Mama’s House: An Examination of the Ability of Mothers to Parent while Imprisoned in Trinidad and Tobago

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There has been significant increases in the number of incarcerated women in Trinidad and Tobago over the past 13 years. According to recent data from the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service (2014), 75% of these women are mothers. This study examines imprisoned mothers ability to parent prior to and during their imprisonment as well as mother-children communication, reports of delinquency among children of incarcerated mothers and the stigmatization of mothers and children as a result of incarceration. This phenomenological study employs semi-structured interviews to harness the views of mothers at the Golden Grove Women’s Prison and will be conducted over a three months. It employs Attride-Stirling’s (2001) thematic network analysis approach to make meaning of the data collected. It is anticipated that the mothers will reveal feelings of anxiety, inadequacy, stress and lack of direct communication with their children due to their prison experience. This study has policy and programme implications for both incarcerated mothers and the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service that has responsibility for their custody and rehabilitation.

Keywords: Incarceration; mothers; children; parenting; Prison; Trinidad and Tobago