions for the application regarding the period in liberty (Affection, $\alpha = 0.78$; Education, $\alpha = 0.73$; Discipline, $\alpha = 0.70$; Social, $\alpha = 0.88$).

In studies with the general population, it is common to perform collections at different times or longitudinal follow-up for comparison. However, in the case of research with the prison population, the feasibility – ethical and material – of the comparison in relation to periods before, during or after prison seems difficult. In this study, as the objective was to identify not only the predominant parenting practices, but the impact of incarceration on the perception of current and before incarceration parenting practices, the viable methodological solution was the concomitant application. It is possible that this way of applying the instruments has, to a certain extent, influenced the answers, as there is usually an idealization of life outside prison by the inmates – which will be contrasted in the future in other stages of the research¹. Thus, we sought here, as far as possible, to assess and compare the perception of individuals about their parenting practices before and in the condition of prison at the same time of collection.

Analysis

Descriptive statistics were applied to describe the sample and to know the means of the items of each one of the components of the PPI, allowing a better understanding of the variations of dimensions in the conditions of liberty and prison. Analyses were performed using JASP 0.14.1 software. Data was tested

for distribution. Dimension scores were distributed within parameters considered adequate in the literature for parametric analyses (asymmetry and kurtosis $< \pm 3.29$, Ghasemi, & Zahediasl, 2012; Kim, 2013), except for the kurtosis of the Discipline dimension scores in both conditions. Another parameter was analyzed, as suggested by Orcan (2020), which showed no significant difference between the results of parametric and non-parametric tests for comparing two means when kurtosis is less than 1.96, in this case only the Discipline dimension scores when arrested violated that criterion. Although part of the literature states that violating the normality assumption for mean comparison testing may not have serious effects on the results (Blanca et al., 2017; Glass et al., 1972), we performed the non-parametric Wilcoxon signed ranks test to compare the Discipline dimension scores. As for the distribution of responses to the items, in the “liberty” condition, items 3, 4, 10 and 11 violated the adopted parameters, and in the “prison” condition, items 9, 10, 11 and 16. Therefore, we also used the non-parametric Wilcoxon signed ranks test to compare the responses of items 3, 4, 9, 10, 11 and 16. The *t*-test was applied to compare the averages of perception of parenthood practices in both conditions for the Social, Education and Affection dimensions, as well as of items 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14 and 15; and Pearson correlation to define the association between parenting practices.

Results

Table 2 lists the means and standard deviations of each of the PPI items. Regarding the “Affection” dimension, only item two had a slight increase in the prison condition, the others decreased, especially item three, from 4.47 to 4.10. As for “Education” practices, item seven remained stable between the two conditions, the others were lower, especially items eight (from 2.82 to 1.79) and six (from 2.87 to 2.19). As for the “Discipline” component, there was a reduction in the scores of items nine (from 2.33 to 1.63) and ten (from 1.49 to 1.31) for the imprisonment situation. In the “Social” dimension, all items had lower means for the “prisoner” condition, especially items fourteen (from 3.79 to 2.35) and sixteen (from 2.44 to 1.02).

With respect to the participants’ perception of their current and prior incarceration parenting practices, significant differences were found in the scores of three dimensions: “Education” ($t = 2.55$, $d = 0.34$, $p < 0.01$), “Social” ($t = 6.60$, $d = 0.87$, $p < 0.001$) and

¹ It is intended, during the development of the research, to build a corpus of information from qualitative studies involving the partners and children of men deprived of liberty.

