
A PROFILE OF INCARCERATED FEMALE OFFENDERS: IMPLICATIONS FOR REHABILITATION POLICY AND PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

Although still limited, inroads are being made in developing a body of knowledge about incarcerated female offenders in South Africa. We present key findings from a survey among this offender population with reference to their demographic characteristics, family background and criminal histories, as well as their uptake of rehabilitation initiatives. Data was obtained from 120 female offenders incarcerated in a South African correctional facility (sample coverage 80.0%). In addition to descriptive results on the profile of female offenders, non-parametric procedures were used to identify meaningful differences ($p < 0.05$) between the profiles of short-term and medium-term female offenders. The results revealed effect sizes of $r > -0.20$ between the two groups in respect of socio-demographic characteristics, previous arrests and prison sentences, self-harm, substance abuse, participation in rehabilitation programmes and expectancies of future criminality. The survey results call for specific reforms regarding current rehabilitation policy and practices, particularly with imprisoned short-term female offenders in mind as their profiles present unique vulnerabilities for future contact with the criminal justice system.

Keywords: *incarcerated female offenders; imprisoned short-term female offenders' profiles; rehabilitation policy and practices*

INTRODUCTION

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niversally, the best predictor of criminality is gender. Among all nations, communities, age groups and historical periods the male crime rate greatly exceeds that of females (Hagan, 2009: 33). In South Africa, female offenders constitute less than three percent of the entire prison population (Department of Correctional Services (DCS), 2015: 9). Due to this underrepresentation (Dastile, 2011: 289), traditional male dominance in academic spheres and low recidivism rates among female offenders (Hughes, 2005: 3), research on incarcerated offenders is skewed in favour of male offenders. Limited literature exists on female criminality (Du Preez, 2008: 193), yet in recent times there is growing interest – locally and abroad – in studying the incidence, nature and pathways associated with female criminality (Dastile, 2011: 288-289). Noteworthy contributions in this regard are:

- A profile of 348 female offenders by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV), and how experiences of violence influenced their criminal actions (Haffajee, Vetten & Greyling, 2006a; 2006b).
- A study by the Gender, Health & Justice Research Unit exploring the factors that caused 55 women to engage in criminal behaviour and eventual imprisonment (Artz, Hoffman-Wanderer & Moul, 2012).
- A profile of 56 female offenders by Dastile (2011) reflecting on characteristics and influences such as age, marital status, education, unemployment, childhood and adult abuse, and links between alcohol, drugs and crime.

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- Research by Steyn and Hall (2015) exploring the mental health of 64 female offenders, with specific reference to depression, anxiety and stress.
- Interviews conducted with 20 female ex-offenders exploring their experiences before, during and after imprisonment (Agboola, 2014: 74).

The present article adds to the growing body of knowledge on female offending by presenting key results of an in-depth profile of 120 adult female offenders in a South African correctional centre. Reference is particularly made to their demographic characteristics, family background, and criminal histories. In addition, the research distinguishes between the profiles of short-term and medium-term female offenders with the aim of identifying meaningful differences between the two groups. A further contribution of the paper relates to information about the uptake of developmental and rehabilitation initiatives by female offenders since such insights are important for discussions about rehabilitation policy and practice.

NUMBERS AND TRENDS IN FEMALE PRISON POPULATIONS

In 2015, 700 000 women and girls were either remand or sentenced offenders in correctional centres across the globe (Walmsley, 2015: 2). As of 2000, the global number of sentenced female offenders has increased by 50 percent, surpassing the 20 percent growth in the total world prison population during the same period. The regions of Oceania, Asia and the Americas carry the bulk of these increases, with Africa showing an increase of 22.6 percent in the number of imprisoned female offenders (Table 1). In some countries, increases over longer periods of time appear substantial. For example, over four decades the number of female prisoners under state and federal jurisdiction in the USA increased from 12 279 in 1977 to 112 961 in 2014 (Carson, 2014: 1; Carson, 2015: 1).

Table1: Global numbers of female prison populations

	Female prison population	Females as % of prison population	Female imprisonment rate (per 100 000)	Increase in female prison population since 2000
Africa	30 675	2.8	2.5	+ 22.6
Americas	297 663	4.9	12.1	+ 51.6
Asia	264 625	6.0	7.5	+84.0
Europe	103 250	4.9	5.4	+4.4
Oceania	3 790	4.1	5.6	+103.3
Global	700 003	4.4	6.0	+ 50.2

(Source: Walmsley, 2015: 13).

Despite increases in the global number of imprisoned female offenders, their incarceration rates remain lower than the general, and male imprisonment rates. The female imprisonment rate in the USA in 2014 was 65 per 100 000 of the population compared to the male imprisonment rate of 1 169 per 100 000 (Carson, 2015: 7). In South Africa, women in correctional facilities represent 2.6 percent of the total prison population with a female incarceration rate of 7.2 per 100 000 compared to the general prison population rate of 292 per 100 000 (Institute for Criminal Policy Research, 2015: np). The proportion of unsentenced and sentenced female offenders in South Africa appears stable over the last five years, although a slight rise in total numbers is noted between 2010/11 and 2015/15 (Table 2).

Table 2: Unsentenced and sentenced female offenders in South African prisons

Year	Unsentenced		Sentenced		Total
	n	%	n	%	
2010/11	963	26.8	2 625	73.2	3 588
2011/12	1 030	27.4	2 735	72.6	3 765
2012/13	988	26.2	2 392	73.8	3 765
2013/14	1 005	28.8	2 490	71.2	3 495
2014/15	1 048	26.8	2 867	73.2	3 915

(Source: DCS, 2015: 28).

