





Article

The Professional Dimension in Spanish Prison Socio-Educational Action

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Abstract: (1) Background: The article addresses the reality of prison professionals in ordinary and open prison conditions, which includes the perceptions of women prisoners, due to their low institutional presence that limits their reintegration, from a socio-educational perspective. The aim is to analyse psycho-emotional, educational, and work-related dimensions of professionals and the perception of female prisoners. (2) Methods: The study was carried out with a mixed design from two research projects. The sample consisted of 102 professionals and 75 women from 13 autonomous communities. The instruments were semi-structured questionnaires and interviews with the female prisoners. For the analysis, content analysis, basic statistics, contingency tables, and independence tests were carried out. (3) Results: The results indicate a lower presence of educational professionals and a higher presence of women. Most of them believe more in the reintegration of women, but see ordinary imprisonment and drug consumption as a limitation for it. The professionals state the lack of resources, bureaucratisation, and management, lack of training, and retraining as the main problems and needs. For their part, women demand individualised interventions adapted to their circumstances. (4) Conclusions: In short, it shows a professional reality that can be improved but with strengths such as motivation, experience, and social skills. The socio-educational dimension is valued for the dignification of women prisoners, their transition to life in freedom, and their reintegration.

Keywords: prison; socio-educational intervention; reinsertion; prison treatment; gender



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1. Introduction

Education is both a fundamental public right and a necessity for all people in today's society. The State must protect and promote access to and development of educational processes in conditions of quality, regardless of social, legal, economic, employment, context, and prison conditions, in order to prevent any situation of vulnerability [1–3]. The re-education and reintegration of prisoners are one of the main objectives of prison action, in accordance with Article 25.2 of the Spanish Constitution (1978) [4] and various international regulations [5–7].

Prisons are presented as spaces for re-educational intervention dedicated to training, comprehensive development, and socio-occupational promotion [8–11], beyond the traditional punitive and punishing function. Education/social pedagogy constitute fields of socio-educational action in prisons to reduce the risk factors of crime, recidivism and facilitate the process of reintegration [12–14].

This reintegration process refers to the set of strategies and actions that promote the change of the person towards a suitable model of life, integrated into society and away from the criminal act [8,11]. It involves a constant and continuous development, although, due to its ambiguity, the concept has different implications and meanings depending on the positioning, values, and perspectives of the person who uses it [8].

The Prison Institution includes a wide range of programmes and activities that facilitate reintegration through socio-occupational reintegration, comprehensive care, and family reintegration [15]. In addition, the Open Environment, an alternative way of serving an open prison sentence, is established in Article 74 of the Prison Regulations.

The position of women prisoners should be highlighted, as they represent a vulnerable minority population due to their low institutional presence [15], which explains the differences and limitations in structures, resources, means, specific programmes, adaptation of prison gender policies, and recognition of their characteristics, needs, and potential [11,16–18], despite the institutional advances that have taken place in the last few years [19]. In addition, they experience greater social stigmatisation and family distancing [10,20], which requires personalised professional accompaniment.

Faced with this social panorama, the Penitentiary Institution organises its work network through collaborative multi-professional workgroups that may be distributed into three areas according to the type of action [13,15,21]:

- Socio-educational intervention. Dedicated to the promotion of re-education and development of skills and competencies that favour reintegration. It is made up of social workers (priority attention in socio-family and labour intervention), educators (accompaniment, advice, and knowledge through educational actions), teachers (formal education), psychologists (reports on the psychological state), pedagogues, and sociologists (both in charge of educational research).
- Prison health care. They must ensure health care, quality assistance, and the implementation of health programmes. It has prison medical, health, and nursing staff.
- Services and maintenance. Focused on custody, security, and the maintenance of security and order [22], observation, and direct contact. It is composed of interior and surveillance staff.

This research focuses on the area of socio-educational intervention given its relevance in the reintegration process, through the socio-educational professionals involved [23], especially educators, pedagogues, and teachers. These professionals require specific and continuous training that makes up competent and qualified profiles in the field of socio-educational action and public policies in prison environments linked to the recognition of rights [24,25] and the development of interventions.

Access to the prison educator job is questioned since it is based on the seniority of the workers in the institution, any degree related to Social Sciences, and a training course [15,26]. This is a form of access to the socio-educational task that may deny prisoners the right to receive qualified attention, recognised as a right [27]. Despite this limitation, it requires a professional profile that is competent in the principles of socio-educational action and its unavoidable political connotation and ethical reflection in order to design, implement and evaluate socio-educational action through recognition and social justice [28–30].