Table 2.
Means and Standard Deviation of PPI Item Scores

Item	Condition				t/W	TE
	Liberty		Prison			
	M	SD	M	SD		
1. I have/had friendly conversations with my child ¹	4.10	1.08	4.00	1.12	0.51	0.07
2. I talk/talked about what happens/happened at school ¹	3.50	1.57	3.68	1.34	-0.79	-0.10
3. I hug/hugged and kiss/kissed my child^{1*}	4.47	1.02	4.10	1.19	348.5	0.40
4. I praise/praised my child ^{1*}	4.39	1.05	4.37	1.03	208.5	0.03
5. I talk/talked about subjects she/he needs to know about life ²	3.71	1.35	3.61	1.40	0.62	0.08
6. I teach/taught my child the subjects he/she does not understand/understood at school²	2.87	1.60	2.19	1.44	2.80	0.37
7. I talk/talked to her/him about religion ²	2.98	1.54	2.98	1.57	0.00	0.00
8. I help/helped with homework²	2.82	1.53	1.79	1.25	4.37	0.58
9. I scream/screamed at my child when she/he does/has done something wrong^{3*}	2.33	1.28	1.63	1.14	426.5	0.83
10. When just talking is/was not enough, I slap/slapped my child^{3*}	1.49	0.94	1.31	0.95	98.0	0.63
11. Conversations with my child end/ended in discussions ^{3*}	1.35	0.85	1.37	0.88	30.5	-0.08
12. It is/It was very difficult for me to make/made my child obey me ³	1.91	1.18	1.82	1.09	0.48	0.06
13. I participate/participated in games/activities with my child⁴	3.74	1.33	2.82	1.63	3.58	0.47
14. I take/took my child to the square⁴	3.79	1.22	2.35	1.63	5.58	0.74
15. I watch/watched TV, listen/listened to music with my child⁴	3.91	1.31	2.80	1.58	4.00	0.53
16. I take/took my child to the movie^{4*}	2.44	1.37	1.02	0.13	666.0	1.00

TE = Effect size, Cohen's d for t-test and biserial hierarchical correlation for the Wilcoxon signed-ranks test.

¹: * = items where the value of W was reported.

²: Bold items indicates a statistically significant difference with a $p < 0.05$.

“Discipline” ($W = 673.00$, biserial hierarchical correlation effect size = 0.56, $p < 0.001$) when compared to parenting practices in situation of liberty and in prison. In all cases, there was a decrease in practices as a prisoner, especially for the “Social” dimension, whose mean value reduced from 3.47 to 2.25. Table 3 summarizes these results.

Table 4 lists the associations between the dimensions of parenting practices. In the condition of liberty, the practices of “Affection” and “Education” ($r = 0.68$; $p < 0.001$), “Affection” and “Social” ($r = 0.64$; $p < 0.001$), “Affection” and “Discipline” ($r = 0.27$; $p < 0.05$) and “Education” and “Social” ($r = 0.52$; $p < 0.001$). In the prison condition, the practices of “Affection” and “Education” ($r = 0.60$; $p < 0.001$), “Affection” and “Social” ($r = 0.41$; $p < 0.01$), “Education” and “Social” ($r = 0.40$; $p < 0.01$), “Education” and “Discipline” ($r = 0.33$; $p < 0.05$) presented significant correlations.

It is important to highlight that the correlation between parenting practices of “Discipline” in the conditions of liberty and prison ($r = 0.73$; $p < 0.001$) was the strongest and, furthermore, there was no other significant correlation between the same dimension in the different conditions. Considering all the possible associations between the dimensions in the two conditions, the only other significant correlation, but less than 0.3, was between the dimension “Discipline” in the condition of liberty and the component “Education” in the prison condition ($r = 0.27$; $p < 0.05$).

Additionally, we analyzed the correlation of the variables in table 4 with four sociodemographic information, namely: income, number of children, age and length of imprisonment in months. No significant association was detected with income or number of children. The correlation between length of imprisonment was inverse and moderate with “Discipline”

Table 3.
t-test for the dimensions of the PPI in the conditions of liberty and prison

Component	Condition				t/W	TE
	Liberty		Prison			
	M	SD	M	SD		
Affection	4.11	0.95	4.0	0.95	0.43	0.06
Education	3.09	1.18	2.64	1.04	2.55*	0.34
Discipline	1.77	0.79	1.53	0.79	673.0*	0.56
Social	3.46	1.04	2.25	1.04	6.60*	0.87

TE = Effect size, Cohen's d for t-test and biserial hierarchical correlation for the Wilcoxon signed-ranks test.

* = items where the value of W was reported.

¹: * = $p < 0.01$.

²: W-value was reported only for the comparison of the Discipline dimension for prison and liberty conditions.