In 2014/15, three female children (younger than 18 years), 92 female juveniles (18 – 20 years of age) and 2 772 adult female offenders (older than 21 years) were incarcerated in South African correctional facilities (DCS, 2015: 28).¹

CHARACTERISTICS OF AND PATHWAYS TO FEMALE OFFENDING

There appears to be some agreement among South African studies regarding characteristics that many female offenders commonly present. The following broad description summarises the evidence on these characteristics (*cf.* Artz et al, 2012; Dastile, 2011; Haffajee et al. 2006a, 2006b; Steyn & Hall, 2015), although the reader should keep in mind that results are often tied to the concepts used, and purposes of individual research studies. At the same time, the authors acknowledge the variations in evidence and that the summary provided here by no means applies to all female offenders incarcerated in South African prisons. What we do know is that a reasonable proportion of female offenders serve sentences for property and economic crimes, in particular theft and shoplifting. In the context of marginalisation and exclusion, economic need is often cited as a motivation for why women engaged in criminal behaviour. Few female offenders had fulltime employment prior to arrest and imprisonment, and some engaged in drug distribution and commercial sex work as a way of supporting their families. Apart from drug distribution and possession, evidence suggests linkages between substance abuse, illicit drug use and criminal behaviour in some women. Most female offenders are single and between the ages of 20 and 35 years, and the greater proportion have children. Very few imprisoned female offenders are foreign nationals. Education levels vary with roughly half of female offenders having completed some secondary school grades. Female offenders are mostly from low income backgrounds. About one in three to one in four female offenders experienced some form of abuse in childhood and/or adulthood. Domestic violence and having been in abusive relationships are characteristic of the lives of many female offenders.

In light of their characteristics and circumstances, various authors suggest that female offenders follow pathways to criminality that differ from men. Pathway perspectives explore the way in which the life experiences and histories of women interact and shape particular forms of problem and deviant behaviour (Artz et al, 2012: 217; Dastile, 2011: 288). The seminal work of Daly in the early 1990s formed the basis of research into female pathways. She studied the records of 40 women and constructed biographies with regard to their social and economic circumstances while growing up, running away, employment, family and economic situation at the time of the offence, experiences of abuse, substance use, previous arrest and convictions, and mental health. Daly identified five distinct routes female offenders follow to felony court (1993: 27-28):

- Harmed-and-harming women have been neglected as a child and were considered problem children who acted out. Substance use and psychological problems may give rise to aggressive crimes such as assault and attempted murder.
- Battered women were in a relationship with a violent male partner. The category includes women who recently terminated violent relationships, and their offences amount to assault, manslaughter and reckless endangerment.
- Street women were forced out or ran away from abusive home environments. They become involved in minor crime and commercial sex work to support their substance use habits, and often have multiple arrests and prison convictions.
- Drug-connected women are addicted to substances via relationships with men or they sell illicit substances via relationships with other family members. They mainly engage in the distribution of substances although other types of criminality could also be present.
- Other women include those committing crime due to immediate economic circumstances or greed. They do not engage in substance use and have no history of childhood abuse. The main motivation for criminal behaviour relates to the “desire for more money”.

Daly’s research sparked further research interest in women’s routes to criminality. For example, Brennan, Breitenbach and Dieterich (2010: 39) conducted a survey among 718 female inmates from two prisons in California and identified nuanced differences in some sub-groups of female offenders. Their typology amounts to three broad pathways, namely “normal” women (who present lower risk and nonviolence; committed property and drug-related crime); marginalised women (influenced by poverty and antisocial drug sub-cultures); and serious, chronic and violent women (similar to Daly’s harmed-and-harming women). Within these groups, sub-pathways emerged which highlight the convolution of factors that may overlap with other social and psychological influences, eventually leading to female criminal behaviour. The study advocates for gender-responsive assessment and subsequent differential developmental interventions.

To date, South African researchers appear to have adopted strong feminist views against the essentialist nature of pathway perspectives. Research by Artz et al. (2012: 219), for example, identified a series of factors that drive female criminality, including loss, trauma, abuse, domestic violence, poverty and economic exclusion. The authors do not propose particular pathways of female criminality in South African contexts since they believe that “[*there is no fixed list of factors that can be said to causally create criminal behaviour*]” [authors’ bold and italicisation for emphasis]. In a similar vein, Dastile (2013: 5297) laments the use of empirical methods that lead to generalisations of female criminal trajectories at the cost of understanding the complex circumstances and lived experiences of imprisoned women. Instead, the use of life histories is proposed to allow women the space to explain their individual lives and unique contexts that contributed to their criminal behaviour.

PROFILING AND INTERVENTION PLANNING

Profiling aims to identify, though empirical methods, personal and contextual traits that influence actions and patterns of criminality. Attention is specifically paid to associations between the characteristics of offenders and their crimes (Canter, 2000: 23). The aim of profile-based rehabilitation is to persuade offenders to accept positive and suitable norms and value systems, different social interaction options, and to develop skills so that they do not return to crime. The profiling approach requires meticulous and factual information of the various categories of offenders in order to facilitate the delivery of appropriate and successful correctional interventions. Support for the profiling approach is further highlighted by the

argument that rehabilitation is a process, which includes dealing with the history of offenders and the factors that contributed to their criminal behaviour (White Paper on Corrections, 2005: 82). Based on quality information, a correctional sentence plan can be developed for offenders, which pays specific attention to their needs and risks. Profiling focuses on the causes of crime, the nature and circumstance/s of the offence, conviction record, social circumstances of the offender, general crime trends, factors promoting crime, as well as the communities of origin of offenders.

In order to achieve its primary goal of rehabilitation and addressing recidivism, DCS supports a needs-based approach to rehabilitation. This approach advocates for interventions that purposefully balances criminogenic factors with the unique offence profile of offenders. Information gained by profiling criminality can be used in crime reduction strategies and to measure responses to crime by the criminal justice system. Furthermore, profiling can advance understandings about the motivations of and crimes committed by particular types of offenders (Kong & AuCoin, 2008: 2).

RESEARCH METHODS

A quantitative research approach was followed in compiling a profile of short-term and medium-term adult female offenders in light of the need for numerical data to statistically determine similarities and meaningful differences between the two groups (Dantzker & Hunter, 2012: 68). A survey was conducted since it focuses on establishing the prevalence of phenomena through a single contact session with respondents (Kumar, 2011: 11). The study population constituted all female offenders incarcerated at the Kgosi Mampuru II Correctional Centre in Tshwane. At the time of the survey, the female offender population totalled 150. A sample was not drawn since it was aimed to interview as many female offenders as possible. A total of 120 female offenders volunteered to participate in the study, resulting in a sample coverage of 80 percent. While this is noteworthy, care should nonetheless be taken when generalising the results to other correctional centres and contexts. Short-term offenders (i.e. those serving a sentence of less than two years) were fairly underrepresented in the study (n=33) compared to medium-term offenders (n=87). Nevertheless, the researchers are confident that the results provide valuable insights into the profiles of the two female offender populations.