On the other hand, the prison environment is an institutional and punitive work context, whose administrative decisions, lack of professional support, and exposition to disciplinary situations can condition the work climate and emotionally unsettle workers, which hinders their technical quality and their level of job satisfaction [26,30–33].

In any case, prison social policies must promote reintegration through socio-educational actions of recognition and accompaniment [34]. This perspective links professional action with a political, ethical, and community dimension [28], which requires a critical and self-critical sense [35].

Therefore, this article deals with the professional dimension of socio-educational agents in prisons, especially in open prisons. To this end, personal perceptions are analysed, both of their work situation and of the process of reintegration into society, with an emphasis on gender policies in prisons through the perceptions of women prisoners.

2. Materials and Methods

The data analysed below correspond to the results obtained from two R+D+i research projects—REINAC—“Processes of reintegration and accompaniment of women in semi-

liberty” (Ref. EDU2016-79322-R) and MUDRES “Drug-dependent women prisoners and their social reintegration. Socio-educational study and proposals for action” (Ref. EDU2009-13408), both directed by Fanny T. Añaños and supported by the SGIP and the Ministry of Justice of the Generalitat de Catalunya, after approval by their respective Research Ethics Committees.

A mixed methodological design is used, combining both qualitative and quantitative methods, with the aim of analysing the professional dimension of those employed in socio-educational action in the Spanish penitentiary environment, highlighting their strengths, limitations, and difficulties, as well as the perspective of the women in semi-freedom situations themselves.

The general sampling of the two investigations was two-stage, according to the population distribution of female prisoners nationwide; the first stage was a stratified sampling, whose requirement to build the strata was the Autonomous Community and, as a second stage, a simple random sampling of the units of each stratum, among all the people who wished to participate.

The population under study is mainly made up of professionals who work in the Spanish penitentiary environment, who are responsible for/executors of the treatment or intervention action in the institutions. In REINAC, work was carried out in the open or semi-release environment, collecting information in 13 Autonomous Communities in Spain (Andalusia, Aragon, Principality of Asturias, Balearic Islands, Canary Islands, Catalonia, Community of Valencia, Extremadura, Galicia, Madrid, Murcia, Basque Country, Castile, and Leon), whose visits were made from June 2018 to March 2019, obtaining a valid sample of 66 professionals; while in MUDRES the institutions were mainly ordinary or closed institutions, where professionals from 11 Spanish Autonomous Communities (Andalusia, Aragon, Principality of Asturias, Balearic Islands, Canary Islands, Castile and Leon, Catalonia, Community of Valencia, Galicia, Madrid, and the Basque Country) participated, carrying out the fieldwork between June 2011 and February 2012, with a valid sample of 36 professionals.

It also takes into account the perspective of women prisoners who participated in the REINAC project (classified in 3rd and 2nd special grade [art. 100.2 R.P.] of sentence compliance), in institutions such as Social Integration Centres (CIS), Open Sections, External Units, among others, obtaining an overall sample of 310 women, of which, for this study, 75 participants were interviewed.

The instrument used with the professionals was a mixed questionnaire designed ad hoc and self-completed in the selected institutions. The REINAC Project questionnaire had 100 items, while the MUDRES questionnaire had 55 items, which addressed socio-demographic questions, professional practice, perceptions and assessments of the intervention/treatment and the target population, as well as the reintegration processes.

The instrument used with the women was a semi-structured interview with 75 participants in REINAC, conducted personally and recorded for later processing. The content covered sociological questions, pre-prison trajectories, prison life, prison intervention/treatment processes, professional accompaniment, and social reintegration. All interviews were conducted after obtaining the informed consent of each participant.

The analysis of the qualitative information was carried out using the content analysis method. On the other hand, quantitative analysis methods were combined with frequency tables, contingency tables, and independence tests (chi-square test with correction for continuity). The statistical programme used for the analysis of all these data was IBM SPSS Statistics 22.

3. Results

3.1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 explains the general and sociodemographic characteristics of the professionals surveyed in both projects.):

Table 1. Characteristics of professionals in open (REINAC) and ordinary (MUDRES) settings. Source: Own elaboration (MUDRES project (Ref. EDU2009-13408) and REINAC project (Ref. EDU2016-79322-R)).