Table 4.
Correlations between the scores of the dimensions of the PPI in the conditions of liberty and prison

Components	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Affection Liberty	—						
2. Education Liberty	0.68***	—					
3. Discipline Liberty	0.27*	0.23	—				
4. Social Liberty	0.64***	0.52***	0.23	—			
5. Affection Prison	0.04	-0.03	0.01	-0.02	—		
6. Education Prison	0.12	0.22	0.27*	0.05	0.60***	—	
7. Discipline Prison	0.07	-0.07	0.73***	0.12	0.15	0.33*	—
8. Social Prison	0.08	-0.07	-0.08	0.10	0.41**	0.40**	0.06

* = $p < 0.05$. ** = $p < 0.01$. *** = $p < 0.001$.

in liberty ($r = -0.40$; $p < 0.01$) and “Social” in liberty ($r = -0.35$; $p < 0.05$). Age was directly and significantly correlated with “Education” in liberty ($r = 0.38$; $p < 0.01$) and inversely with “Social” in prison condition ($r = -0.27$; $p < 0.05$).

Discussion

From the results, it was identified that the “Affection” dimension remained practically stable, while there was a decrease in the scores of the “Discipline” and “Education” dimensions. The “Social” dimension was the most affected by incarceration. As mentioned, the “Affection” dimension remained practically stable at 4.11 ($t = 0.43$; $p > 0.05$), which can be considered high, according to the instrument standardization, where the

maximum possible score is 5 (Benetti, & Balbinotti, 2003). When analyzing individually the scores in the “Affection” practices, we can see that the praise and friendly conversations about life or school remained high and stable. The demonstration of direct affection through hugs and kisses was reduced, which may be related to the decrease in contact due to the separation of fathers and children due to imprisonment. The small change in this dimension can be explained, to some extent, by the fact that being recognized as good fathers can be beneficial to the image of imprisoned men in front of the prison institution and their subsequent community reintegration, even though the appeal to paternity does not have the same force that the encouragement of motherhood has within the prison space (Arditti, 2012; Cúnico et al., 2020), a situation

that may have influenced the responses of the participants in this dimension.

In addition, without other “distractions” and with the reduction of the social network, family relationships tend to have a greater affective weight in the context of deprivation of liberty, which can also explain the stability of the “Affection” dimension. Still, some incarcerated fathers idealize and overestimate their relationships with their children, spending their time in prison creating expectations for when they get out of prison, and such expectations are also directed towards how to exercise their role as a father (Arditti, 2012).

As for the dimension “Discipline”, in the liberty condition, the highest mean value was 2.33 for item 9 (*screaming at the child when they do something wrong*). Regarding the changes due to incarceration, it was possible to identify that the scores for practices that involve arguing with their children and the difficulty in making them obey were low and stable, while there was a decrease in the use of spanking, when talking was not enough and reprimand with screams for doing something wrong. In this regard, it is possible to think that the pattern of relationship imposed by the prison has implied an optimization of the moments of direct relationship that these men have with their children. In this sense, some incarcerated fathers may start to resignify the relationship previously established with their children, starting to prioritize emotional involvement with the children (Granja, et al., 2013).

The correlation between parental practices of “Discipline” in the conditions of liberty and incarceration was the strongest association found, which indicates that these practices, in general, are evaluated as less affected by the process of serving sentences and prison isolation. The maintenance of discipline practices may be related to the fact that, although there is more incentive for men to participate in the affective care of their child, it is still for the exercise of authority that they direct their investment. Such direction, in the prison environment, becomes even more evident as it is socially understood that fathers who are not able to exercise authority and impose limits on their children would, therefore, raise irresponsible children and possibly criminals (Moreira, & Tonelli, 2013). It is even possible that these fathers have experienced authoritarian practices with their own fathers, which makes them reproduce these practices with their children (Arditti, 2012).

The correlation of the “Discipline” dimension in liberty with the time spent in prison was inverse

and, although moderate, indicates an interesting fact, namely: the longer the prison sentence, the lower the perception of the use of disciplinary parenting practices when in liberty. The types of crimes committed or the recidivism determine the possible length of prison sentences. Thus, there was a tendency for repeat offenders or fathers who had committed more serious crimes, and who had probably been in prison for longer, to perceive themselves as less disciplinarian when in liberty. However, the negative correlation between time spent in prison and Discipline practices was not maintained in the prison condition.