Data was gathered by means of face-to-face interviews using a structured questionnaire. The instrument was designed following a review of relevant literature (cf. Dastile, 2011) on female offenders and covered: demographic, biographic and socio-economic status; family background; history of crime and criminality; current crime and motivations; physical and mental health; rehabilitation, education and skills development; and post-release support. The questionnaire contained both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The data gatherers were fluent in a number of local languages, which facilitated the gathering of information. The data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM Corp, 2016). An inspection of the descriptive data (in the form of histograms with normality curves) showed that the data was not normally distributed. In addition, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests revealed $p < 0.05$, which is indicative of a non-normal distribution. Therefore, the researchers had to opt for non-parametric measures to identify potential significant differences between short-term and medium-term female offenders. The Mann-Whitney U test was the logical option since it determines variance between two independent groups. Wherever a meaningful difference featured ($p < 0.05$), Z -scores were used to determine the effect size, in which case -0.1 indicates a weak effect size, -0.3 denotes a medium effect size and -0.5 represents a strong effect size (Field, 2009: 550).

The study adhered to the standard ethical considerations when gathering information from human subjects, namely confidentiality, no harm and voluntary participation.

Respondents were not deceived about the purpose and procedures of the study and they could withdraw from participation at any time without any penalties levied against them. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from DCS following approval by the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities (University of Pretoria).

RESEARCH RESULTS

The following section presents the empirical results of the survey among short-term and medium-term female offenders. The results are presented in table-format. It is important to bear in mind that percentages are rounded off to the first decimal, hence the percentage totals do not necessarily add up to exactly one hundred percent. Statistical differences between the two groups of female offenders are indicated in text before each table.

Background characteristics

The mean age of respondents was 35.65 years with a standard deviation of 9.68 years. The age distribution differed significantly ($p=0.002$; $r=-0.28$) with short-term offenders having been predominantly between the ages of 20 and 34, while medium-term offenders showed a normal distribution across the age categories (Table 3). Respondents indicated a wide variety of home languages, with 9.2 percent indicating a foreign language as their home language.

Table 3: Age and home language of respondents

	Total		Short-term		Medium-term	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Age (per 5-year category)						
20-24	14	11.8	7	21.2	7	8.1
25-29	25	21.0	11	33.3	14	16.3
30-34	23	19.3	7	21.2	16	18.6
35-39	18	15.1	2	6.0	16	18.6
40-44	14	11.8	2	6.0	12	14.0
45-49	14	11.8	1	3.0	13	15.1
≥50	11	9.2	3	9.1	8	9.3
Home language						
Afrikaans	17	14.3	5	15.2	12	14.0
English	8	6.7	-	-	8	9.3
isiNdebele	4	3.4	3	9.1	1	1.2
Sesotho sa Leboa	8	6.7	1	3.0	7	8.1
Sesotho	12	10.1	6	18.2	6	7.0
siSwati	1	0.8	-	-	1	1.2
Xitsonga	2	6.7	2	6.1	6	7.0
Seswana	18	15.1	8	24.2	10	11.6
Tshivenda	2	1.7	-	-	2	2.3
isiXhosa	5	4.2	-	-	5	5.8
isiZulu	17	14.3	3	9.1	14	16.3
Multiple languages	7	5.9	2	6.1	5	5.8
Shona	5	4.2	3	9.1	2	2.3
Spanish	4	3.4	-	-	4	4.7
Portuguese	4	3.4	-	-	1	1.2
German	1	0.8	-	-	1	1.2
Thai	1	0.8	-	-	1	1.2
Dutch	1	0.8	-	-	1	1.2

The population groups of the two categories of female offenders differed slightly (Table 4). Although most offenders in both groups associated themselves with the Black population group, short-term offenders (81.8%) carried a disproportionate bulk of Black respondents compared to the medium-term group (67.4%). Four in every five respondents were South African citizens.

Table 4: Population group and nationality of respondents

	Total		Short-term		Medium-term	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Population group						
Black	85	71.4	27	81.8	58	67.4
White	20	16.8	5	15.2	15	17.4
Mixed race	13	10.9	1	3.0	12	14.0
Asian	1	0.8	-	-	1	1.2
Nationality						
South African	94	80.3	25	80.6	69	80.3
Non-South African	23	19.7	6	19.4	17	19.8

The two offender groups presented differences in their marital status (Table 5). Short-term offenders were more likely to be single (69.7%) compared to medium-term offenders (46.5%). More medium-term offenders were divorced (13.4%) or separated (10.5%) compared to only one short-term offender who was divorced (3.0%). Nearly half of respondents (48.7%) had either one or two children.

Table 5: Marital status and number of children of respondents

	Total		Short-term		Medium-term	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Marital status						
Single	63	52.9	23	69.7	40	46.5
Married	19	16.0	3	9.1	16	18.6
Divorced	17	14.3	1	3.0	16	13.4
Separated	9	7.6	-	-	9	10.5
Widow	8	6.7	3	9.1	5	5.8
Living with partner	1	0.8	1	3.0	-	-
Engaged	2	1.7	2	6.1	-	-
Number of children						
None	19	16.0	6	18.2	13	15.1
1-2	58	48.7	17	51.5	41	47.7
3-4	29	24.4	7	21.2	22	25.6
≥5	13	10.9	3	9.1	10	11.6

A slightly different picture prevailed regarding the educational levels of short-term and medium-term offenders (Table 6). More medium-term offenders (24.4%) held a diploma or degree compared to short-term offenders (12.1%). In both groups, roughly one in three had obtained Grade 12. The vast majority of respondents (87.1%) attended public schools.

Table 6: Education and schooling of respondents

	Total		Short-term		Medium-term	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Highest qualification achieved						
No schooling	1	0.8	-	-	1	1.2
Grade 1-2	3	2.5	-	-	3	3.5
Grade 3-7	8	6.7	4	12.1	4	4.7
Grade 8-11	44	37.0	14	42.4	30	34.9
Grade 12	38	32.0	11	33.3	27	31.4
Diploma	16	13.4	3	9.1	13	15.1
Degree	9	7.6	1	3.0	8	9.3
Type of school attended						
Private school	15	12.9	3	9.1	12	14.0
Public school	105	87.1	30	90.9	75	85.9

The two respondent categories showed different residential arrangements prior to their imprisonment (Table 7). Half of the short-term female offenders indicated having lived with their parents (51.5%) prior to receiving a prison sentence compared to 35.7 percent of medium-term offenders. Roughly a third of short-term (34.5%) and medium-term offenders (31.6%) grew up in townships.