Reinac Professionals (n = 66)			Mudres Professionals (n = 36)		
SEX			SEX		
	N	% valid		N	% valid
Men	20	30.3	Men	10	27.8
Women	46	69.7	Women	26	72.2
Total	66	100	Total	36	100
AGE (Mean = 47.23)			AGE (Mean = 38.64)		
18–25	1	1.5	25–35	16	48.5
26–35	9	13.6	36–49	13	39.4
36–45	16	24.2	50–65	4	12.1
46–60	34	51.5	Total	33	100
+61	6	9.1			
Total	66	100			
Professional Academic Qualification			Professional Profile		
Social Educator	10	15.2	Social Educator	4	12.1
Psychologist	22	33.3	Psychologist	17	51.5
Social worker	13	19.7	Social worker	6	18.2
Pedagogue/Teachers	6	9.1	Teachers	1	3
Jurist/Lawyer	2	3	Sociologists	1	3
Therapy Technician	4	6.1	Criminologists	2	6.1
Health care	3	4.5	Others	2	6.1
Others	6	9.1	Total	33	100
Total	66	100			
Employment Status			Employment Status		
IIPP Officer	31	47	IIPP Officer	18	54.5
Officer of other State administrations	5	7.6	Officer of other State administrations	1	3
Employed by the prison administration	7	10.6	Employed by the prison administration	3	9.1
Employed by the collaborating entity	17	25.8	Employed by the collaborating entity	9	27.3
Collaborator of collaborating entity	3	4.5	Collaborator of collaborating entity	1	3
Volunteer	1	1.5	Others	1	3
Others	2	3	Total	33	100
Total	66	100			
Position Held			Position Held		
Programme Director	8	12.1	Programme Director	4	12.1
Subdirector of Treatment	3	4.5	Subdirector of Treatment	2	6.1
Educator	10	15.2	Educator	5	15.2
Psychologist	13	19.7	Psychologist	12	36.4
Social worker	11	16.7	Programme Coordinator	5	15.2
Jurist	1	1.5	Others	5	15.2
Service Coordinator	6	9.1	Total	33	100
Monitor/Inclusion technician	6	9.1			
Others	8	12.1			
Total	66	100			

Table 1, on the one hand, displays a distribution of 36 professionals in the ordinary regime, where women predominate (72.2%), with an average age of 38 years, highlighting the range of 25 to 35 years (48.5%) and, the average time employed is more than 5 years (54.5%). In terms of academic profile, a high percentage of psychologists are employed (51.5%), while social educators and social workers are in second place (12.1% and 18.2%,

respectively). A similar situation with the positions they hold, reflecting a higher presence of psychologists (36.4%), followed by educators (15.2%), programme coordinators (15.2%), and programme managers (12.1%). The employment situation reflects that 54.5% are officer IIPP and 27.3% of those contracted by collaborating entities.

On the other hand, the professionals in the open regime are also mostly women (69.7%), with an average age of 47 years and a predominant range of 46 to 60 years (51.5%). They have been working for more than 10 years (57.6%). The most frequent academic qualifications are psychologists (33.3%), social workers (18.2%), and social educators (12.1%). Therefore, the positions they hold are not entirely consistent with their degrees: psychologists (19.7%), social workers (16.7%), educators (15.2%), and programme managers (12.1%). The employment status of these professionals is similar to the ordinary regime, where most of them are officer staff (47%).

Table 2 shows the summary of statistical significance of the operations carried out in the crossing of variables of the analyzed tables and that will be analyzed.

Table 2. Summary results of the significance of the Chi-Square test of the statistical operations performed.

