Imprisoned Mothers and Parenting: A Case Study in Trinidad and Tobago

Globally, there have been significant increases in the number of women who have been incarcerated and this is similar for women in Trinidad over the past 10 years. According to the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service (2018), 75% of these women incarcerated are mothers. This study examined the imprisoned mothers’ experiences with parenting, as well as the mother-child communication, the challenges with parent-interaction, and the eventual process of mothering from prison. This phenomenological study employed semi-structured interviews with the mothers at the Golden Grove Women’s Prison which were conducted over a period of three months. Attride-Stirling’s (2001) thematic network analysis was used to make meaning of the data collected. It was revealed that the mothers had feelings of anxiety, inadequacy, stress, and the experiences related to the lack of direct communication with their children, due to their imprisonment. This study has policy and program implications for both incarcerated mothers and the Trinidad and Tobago Prison Service, that has the responsibility for their custody and rehabilitation.

Keywords: incarcerated mothers, parenting, children, prison, mothering, Trinidad.