Table 7: Residential arrangements and area in which respondents grew up

	Total		Short-term		Medium-term	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Residential arrangements						
Living with parents	47	40.2	17	51.5	30	35.7
Husband/partner	27	23.1	7	21.2	20	23.8
Children	19	16.2	5	15.2	14	16.7
Alone	12	10.3	1	3.0	11	13.1
With other relatives	12	10.3	3	9.1	9	10.7
Type of area grown up in						
Urban (city and metropolitan)	50	46.9	12	41.4	38	48.1
Rural (small town)	23	21.3	7	24.1	16	20.3
Township	35	32.4	10	34.5	25	31.6

Roughly one in three female offenders (33.1%) was unemployed prior to imprisonment (Table 8). Nearly twice the proportion of medium-term offenders (39.5%) were full-time employed compared to short-term offenders (21.9%). Short-term offenders were more likely to have been employed part-time (25.0%) or on a contract-basis (15.6%). There was a significant difference in the household income status prior to imprisonment ($p=0.026$; $r=-0.21$) with more short-term offenders (67.7%) having grown up in low income households compared to medium-term offenders (39.5%).

Table 8: Employment and household income of respondents prior to imprisonment

	Total		Short-term		Medium-term	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Employment status prior to prison						
Unemployed	39	33.1	11	34.4	28	32.6
Contract-basis	7	5.9	5	15.6	2	2.3
Self-employed	15	12.7	1	3.1	14	16.3
Part-time employed	16	13.6	8	25.0	8	9.3
Full-time employed	41	34.7	7	21.9	34	39.5
Household income prior to prison						
Low income	53	47.3	21	67.7	32	39.5
Middle income	44	39.3	6	19.4	38	46.9
High income	15	13.4	4	12.9	11	13.6

Respondents grew up in fairly large households (Table 9). More than one in three respondents (38.1%) had five or more siblings. More short-term offenders were raised by both parents (60.6%) compared to medium offenders (45.3%). Of all respondents, one in five (21.2%) reported substance abuse by parents, predominantly alcohol abuse (88.9%).

Table 9: Family background of respondents

	Total		Short-term		Medium-term	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Family size						
No siblings	12	10.2	5	15.2	7	8.2
1-2 siblings	26	22.0	7	21.2	19	22.4
3-4 siblings	35	29.7	10	30.3	25	29.4
≥5 siblings	45	38.1	11	33.3	34	40.0
Primarily raised by						
Both parents	59	49.6	20	60.6	39	45.3
Mother only	40	33.6	8	24.2	32	37.2
Father only	3	2.5	2	6.1	1	1.2
Grandparents	12	10.1	2	6.1	10	11.6
Other guardians	4	3.4	1	3.0	3	3.5
Foster care	1	0.8	-	-	1	1.2
Absence or loss of parent(s)						
Divorced	8	9.3	-	-	8	12.5
Separated	13	15.1	4	18.2	9	14.1
Desertion	4	4.7	-	-	4	6.2
Death	61	71.0	18	81.8	43	67.2
Parents substance abuse						
	26	22.0	9	27.3	17	20.0
Type of substance abused (parents)						
Alcohol	24	88.9	8	88.9	16	88.9
Drugs	3	11.1	1	11.1	2	11.1

Roughly one in seven respondents (16.0%) reported having been abused as a child (Table 10). One in three medium-term offenders (31.8%) reported emotional abuse, although sexual abuse (42.9%) was the main type of abuse reported by respondents. The perpetrator of abuse was, in the majority of cases (84.2%), known to the respondent.

Table 10: Experiences of child abuse among respondents

	Total		Short-term		Medium-term	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Abused as a child	19	16.0	5	15.2	14	16.3
Type of abuse						
Sexual	12	42.9	3	50.0	9	40.9
Emotional	7	25.0	-	-	7	31.8
Physical	9	32.1	3	50.0	6	27.3
Relationship to abuser						
Parent/guardian	8	42.1	2	40.0	6	42.9
Other relative(s)	6	31.6	1	20.0	5	35.7
Friend/acquaintance	2	10.5	2	40.0	-	-
Stranger	3	15.8	-	-	3	21.4

One in three short-term offenders (33.3%) and one in five medium-term offenders (22.6%) had a family member who had been arrested in the past (Table 11). These family members were mostly a brother (40.0%) or an uncle (42.6%) who was arrested for either an economic (39.4%) or an aggressive (39.4%) crime.

Table 11: Family members of respondents who have been arrested

	Total		Short-term		Medium-term	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Family member ever been arrested	30	25.6	11	33.3	19	22.6
Family member arrested						
Husband/partner	1	2.9	-	-	1	5.3
Parent	2	5.7	-	-	2	10.5
Brother	14	40.0	5	45.5	9	47.4
Uncle	15	42.6	6	54.5	6	31.6
Other	3	8.6	-	-	3	15.8
Offence for which family member arrested						
Economic	13	39.4	4	36.4	9	40.9
Aggressive	13	39.4	5	45.5	8	36.4
Sexual	5	15.6	2	18.2	3	13.6
Other	2	6.1	-	-	2	9.1

Self-reported substance abuse

Short-term female offenders were significantly ($p=0.012$; $r=-0.23$) more likely to have ever abused substances compared to medium-term offenders (Table 12). The majority of medium-term offenders (80.2%) reported to never have engaged in substance abuse. Two in five short-term offenders (42.4%) reportedly had used substances in the past. The frequency of 'type of substances' ($n=49$) surpassed the actual number of respondents who reported substance abuse ($n=31$) suggesting poly-substance use in the past by some respondents.

Table 12: Self-reported substance abuse by respondents

	Total		Short-term		Medium-term	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Ever engaged in substance abuse	31	26.1	14	42.4	17	19.8
Type of substances abused						
Alcohol	13	26.5	4	19.0	9	23.1
Dagga	7	14.3	2	9.5	5	17.9
Ecstasy	1	2.0	1	4.8	-	-
Crack cocaine	6	12.2	3	14.3	3	10.7
Heroin	10	20.4	4	19.0	6	21.4
Nyaope	8	16.3	5	23.8	3	10.7
Rocks	1	2.0	-	-	1	3.6
Most of them	3	6.1	2	9.5	1	3.6

Physical and mental health

Roughly two in five respondents (44.9%) reported a health concern (Table 13). On their own volition, 21 (39.6%) respondents with a health concern reported HIV/AIDS. Cholesterol (n=17; 34.0%) was a health condition of concern mostly reported by medium-term offenders.