Variables Analised	χ^2			Cramer's V		
	Value	df	p	Value	p	
Table 3	Educational degree—Reintegration conviction	1.608 ^a	3	0.657	0.168	0.657
Table 4	Level of job satisfaction—Educational degree	13.216 ^a	3	0.004	0.482	0.004
Table 7	Does the period of incarceration affect reintegration?— Real reintegration	12.996	1	0.000 ^{***}	0.482	0.000
Table 8	Social reintegration—Educational degree	9.67 ^a	6	0.139	0.299	0.139
Table 8	Social reintegration—Conviction of reintegration	1.457 ^a	2	0.483	0.169	0.483
Table 9	Real reintegration—Educational degree	1.608 ^a	3	0.657	0.168	0.657
Table 10	Professional difficulties—Educational degree	8.408 ^a	15	0.906	0.23	0.906
Table 10	Professional difficulties—Level of job satisfaction	13.198 ^a	10	0.213	0.36	0.213
Table 11	Professional strengths—Educational degree	14.079 ^a	9	0.12	0.303	0.12
Table 11	Professional strengths—Level of job satisfaction	6.623 ^a	6	0.357	0.26	0.357
Table 12	Professional needs—Educational degree	5.592 ^a	9	0.78	0.228	0.78
Table 12	Professional needs—Level of job satisfaction	5.538 ^a	6	0.477	0.285	0.477

*** Significant at 99%, ^a not applicable: more than 20% of boxes with a count less than 5.

Tables 3 and 4 analyse the relationships between educational degrees, job satisfaction, and perception of reintegration in an open prison.

Table 3. Self-perception of actual reintegration. Source: Own elaboration (REINAC project (Ref. EDU2016-79322-R)).

Educational Degree	Reintegration Conviction				p
	N-%	No	Yes	Total	
E/P/T*	16 (24.2)	1 (33.3)	13 (24.1)	14 (24.6)	NA
Psychologist	22 (33.3)	0	19 (35.2)	19 (33.3)	
Social worker	13 (19.7)	1 (33.3)	11 (20.4)	12 (21.1)	
Other	15 (22.7)	1 (33.3)	11 (20.4)	12 (21.1)	
Total	66 (100.0)	3 (100.0)	54 (100.0)	57 (100.0)	

Notes: E/P/T* (Educators, pedagogues, and teachers), Psych (Psychologists), NA (Not Applicable).

Table 4. Level of job satisfaction according to educational degrees. Source: Own elaboration (REINAC project (Ref. EDU2016-79322-R)).

Level of Job Satisfaction	Educational Degree						p
	N-%	E/P/T*	Psychologist	Social Worker	Other	Total	
Little (L)	1 (1.8)	0	0	0	1 (8.3)	1 (1.8)	NA
Medium (M)	6 (10.5)	0	2 (10.0)	0	4 (33.3)	6 (10.5)	
Quite (Q)	38 (66.7)	12(85.7)	12 (60.0)	10 (90.9)	4 (33.3)	38 (66.7)	
Very satisfied (VS)	12 (21.1)	2 (14.3)	6 (30.0)	1 (9.1)	3 (25)	12 (21.1)	
Total	57 (100.0)	14 (100.0)	20 (100.0)	11 (100.0)	12 (100.0)	57 (100.0)	

Notes: E/P/T* (Educators, pedagogues, and teachers), Psych (Psychologists), NA (Not Applicable).

First, the educational degrees with the highest presence in the open regime are psychology (33.3%), E/P/T (24.2%), and social workers (19.7%). The relationship between these and their conviction about reintegration shows that psychologists have the greatest conviction (35.2%), followed by E/P/T (24.1%) and, finally, social workers (20.4%) and other degrees (20.4%).

Secondly, the level of job satisfaction indicates that the majority of professionals are quite satisfied (66.7%), followed by very satisfied professionals (21.1%). The relationship between this level of satisfaction and educational degrees shows that psychologists are the academic graduates with the highest level of satisfaction (30% very satisfied and 60% fairly satisfied). Positive job satisfaction is shown in E/P/T (14.3% very satisfied and 85.7% fairly satisfied) and social workers (although only 9.1% are very satisfied, 90.9% indicate fairly satisfied).

3.2. Professional Approaches to Reintegration

Self-perceptions and evaluations of reintegration are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Concept of reintegration. Source: Own elaboration (REINAC project (Ref. EDU2016-79322-R)).

Concept of Social Reintegration.		
	N	% Valid
No belief in reintegration	1	1.9
More effort is needed to achieve it	27	50.0
Depends on the person's circumstances and environment	10	18.5
Reintegration is possible	16	29.6
Total	54	100.0

Table 5 highlights that, while the majority of professionals (50%) state that more effort and involvement is needed to achieve this, only 29.6% have a firm conviction.

The perspectives on reintegration for women are much more evident (61.9%), followed by 21.4% who again demand the need for more professional involvement (Table 6).

