

CRIMINAL REACTIONS AND REDUCTION OF CRIME AND DRUG USE IN DRUG-USER OFFENDERS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

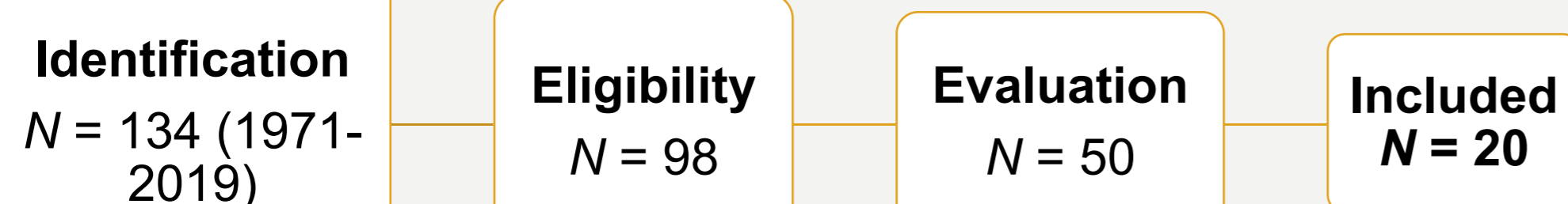
- Although incarceration seems to convey an idea of public security, in reality this measure appears to be ineffective in reducing criminal recidivism (Chandler, Fletcher, & Volkow, 2010; McVay, Schiraldi, & Ziedenberg, 2004). Specifically, drug user offenders are more likely to re-enter prisons (McVay et al., 2004) and showed no reduction in drug use after incarceration (Chandler et al., 2010).
- In offenders with significant drug related issues and whose risk of recidivism is high, treatment programs may be more effective in reducing recidivism than criminal sanctions (Spooner, Hall, & Mattick, 2001).
- However, there is still little knowledge about the effectiveness of punitive responses and alternative responses to punishment at this level, particularly as regards the reduction of criminal recidivism and/or drug use.

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

What is the role of treatment and/or punishment, as responses of the justice system, in reducing drug use and/or criminal recidivism in drug user offenders?

METHOD

- **PRISMA guidelines**
- **Inclusion criteria:** 1. Adult offenders (18-65 years), regardless of gender; 2. (licit and/or illicit) drug users; 3. Treatment programs (of any kind, e.g., intervention, social reintegration, prevention of recidivism, prevention of drug use, studies of the efficacy of responses/sentences/judicial measures); 4. Punitive Measures.
- **Search Expression:** AB (Incarceration-based drug treatment OR drug treatment OR diversion program OR treatment sentences OR incarceration OR imprisonment OR drug treatment OR drug intervention OR rehabilitation) AND AB (sentenc* OR criminal justice programmes) AND AB (drug offenders OR addicted offenders OR drug user offenders OR drug misuser offenders OR dependent offenders).
- **Databases:** Academic Search Complete, PsycInfo, Academic Search Ultimate, Business Source Complete, Criminal Justice Abstracts, PsyArticles, e Sociology Source Ultimate.



BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES:

Chandler, R., Fletcher, B., & Volkow, N. (2010). Treating Drug Abuse and Addiction in the Criminal Justice System: Improving Public Health and Safety. *Jama*, 301(2), 183-190. doi:10.1001/jama.2008.976 || McVay, D., Schiraldi, V., & Ziedenberg, J. (2004). *National and State Findings on the Efficacy and Cost Savings of Drug Treatment Versus Imprisonment*. Washington, DC: Justice Policy Institute. || Spooner, C., Hall, W., & Mattick, R. (2001). An overview of diversion strategies for Australian drug-related offenders. *Drug and Alcohol Review*, 20(3), 281-294. doi:10.1080/09595230120079594 || European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction [EMCDDA] (2015). *Alternatives to punishment for drug-using offenders*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. || International Drug Policy Consortium [IDPC] (2016). *Alternatives to incarceration. IPDC Drug Policy Guide*, 3, 83-89. London: IDPC. <https://idpc.net/publications/2016/03/idpc-drug-policy-guide-3rd-edition> || Vergara, J., Guzmán, D., Uprinsky, R., Henao, A., Hughes, B., & Duguid, J. (2015). *Technical report on alternatives to incarceration for drug-related offenses*. Washington, D.C.: Organization of American States.

All articles used in systematic review: [All articles systematic review - Lisbon Addictions 2019.docx](#)

RESULTS

- **Incarceration, probation**
 - Imprisonment increases the likelihood of criminal recidivism, both in drug-related and non-drug-related crimes (Dynea & Sung, 2000; Mitchell et al., 2017; Sphon & Holleran, 2002).
 - Offenders convicted of imprisonment have higher recidivism rates and recur faster than offenders in probation (Sphon & Holleran, 2002; Sphon, 2007).
- **Treatment programs**
 - Participation in a program Drug Treatment Alternative to Prison [DTAP] decreases recidivism rates compared to offenders sentenced to imprisonment (Belenko, Foltz, Lang, & Sung, 2004; Brown, 2011; Sung, 2003).
 - Participants who do not complete the programs show a higher risk of recurrence than those who complete them (Brown, 2011; Dynea & Sung, 2000; McSweeney et al., 2015; Passey et al., 2007; Sung, 2003; Warner & Kramer, 2009; Zanis et al., 2003).
 - Offenders who complete the programs take longer to repeat criminal offenses than offenders who do not complete them (Banks & Gottfredson, 2003; Brown, 2011; Passey et al., 2007; Sung, 2003; Warner & Kramer, 2009).
- **Drug use reduction**
 - Imprisonment seems to decrease drug use while the offender is incarcerated and even after his release (Kim et al., 1993). However, the longer the time elapsed since incarceration, the more likely it is to use drugs again (Kim et al., 1993).
 - Treatment seems to be effective in reducing drug use, namely by enabling individuals to acquire strategies that allow them to cope with drug use (Yokotani & Tamura, 2015).

DISCUSSION

- **Incarceration:**

Seems to have little impact on criminal recidivism (Freiburger & Iannacchione, 2011; Mitchell et al., 2017; Spohn, 2007).

This corroborates the specialized literature, which points out that punishment per se appears to be an ineffective response to the problem of drug abuse in drug user offenders (Chandler et al., 2009).
- **Treatment:**

It is the most consistent and significant indicator of the longest time without recurrence (Banks & Gottfredson, 2003; Zanis et al., 2003).

Thus, it seems an effective alternative in reducing criminal recidivism (Baird & Frankel, 2001; Banks & Gottfredson, 2003; Belenko, et al., 2004; Brown, 2011; Dynea & Sung, 2000; Gottfredson & Exum, 2002; McSweeney et al., 2015; Passey et al., 2017; Sung, 2003; Warner & Kramer, 2009; Yokotani & Tamura, 2015).
- **Limitations:**

Research into the use of drugs and crime is varied and largely uncoordinated (Bennett, Holloway, & Farrington, 2008) and there is a lack of monitoring and evaluation of the measures implemented (EMCDDA, 2015).

For many diversion programs there are no methods of data evaluation, collection and publication to assess their effectiveness in terms of reducing costs and recidivism (Vergara et al., 2015).

➤ Therefore, in regard to drug use, a risk reduction and treatment perspective should be adopted, based on available evidence, both for the drug user population and for drug users who have committed crimes related to these substances (IDPC, 2016).

✓ **Priority should be given to the adoption of alternative measures to imprisonment, particularly those including treatment, and their continued evaluation, monitoring and scientific publication.**

✓ **It is also essential to adapt the treatment to each case.**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.