Table 13: Physical health of respondents

	Total		Short-term		Medium-term	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Health problem	53	44.9	14	42.4	39	46.4
Nature of medical problem						
TB	4	7.6	1	7.1	3	6.0
Asthma	5	9.4	1	7.1	4	8.0
Cholesterol	17	32.1	-	-	17	34.0
High blood pressure	3	5.6	-	-	3	6.0
Diabetes	5	9.4	2	14.3	3	6.1
HIV/AIDS	21	39.6	8	57.1	13	26.0
Arthritis	5	9.4	1	7.1	4	8.0
Ulcers	3	5.6	1	7.1	2	4.0
Cancer	1	1.9	-	-	1	2.0

The majority of respondents (77.5%) were not diagnosed by or receiving treatment from a psychologist (Table 14). Of those diagnosed or being treated, the vast majority suffered from depression (81.5%). More short-term female offenders (48.5%) had thought of suicide compared to medium-term offenders (31.4%). Short-term female offenders were significantly ($p=0.028$; $r=-0.20$) more inclined to have attempted suicide compared to medium-term offenders.

Table 14: Mental health of respondents

	Total		Short-term		Medium-term	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Diagnosed/treated by psychologist	27	22.5	5	15.6	22	25.6
Nature of psychological problem						
Depression	22	81.5	5	83.3	17	77.3
Bipolar disorder	5	18.5	1	16.7	4	18.2
Anxiety disorder	1	3.7	-	-	1	4.5
Ever thought of suicide	43	35.8	16	48.5	27	31.4
Ever attempted suicide	30	25.2	13	39.4	17	19.8

Previous arrest and prison sentences

A small percentage of respondents had been placed in a reformatory or secure care facility in the past (Table 15). Short-term offenders were significantly more likely ($p=0.001$; $r=-0.31$) to have been arrested before their current prison sentence (48.5%) compared to medium-term offenders (17.4%).² Short-term offenders were younger than medium-term offenders at the age of their first arrest. The majority of female offenders who were arrested before committed crimes of an economic nature (60.0%).

Table 15: Previous arrest and offences of respondents

	Total		Short-term		Medium-term	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Placed in reformatory/secure care	5	4.2	2	6.1	3	3.5
Ever been arrested before	31	26.1	16	48.5	15	17.4
Age of first arrest						
≤15	5	16.1	3	18.8	2	13.3
16-18	4	12.9	2	12.5	2	13.3
19-21	6	19.4	4	25.0	2	13.3
22-24	5	16.1	4	25.0	1	6.7
≥25	11	35.5	3	18.8	8	53.3
Times arrested before						
Once	8	26.7	4	25.0	4	28.6
2-3 times	11	36.7	4	25.0	7	50.0
4-5 times	4	13.3	4	25.0	-	-
≥6	7	23.3	4	25.0	3	21.4
Offence for which arrested						
Aggressive	12	30.0	6	31.6	6	28.6
Economic	24	60.0	12	63.2	12	57.1
Narcotics	4	10.0	1	5.3	3	14.3

Short-term offenders were significantly ($p=0.015$; $r=-0.22$) more likely to have served a prison sentence prior to their current incarceration (30.3%) compared to medium-term offenders (11.6%) (Table 16). Less than a third of respondents (30.0%) who served a previous sentence attended rehabilitation programmes.

Table 16: Previous imprisonment of respondents

	Total		Short-term		Medium-term	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Served a prior prison sentence	20	16.8	10	30.3	10	11.6
Number of prison sentences						
1	7	35.0	1	10.0	6	60.0
2-3	7	35.0	5	50.0	2	20.0
4-5	1	5.0	1	10.0	-	-
≥6	5	25.0	3	30.0	2	20.0
Offence						
Aggressive	10	40.0	5	38.5	5	41.7
Economic	13	52.0	7	53.8	6	50.0
Narcotics	2	8.0	1	7.7	1	8.3
Attended rehabilitation	6	30.0	2	20.0	4	40.0

Current prison sentence

More short-term female offenders (68.9%) than medium-term offenders (42.5%) served a sentence for economic offences (Table 17). More than two thirds of short-term offenders (69.7%) served sentences of one year or less. Nearly half of all respondents (46.6%) stated that they had committed crime due to economic needs. Substance use as a motivation for criminal behaviour was more readily reported by short-term offenders (18.9%) compared to medium-term offenders (8.3%).

Table 17: Current prison sentences of respondents

	Total		Short-term		Medium-term	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Offence (current sentence)						
Aggressive	24	18.2	1	2.2	23	26.4
Economic	68	51.5	31	68.9	37	42.5
Narcotics	25	18.9	3	6.7	22	25.3
Other	15	11.4	10	22.2	5	5.7
Duration of sentence						
≤6 months	17	14.2	17	51.5	-	-
7-12 months	6	5.0	6	18.2	-	-
>1-2 years	10	8.3	10	30.3	-	-
>2-5 years	23	19.2	-	-	23	26.4
>5-10 years	26	21.7	-	-	26	29.9
>10-15 years	28	23.3	-	-	28	32.2
>15 years	10	8.3	-	-	10	11.5
Motive/reason for offence						
Opportunity	4	3.0	1	2.7	3	3.1
Unintentional	12	9.0	3	8.1	9	9.4
Thrill/excitement	5	3.8	1	2.7	4	4.2
Economical need	62	46.6	14	37.8	48	50.0
Substance use	15	11.3	7	18.9	8	8.3
Forced/coerced	12	9.0	4	10.8	8	8.3
Self-defence	5	3.8	-	-	5	5.2
Anger/frustration	6	4.5	2	5.4	4	4.2
Don't know	6	4.5	3	8.1	3	3.1
Not guilty/framed	6	4.5	2	5.4	4	4.2

Participation and rating of rehabilitation programmes

A significant difference ($p < 0.001$; $r = -0.43$) prevailed regarding female offenders' participation in rehabilitation programmes (Table 18). The majority of short-term offenders (75.8%) were not attending rehabilitation programmes while roughly two in three medium-term offenders (69.4%) were attending rehabilitation programmes. Most respondents (84.2%) who were attending rehabilitation provided a positive rating of the programmes.

