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Ana Lopes Morais | FDUP | Doutoramento em Criminologia

Presentation title

Assessing intimate partner violence legitimizing beliefs of the Portuguese Justice System agents: Implications on the investigation, prosecution and penal decision making.

Abstract

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a broad and complex phenomenon, involving a multiplicity of factors. Despite the efforts made, Portugal still has strong gaps in the management of IPV, resulting in low confidence in the Justice System, supported by poor victim protection and offender restraint.

The literature has documented that better preparation of the justice agents is associated with higher prosecution rates and greater trust of victims in the system. Therefore, a point of extreme importance is the interference of personal beliefs in the treatment of reports, from the initial report, through the investigation, to the verdict, where preconceived ideas are reflected in disparities in the final decisions.

The analysis of the points of constraint of the Justice System therefore also involves identifying the weight of these factors in the treatment of complaints, in order to be able to respond with concrete measures aimed at the needs presented, contributing to a better management of the phenomenon. Therefore, the objective of this communication is to highlight the existing beliefs of the different groups of the Justice System, the training obtained by them, as well as their level of motivation and confidence to work with IPV, also analyzing the importance attributed to the risk factors assessed by the risk assessment form currently used by law-enforcement agents.

To this end, the *Conjugal Violence Belief Scale* (Machado, Matos & Gonçalves, 2008) and a questionnaire developed for this purpose were applied to a sample of 448 participants belonging to the Police, Public Prosecutor's Office, and Courts. It is expected that the results that demonstrate the presence of beliefs that legitimize IPV are correlated with less training of justice agents, the impact of which will also affect the appreciation of risk factors identified in the literature as predictors of the risk of revictimization, namely homicide.