Possibly, such results are related to the fact that, not rarely, incarcerated individuals do not maintain close and active contact with their children when in liberty (Cúnico, et al., 2020), which may justify the little emphasis they place on disciplinary practices. In the same way that occurs with some separated parents (Almeida, et al., 2000), it is possible that the restricted relationship contact with their children has made the participants of this study prioritize other dimensions to the detriment of the discipline when they were not imprisoned.

In relation to the “Education” dimension, in the liberty condition, it had lower mean values than those in the prison condition. The highest value was 3.71 for item 5 (*talking about subjects she/he needs to know about life*). With incarceration, the practices that reduced the most were those of teaching the subject at school and helping with homework. One of the possible explanations for this fact may be related to the redirection of the father focus due to incarceration. As already mentioned, in the prison institution studied, the entry of children occurs only once a month, and it can take up to two shifts, which makes it difficult for the men in prison to have recurrent and systematic monitoring of school activities. Therefore, they seem to use their children visiting time for other activities that do not involve school.

Moreover, the greater or lesser presence of parenting practices with educational goals may be related to the very difference in income and education between the general population and the incarcerated population (Depen, 2017). Fathers with higher levels of education and income tend to give greater encouragement and prioritize the quality of their children education, in addition to being able to offer higher quality education, which affects the chances of career success and the earnings of the offspring (Benner, et al., 2016; Erola, et al., 2016). It is possible that individuals from the general population with the same education and income profile as people in prisons also have low averages in

education practices, especially male parents. This is because socialization and care related to formal and informal education fall mainly on mothers and educators (Cabrera, et al., 2018; Maia, & Soares, 2019). The limitations on freedom and interaction between fathers and children imposed by imprisonment further aggravate this situation (Turney, & Haskins, 2014). Age was also directly and significantly correlated with the dimension “Education” in liberty, which seems to indicate that parental maturity interferes with the parenting practices used.

With regard to the “Social” dimension, when in liberty, the mean score was 3.47, practically the same as found in a study with a sample of the general population (Benetti, & Balbinotti, 2003). The difference was only in the emphasis of practices, being more common in the sample of the general population to take to the movie and, among prisoners, to take to the square. Nevertheless, this was the dimension most affected by incarceration ($t = 6.60$; $p < 0.001$), as it assumes parenting practices that depend heavily on freedom of movement, direct and continuous contact, and involve the sharing of moments of leisure and interaction. In other words, the involvement that fathers deprived of liberty have with their children is limited to what is experienced during visits and/or through letters, phone calls or via the internet (Arditti, 2012), although, as already mentioned, in Brazil these last options are not legally authorized, but actually operate.

As is well known, Brazilian penitentiaries are internationally characterized by overcrowding and poor structural conditions (Rangel, & Bicalho, 2016), which means that visits take place in the cells and galleries, not in a specific space for this purpose. In some prisons, as in the case of the studied prison, there is a space with toys similar to a small square, which perhaps justifies the fact that the social practices presented in the instrument have not been zeroed.

As with the “Discipline” dimension, the correlation between prison time and the “Social” dimension in liberty was also inverse and moderate. It is known that being in liberty does not necessarily mean an involvement of closeness and intimacy with the children. On the contrary, many fathers even maintain a peripheral role in the children lives before imprisonment, giving a new meaning to fatherhood in prison and expanding the possibilities of exercising the role of father beyond the presence versus absence binomial (Granja, et al., 2013).

In relation to age, it was noticed that the older subjects were the ones who scored the least in the “Social”

dimension after being imprisoned. One might think that this is because older individuals deprived of liberty are also those who have older children whose contact is no longer very close and recurrent and/or also those who have more time of sentence to be served, consolidating physical distance.

Regarding the association between the dimensions, in the condition of liberty, the components “Affection”, “Education” and “Social” were strongly associated ($r > 0.5$; $p < 0.001$), forming a triad of relationships between these positive facets of parenting practices, dissociated from the “Discipline” factor. In turn, in the condition of prison, the correlations between the three components were weaker ($r > 0.30$; $p < 0.05$) and the factor “Discipline” was positively correlated with “Education” ($r = 0.33$; $p < 0.01$). These results indicate that the limitations imposed by prison impact on the reduction of positive practices. If in liberty they are strongly related, in prison, there is a tendency for fathers to carry out less socialization practices, which seems to affect other practices.