Table 18: Respondents' attendance of rehabilitation programmes

	Total		Short-term		Medium-term	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Currently attending rehabilitation	67	55.0	8	24.2	59	69.4
Rehab programme attending						
Anger management	34	24.5	3	23.1	31	24.6
Crossroads	20	14.4	1	7.7	19	15.1
Restorative justice	26	18.7	3	23.1	23	18.3
New Beginnings	3	2.6	-	-	3	2.4
Pre-release programme	7	5.0	-	-	7	5.6
Stop to start	4	2.9	-	-	4	3.2
Economic crimes	1	0.7	-	-	1	0.8
Life skills	7	5.0	2	15.4	5	4.0
HIV	20	14.4	2	15.4	18	14.3
Bible study	9	6.5	2	15.4	7	5.6
All	4	2.9	-	-	4	3.8
Most of them	2	1.4	-	-	2	1.6
TB	2	1.4	-	-	2	1.6
Rating of rehabilitation programmes						
Very good	35	55.6	4	50.0	31	56.4
Good	18	28.6	3	37.5	15	27.3
Average	6	9.5	-	-	6	9.5
Poor	2	3.2	1	12.5	1	1.8
Very poor	2	3.2	-	-	2	3.6

Education, skills training and working in prison

Significantly ($p < 0.001$; $r = -0.47$) more medium-term female offenders (68.6%) were attending education in prison compared to short-term offenders (15.2%) (Table 19). Nearly a third of all respondents attended Adult Basic Education Training (ABET) (30.1%), and one in five attended tertiary education (21.5%) and life skills training (20.4%). Two in five short-term offenders (42.9%) stated that their prison sentences were too short to benefit from educational training.

Table 19: Respondents' attendance of education training

	Total		Short-term		Medium-term	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Attending education	64	53.3	5	15.2	59	68.6
Education programme attending						
ABET	28	30.1	5	41.7	23	28.4
Grade 10-12	16	17.2	4	33.3	12	14.8
Tertiary education	20	21.5	-	-	20	24.7
Recreational	6	6.5	2	16.7	4	4.9
Life skills	19	20.4	1	8.3	18	22.2
All except tertiary	2	2.2	-	-	2	2.7
Most of them	2	2.2	-	-	2	2.7
Reason for not attending education						
Not aware of programme	11	26.2	8	28.6	3	21.4
Not interested	14	33.3	5	17.9	9	64.3
Sentence too short	14	33.3	12	42.9	2	14.3
Not court ordered	3	7.14	3	10.7	-	-

Significantly ($p < 0.001$; $r = -0.33$) more medium-term female offenders (45.3%) attended skills training in prison compared to short-term offenders (9.1%) (Table 20). Beautician (36.5%) and needlework (28.6%) training were mostly attended. Nearly one in three short-term female offenders (31.0%) stated that their sentences were too short to benefit from skills training programmes.

Table 20: Respondents' attendance of skills training programmes

	Total		Short-term		Medium-term	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Attending skills training	42	35.3	3	9.1	39	45.3
Skills programme						
Beauty	23	36.5	-	-	23	38.3
Arts and crafts	11	17.5	1	33.3	10	16.7
Needlework	18	28.6	1	33.3	17	28.3
Computer	6	9.5	1	33.3	5	8.3
Workshop	4	6.3	-	-	4	6.7
Baking	1	1.6	-	-	1	1.7
Reason not attending skills training						
Not aware of programme	25	34.2	11	37.9	14	30.4
Not interested	21	28.8	6	20.7	15	32.6
Sentence too short	12	16.4	9	31.0	3	6.5
Still new here	15	20.5	3	10.3	12	26.1

Significantly ($p=0.045$; $r=-0.18$) more medium-term female offenders (57.0%) were working in prison compared to short-term offenders (36.4%) (Table 21). Of the short-term offenders who did work while in prison, the majority were cleaning offices (61.5%). Medium-term offenders performed a variety of tasks in the correctional facility. A third of short-term female offenders (33.3%) stated that their sentences were too short to perform work in the prison.

Table 21: Respondents working in prison

	Total		Short-term		Medium-term	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Currently working in prison	61	51.3	12	36.4	49	57.0
Nature of work in prison						
Shop	5	7.8	1	7.7	4	7.8
Library	3	4.7	1	7.7	2	3.9
Salon	1	1.6	-	-	1	1.9
Kitchen	7	10.9	-	-	7	13.7
Office cleaning	10	15.6	8	61.5	2	3.9
Workshop	12	18.8	2	15.4	10	19.6
Tutor	11	17.2	1	7.7	10	19.6
Outside (guesthouse)	4	6.3	-	-	4	7.8
Laundry	6	9.4	-	-	6	11.8
Plumbing	1	1.6	-	-	1	1.9
Administration	1	1.6	-	-	1	1.9
Health	2	3.1	-	-	2	3.9
Spiritual worker	1	1.6	-	-	1	1.9
Reason for not working in prison						
Not offered work	11	22.0	6	28.6	5	17.2
Not interested	15	30.0	6	28.6	9	31.0
Sentence too short	10	20.0	7	33.3	3	10.3
Currently studying	11	22.0	-	-	11	37.9
Still new here	2	4.0	1	4.8	1	3.4
Unable due to illness	1	2.0	1	4.8	-	-

Contact with family and post-release support

The majority of respondents had contact with their family members (Table 22). Contact was maintained by means of visits (51.8%) and telephone calls (27.7%) or both (20.5%). Short-term offenders (66.7%) received more visits than medium-term offenders (46.3%). The majority of respondents indicated that they have stable support to return to upon their release from prison. Most indicated that it is unlikely that they will be imprisoned again in future (93.3%), although short-term offenders were significantly ($p=0.002$; $r=-0.28$) more likely to have answered 'unsure' or 'likely' to the question.