Table 6. Beliefs about reintegration. Source: Own elaboration (REINAC project (Ref. EDU2016-79322-R)).

Do You Believe in the Real Reintegration of Women Prisoners?		
	N	% Valid
More effort is needed to achieve it	9	21.4
Depends on the person's circumstances and environment	7	16.7
Women reintegration is possible	26	61.9
Total	42	100.0

When asked whether imprisonment in ordinary prison conditions the reintegration process, 91.8% consider this to be the case (Table 7). This perspective is related to the conviction of the reintegration process, with 94.3% of respondents thinking that imprisonment is

a limiting/conditioning factor. The X^2 (p -value < 0.05) indicates that there is a relationship between the two variables.

Table 7. Beliefs about incarceration. Source: Own elaboration (REINAC project (Ref. EDU2016-79322-R)).

	Does the Period of Incarceration Affect Reintegration?		Real Reintegration			<i>p</i>
	<i>N</i> -%	No	Yes	Total		
No	5 (8.2)	2 (66.7)	3 (5.7)	5 (8.9)	0.000	
Yes	56 (91.8)	1 (33.3)	50 (94.3)	51 (91.1)		
Total	61 (100.0)	3 (100.0)	53 (100.0)	56 (100.0)		

Table 8 reflects the assessments of the reintegration process in relation to their educational degrees and convictions, drawing a distinction: 68.5% consider that it depends on all kinds of factors and situations, while 29.5% state that they believe in the possibility of reintegration.

Table 8. Social reintegration. Source: Own elaboration (REINAC project (Ref. EDU2016-79322-R)).

Social Reintegration	Educational Degree						Conviction of Reintegration				
	<i>N</i> -%	E/P/T	Psych	S.W.	Other	Total	<i>p</i>	No	Yes	Total	<i>p</i>
No	1 (1.9)	0	0	1 (9.1)	0	1 (1.9)	NA	0	1 (2.1)	1 (2.0)	NA
Yes	16 (29.6)	3 (27.3)	10 (47.6)	1 (9.1)	2 (18.2)	16 (29.6)		0	15 (31.3)	15 (29.4)	
Depend	37 (68.5)	8 (72.7)	11 (52.4)	9 (81.8)	9 (81.8)	37 (68.5)		3 (100.0)	32 (66.7)	35 (68.6)	
Total	54 (100.0)	11 (100.0)	21 (100.0)	11 (100.0)	11 (100.0)	54 (100.0)		3 (100.0)	48 (100.0)	51 (100.0)	

Notes: E/P/T (Educators, pedagogues, and teachers), Psych (Psychologists), S.W. (Social workers).

According to their educational degree, 81.8% of social workers and other professionals, 72.7% of E/P/T, and 52.4% of psychologists stated, once again, that the reintegration process depends on different situations/external factors. It is observed that 47.6% of psychologists openly believe in achieving reintegration, and this is the degree with the best conviction, followed by E/P/T (27.3%) and other degrees (18.2%). It should be noted that 9.1% of social workers do not believe that reintegration is possible.

With regard to drug consumption, 85% of these professionals consider that it affects reintegration. This assessment according to educational degrees shows 94.7% psychologists, 93.3% E/P/T, 83.3% social workers, and 64.3% of other degrees. However, 16.7% of social workers and 28.6% of other degrees believe that the condition of drug addiction does not affect reintegration (Table 9).

Table 9. Real reintegration. Source: Own elaboration (REINAC project (Ref. EDU2016-79322-R)).

Real Reintegration	Educational Degree						<i>p</i>
	<i>N</i> -%	E/P/T	Psych	S.W.	Other	Total	
No	3 (5.3)	1 (7.1)	0	1 (8.3)	1 (8.3)	3 (5.3)	NA
Yes	54 (94.7)	13 (92.9)	19 (100)	11 (91.7)	11 (91.7)	54 (94.7)	
Total	57 (100.0)	14 (100.0)	19 (100.0)	12 (100.0)	12 (100.0)	57 (100.0)	

Notes: E/P/T (Educators, pedagogues, and teachers), Psych (Psychologists), S.W. (Social workers).

Regarding the possibilities of female reintegration, the vast majority of professionals (94.7%) have great confidence in this possibility. Cross-checking these with the educational

degrees shows that 100% of psychologists, 92.9% of E/P/T, and 91.7% of both social workers and the rest of the degrees have firm convictions in this respect.