These results differ from the study carried out by Leme and Marturano (2014) on mothers in which the triad of positive practices and the “Discipline” dimension were inversely associated. It is possible that this difference was related to differences in parenting practices on the part of mothers and fathers, as the latter tend to emphasize expressions that denote authority over other dimensions of socialization (Cabrera, et al., 2018; Maia, & Soares, 2019).

In general, the results found here indicate an effect of imprisonment on fatherhood practices of education and socialization. Thus, they add to a broader set of evidence that corroborates Wakefield and Wildeman’s (2013) understanding of the effects of incarceration on the descendants and other relatives of individuals in prison situations. These authors argue, based on a robust body of evidence, that the policy of social exclusion imposed by the prison sentence has a devastating effect on future generations, similar to those of racist and slavery laws. The damage affects different areas of the lives of the children of prisoners (e.g., social, economic, educational) and will lead to a deepening of inequalities, condemning a generation of children, mostly black and poor, to misery and stigmatization.

Final Considerations

This study aimed to analyze and compare the self-assessment of parenting practices before and during

incarceration by men deprived of liberty. Parenting practices are strategies used by fathers/mothers to educate and deal with their children behavior. Based on this understanding, it is evident that for them to be performed, parents and children need to maintain some type of interaction. In the case of incarcerated fathers, even if the interaction is impacted due to the obvious physical separation that the prison imposes, the contact continues to take place through visitation, telephone calls mediated by prison institutions, in addition to contact via the internet, despite the legal prohibition of use of cell phones inside prisons. Considering that many men did not have daily contact with their children when they were in liberty, for many of them, the regularity of visits establishes a constancy of interaction that was not always present before, which allowed them to reflect on the parenting practices performed before and during incarceration under other operating parameters.

Some implications of the results can be highlighted. In an approximation with the scores of the general population, the present sample - for the condition in liberty - presented similar means for the "Social" dimension and lower, albeit close, for "Affection", "Discipline" and "Education". However, incarceration represented a decrease in the exercise of all parenting practices and a decrease in the association between the "Affection", "Education" and "Social" dimensions. The "Discipline" practices remained more stable in relation to the perception of practices before and after the deprivation of liberty. The "Social" dimension was the most affected in the participants perception, probably due to the limitations imposed by the prison, which seems to have affected the dimensions to which it was associated in the liberty condition (i.e., "Affection" and "Education"). Future studies should investigate whether, for individuals in the general population, there is a direct relationship between income and education of fathers/mothers and practices of the "Education" dimension (and the practice of the "Affection" dimension, *talking about school*).

It is important to emphasize that the study has some limitations. The sample consisted only of fathers, although initially the research proposal also relied on the participation of the partners of incarcerated subjects. Despite numerous contacts and attempts, only three women agreed to participate in the study. The participation of mothers would have allowed a contrast between the perception of parenting practices between incarcerated mothers and fathers, contributing to the

complexity of the research. In addition, the cross-sectional nature of the PPI application for the liberty/prison conditions may have affected the answers to some extent; ideally a longitudinal follow-up would be recommended, but it seems impracticable to carry out a research with such a methodological approach in this case, due to strong ethical and operational obstacles.

In addition to these issues, the difficulties of the study in operational terms caused by the institutional dynamics are also highlighted. The participation of a greater number of inmates was estimated considering the total population of the prison institution and the fact that most men are fathers. However, the mandatory use of handcuffs for some individuals, the numerous cancellations of the research due to the impossibility of moving prisoners within the institution and also the intermediation of the prison institution in the invitation for the participation of inmates meant that the research was ended with the final number of 65 subjects, not all meeting the study criteria.

Despite the limitations presented, it is understood that the results found contribute to the small body of evidence about the impacts of incarceration on prisoners and their families in Brazil, in addition to pointing to the relevance of programs that increase more positive parenting practices not only within prison institutions, but also in more marginalized contexts. It is known that the family can act both as a protective factor and as a risk factor for child development. Therefore, the increase in parental practices for a better exercise of fatherhood is an important factor for the development of children, especially for children and adolescents who grow up in contexts of exclusion, violence and shortage.

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