Table 22: Family contact, post-release support and future imprisonment

	Total		Short-term		Medium-term	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Contact with family	112	94.1	29	87.9	83	96.5
Nature of contact with family						
Visits	58	51.8	20	66.7	38	46.3
Telephone calls	31	27.7	6	20.0	25	30.5
Visits and calls	23	20.5	4	13.3	19	23.2
Stable support following release	103	86.6	28	84.8	75	88.2
Likelihood of future imprisonment						
Likely	1	0.8	1	3.0	-	-
Unsure	7	5.9	4	12.1	3	3.5
Unlikely	111	93.3	28	84.8	83	96.5

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this research indicate that female offenders have some specific concerns that may impact on their rehabilitation and subsequent reoffending prognoses. The short-term offenders were predominantly younger than 34 years and it is, therefore, not surprising that a significant number reported that they are single, compared to the medium-term offenders who showed a normal distribution across age categories, and who are more likely to be divorced or separated. These findings correspond with national and international studies, which indicate that the majority of female inmates are single (Dastile 2011: 296; Wright, Van Voorhis, Salisbury & Bauman, 2012: 1615). One possible explanation is the so-called chivalry perspective, which states that married woman with children are less likely to be sentenced to a period of imprisonment (Brown, Esbensen & Geis, 2007: 72). However, such arguments could be challenged in light of the present findings that most female offenders had children. Half of the respondents had one or two children. Incarcerated mothers with children pose a particular concern in correctional settings. Sorbello, Eccleston, Ward and Jones (2002: 201) state that these mothers often experience feelings of despair, frustration and even depression due to forced separation from their children. Therefore, it is important to offer programmes that will strengthen the mother-child relationship during incarceration. DCS, in collaboration with the Department of Basic Education, is making great strides in this regard by offering early childhood development programmes to all mothers incarcerated with their infants. These programmes are aimed at strengthening the attachment between mother and child, promoting rehabilitation and providing child care education to the mother (Mkosi, 2013: 62-63).

The majority of respondents from both offender populations completed Grades 8 -11, with more medium-term offenders obtaining a diploma or degree. The low level of education among some female offenders may contribute to them having difficulty finding employment after release or result in them being employed at low paying and low skilled jobs. Getting incarcerated female offenders involved in education activities shows potential in counteracting the negative influence of prison life (cf. Steyn & Hall, 2015). Furthermore, a lack of education could be a contributing factor to their offending behaviour (Wright et al, 2012: 1615). One in three offenders from the present survey was unemployed prior to incarceration, and a criminal record could severely hamper prospects of future employment. Moreover, Agboola (2014: 83) found that the unemployment rate for female offenders doubled after release. Furthermore, respondents from both offender populations indicated that they grew up in large households in the low to middle income bands, although short-term offenders were significantly more likely ($r=-0.21$) to come from low income households. The family life of some female offenders was characterised by substance abuse by parents. Furthermore, the offender groups were also likely

to have had a family member arrested for crime, most notably a brother or an uncle. Farrington et al. (2001: 579) found a correlation between family criminality and the delinquent behaviour of boys, and the present findings suggest that these observations may equally apply to some profiles of female offenders, in particular regarding previous arrest. Noteworthy from the present profile, and in contrast with most other research on female crime (*cf.* Borrill, Burnett, Atkins, Miller, Briggs, Weaver & Maden, 2003; Byrne & Howells, 2002; Sorbello et al, 2002), is the relatively low reporting of childhood abuse. The finding is lower than that reported by Dastile (2011) and Artz et al. (2012), and could be ascribed to the limitations associated with the data gathering methods.

A noteworthy finding of the present survey is that short-term offenders were significantly more likely ($r=-0.31$) to have been arrested before their current sentence compared to the medium-term offenders. Short-term offenders were also younger than the medium-term offenders at the age of their first arrest. This trend could be worrisome as it is postulated that females who engage in criminal behaviour from an early age are more likely than other girls to engage in antisocial behaviour by the age of 32 years (Dastile, 2011: 295). The majority of previous arrests, previous prison sentences and current prison sentence were for economic offences. This finding corresponds with research on female crime (Chesney-Lind & Pasko, 2004; Dastile, 2011; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002; Wright et al, 2012), which indicates that female offenders are more likely to commit non-violent economic offences, such as shoplifting, fraud and embezzlement, whereas their male counterparts were more likely to commit serious and violent property crimes. Furthermore, economic offences such as shoplifting are more likely to be committed by younger female offenders. Given their socio-economic backgrounds and the prominence of economic offences, it is not surprising that nearly half of the female offenders in the present survey cited economic need as the main motivation for having engaged in criminal behaviour. In the Handbook on Women and Imprisonment (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2014) it is stated that female offenders are less likely to have been employed, compared to men, before incarceration, and that in the majority of cases poverty was cited as the main reason for the offending behaviour. It is, therefore, imperative for the DCS to provide female offenders with adequate and equal opportunities for vocational training whilst incarcerated. Not only will this enable them to enter the workforce after incarceration, but to compete equally with their male counterparts. Possible vocational programmes should entail administrative skills, bookkeeping, electro-technology, managing income and creating community projects (UNODC, 2014). This is a complete paradigm shift from the current gender stereotyped training (beauty skills and needle work) being offered by DCS.

Significantly fewer short-term offenders were attending rehabilitation programmes compared to medium-term offenders ($r=-0.43$). Of those who attended rehabilitation programmes, the majority attended anger management, restorative justice and HIV programmes. Although it is stipulated in the Correctional Services Act (111 of 1998) that offenders serving a sentence of less than 24 months are not compelled to attend rehabilitation programmes, it is recommended that this stipulation be reviewed by DCS. Moreover, only one respondent attended the economic-specific rehabilitation programme, this despite most female offenders being incarcerated for economic offences. It is recommended that these economic offenders attend the economic crime programme – theft category, as this intervention provides offenders with the necessary skills and knowledge to address and correct their offending behaviour. The programme, furthermore, targets specific theft-related offences such as petty theft and shoplifting (Heyns, 2012: np). Although there are ten national correctional programmes, it is argued here that none of these programmes focus on the specific needs of the female offender such as abuse, parenting and self-image (Sorbello et al, 2002: 202). DCS should consider revisiting the content of their correctional programmes; for example, the

content of the standard anger management and substance abuse programmes should be presented differently to female offenders. Substance abuse may serve a different function for women than for men as women may use drugs and alcohol to numb emotions in an attempt to escape their realities (Byrne & Howells, 2011: 41). Regarding anger, it has been noted that women are more likely to suppress anger as it is unacceptable for a woman to have a violent outburst fuelled by anger. However, in correctional settings woman can more freely express their anger, but lack the coping skills to regulate anger and, ultimately, how to manage their anger (Sorbello et al, 2002: 200). There has long been a debate about the gender specific needs of female offenders and the 'custom made' rehabilitation programmes for this offender group. For example, Australian correctional programmes for female offenders focus on self-esteem, parenting, communication and assertiveness, skills and change, life choices and stress management. Canadian corrections have a core programme for female offenders, which includes the following: living skills programmes (parenting skills, leisure education and community integration); substance abuse programme specifically designed for female offenders; literacy and continuous learning programme based on the employment and personal needs of women; survivors of abuse and trauma programmes to assist female offenders in dealing with violence they may have suffered; and mother-child support where the well-being of the child is the primary focus (Byrne & Howells, 2011: 40). Furthermore, it is noteworthy that none of the short-term offenders reported attending the pre-release programme. This programme is essential as it prepares offenders for successful reintegration by providing them with skills to cope with post-release activities and reintegration into society (Heyns, 2012: np). The programme is compulsory for all offenders who have an approved release date, and could be extended to short-term offenders.

A particularly worrisome finding from the present study relates to suicide ideation, as well as reported suicide attempts, which is especially more pertinent among the short-term offender population. This finding is not unique to the South African female offender population. In a study conducted by Borrill et al. (2003: 229) with 301 women in ten different prisons in England, half of the women reported at least one act of self-harm and 46 percent reported attempted suicide. Similarly, a study by the Office for National Statistics in England and Wales indicated that a high proportion (50%) of female offenders on remand reported suicidal thoughts or attempted to commit suicide (27%) (Borrill et al, 2003: 230). It is suggested that correctional staff be trained to detect risk of self-harm and suicide ideation and refer such cases to social workers and psychologists (UNODC, 2014: 65). Although such steps appear attainable, DCS officials are trained to focus on rehabilitation and safe custody (White Paper on Corrections, 2005). In light of severe overcrowding and resource constraints, it is understandable that safe custody should be the main concern of correctional staff. Even if officials receive relevant training, the shortage of professional staff in corrections may hamper referral procedures. Although the majority of the respondents were not being treated for a mental illness, those who were diagnosed and treated suffered mostly from depression. This finding correlates with other research, which reports that female offenders are more likely than male offenders to suffer from depression (Gussak, 2009: 205). Other mental and health issues include borderline personality disorder, anger control and poor self-esteem (Sorbello et al, 2002: 200; Wright et al, 2012: 1615).

One in four respondents had engaged in substance abuse, and more so short-term offenders compared to medium-term offenders ($r=-0.23$). In addition, substance abuse was the second most frequently reported motivation why short-term female offenders had engaged in criminal behaviour. Substance abuse interventions should clearly be geared towards short-term offenders as addiction and related crimes (possession and distribution) have long been identified as a distinct pathway to female criminal behaviour (Daly, 1993: 28). Not only should substance abuse programmes be aimed at short-term offenders, they must also include the

individual background factors that shaped the woman's pathway to criminal behaviour. In this regard, Covington and Bloom (2006: 11) emphasise that addiction treatment focusing on the female offender's unique makeup are more effective in treating substance abuse than the traditional programmes aimed at male offenders. The current Stop-to-Start DCS programme is a standardised programme presented to both male and female inmates. The majority of short-term offenders reported the use of substances, yet none of them indicated attending the Stop-to-Start substance abuse programme. The programme is designed with the aim of helping offenders gain insight into the negative effects of the substances on their well-being, and ultimately on offending behaviour (Heyns, 2012: np). Although DCS are short-staffed with regards to social workers, psychologists and correctional officials to facilitate the programmes offered to offenders, senior and postgraduate social work, psychology and criminology students can assist in this regard.

Medium-term offenders were significantly more likely to attend education and skills training than short-term offenders ($r=-0.33$). Short-term offenders reported that their sentences were too short or that they were not aware of any skills training programmes as reasons for not attending education and training. It is, however, noted that, in general, adult female offenders lack the motivation to attend courses and training programmes (Sorbelli et al, 2002: 201). It is also noted in the report by the Social Exclusion Unit (2002: 49) that short-term offenders often miss out the most on education and training opportunities. In addition, their needs should be comprehensively assessed and education and skills training opportunities based on their specific needs. It is recommended that DCS deliver short, practical and attainable programmes to especially the short-term offenders, for example, basic computer skills and planning career goals. Compared to short-term offenders, medium-term offenders were also more likely to work in the correctional centre ($r=-0.18$), especially in the workshop or as a tutor. It can be argued that the latter group is more inclined to work as a tutor as they are the ones who have a higher level of education compared to the short-term offenders.

The majority of the respondents still had contact with their family members through telephone calls and visits. Visits may well be constrained by the limited number of female prisons and the families of imprisoned females having to travel far distances to visit them. While the vast majority of respondents did not anticipate future imprisonment, the short-term offenders were significantly more likely than the medium-term offenders to indicate that they are unsure or very likely to reoffend. This is not unique to local contexts as the Social Exclusion Unit (2002: 14) indicates that those serving short-term sentences of less than 12 months are more likely to reoffend than those serving longer sentences. These observations argue for distinct ties to the street and drug-connected pathways to female criminality suggested by Daly (1993: 37).

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

It is important to keep in mind that the present investigation involved female offenders imprisoned in one correctional centre only, and that probability sampling procedures were not followed. It is, therefore, likely that the profiles of female offender populations may differ across correctional centres and geographic contexts. The limitations associated with quantitative strategies must be borne in mind in the interpretation of the results. The authors are fully aware, and acknowledge, the value that qualitative research adds to the understanding of female offenders, their often complex pasts, and experiences of incarceration.

It is recommended that research similar to this survey be undertaken at other correctional centres, and preferably so at the national level to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the profiles of incarcerated female offenders. Longitudinal research is further needed to determine the influences of key variables identified in this study on both the criminal trajectories and post-release lives of female offenders. The intersections between family

criminality and female offending behaviour deserve particular attention. Lastly, researchers ought to focus on the recidivism rates of female offenders vis-à-vis the anticipated effects of rehabilitation and post-release care and support.

ENDNOTES

1. Dastile (2011: 293) cautions against considering the number of imprisoned female offenders as being representative of all female criminality since, due to a process known as the 'funnel' of the criminal justice system, not all criminal acts by women necessarily lead to arrest and eventual incarceration.
2. A significant association prevailed between having a family member arrested in the past and the personal previous arrest of respondents ($p=0.003$; $r=-0.27$). Fourteen of the 31 respondents who had a family member arrested also had a personal previous arrest (46.7%). Conversely, 71 of the 87 respondents who had not been previously arrested did not have a family member arrested (80.7%).

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