In this regard, women in open prison perceived a better treatment/relationship with social workers (55.6%), E/P/T (48%), and psychologists (33.8%), which establishes a link between professional perspectives on reintegration and the relationship between professionals and convicted persons.

Likewise, upon addressing the perspectives on social reintegration in prison in both sexes and the reintegration of women in prison, 31.3% of professionals believe in both processes without distinction between the sexes. It is also observed that professionals who believe in general reintegration are less likely to think that this process depends on external situations/factors.

Finally, from the perspective of the women in open prison regarding the support received from professionals to facilitate their reintegration, we find that 62.2% state that they receive professional support and advice, mainly through therapies and interventions by the technical team. However, only 10.3% of the women rated this support as useful for their reintegration.

3.3. Work and Personal Dimension

This block addresses the work and personal dimensions of open workers, with emphasis on their level of professional satisfaction, needs, strengths, and work difficulties.

Table 10 discusses professional difficulties in the open regime, with 35.8% of respondents pointing to lack of resources, 26.4% pointed to bureaucratic and institutional problems, and 18.9% to stress and excessive workload. In relation to educational degrees, lack of resources is the difficulty most frequently mentioned by 50% of the social workers and 42.1% of the psychologists. This is followed by bureaucratic problems reported by 30% of social workers and 21.4% of both psychologists and E/P/T, respectively.

Table 10. Challenges, strengths, and needs of professionals and their relationship with job satisfaction. Source: Own elaboration (REINAC project (Ref. EDU2016-79322-R)).

Professional Difficulties	Educational Degree						Level of Job Satisfaction					
	N-%	E/P/T	Psych	S.W.	Other	Total	<i>p</i>	M	Q	VS	Total	<i>p</i>
Bureaucratic and institutional problems	14 (26.4)	3 (21.4)	4 (21.1)	3 (30.0)	4 (40.0)	14 (26.4)		2 (50.0)	9 (25.7)	2 (16.7)	13 (25.5)	
Lack of resources	19 (35.8)	4 (28.6)	8 (42.1)	5 (50.0)	2 (20.0)	19 (35.8)	NA	0	13 (37.1)	5 (41.7)	18 (35.3)	NA
Stress and workload	10 (18.9)	3 (21.4)	5 (26.3)	1 (10.0)	1 (10.0)	10 (18.9)		1 (25.0)	8 (22.9)	1 (8.3)	10 (19.6)	
Lack of training and skills	2 (3.8)	1 (7.1)	0	0	1 (10.0)	2 (3.8)		1 (25.0)	1 (2.9)	0	2 (3.9)	
Others	3 (5.7)	1 (7.1)	1 (5.3)	0	1 (10.0)	3 (5.7)		0	2 (5.7)	1 (8.3)	3 (5.9)	
I have no difficulties	5 (9.4)	2 (14.3)	1 (5.3)	1 (10.0)	1 (10.0)	5 (9.4)		0	2 (5.7)	3 (25.0)	5 (9.8)	
Total	53 (100.0)	14 (100.0)	19 (100.0)	10 (100.0)	10 (100.0)	53 (100.0)		4 (100.0)	35 (100.0)	12 (100.0)	51 (100.0)	

Notes: E/P/T (Educators, pedagogues, and teachers), Psych (Psychologists), S.W. (Social workers), M (Medium satisfied), Q (Quite satisfied), and VS (Very satisfied).

Relating these difficulties to the level of professional satisfaction, 50% of professionals report medium satisfaction and refer to bureaucratic and institutional difficulties. 41.7% express high satisfaction and point to the lack of resources as their main problem. Likewise, 37.1% of the professionals who feel fairly satisfied point to the lack of resources as their main problem, followed by the bureaucratic framework for 25.7%. Finally, 25% of professionals who are very satisfied say that they do not have any difficulties at work (Table 9).

With regard to professional strengths, motivation/vocation are the most frequently mentioned competencies (31.4%). The other significant options are experience and social skills (both with 25.5%). According to educational degrees, 46.7% of E/P/T and 33.3% of psychologists indicate motivation/vocation as their greatest strength, and this is consistent with a high level of job satisfaction in both degrees. Social skills are mostly indicated by social workers (50%), as well as a high level of satisfaction (Table 11).

Table 11. Level of job satisfaction. Source: Own elaboration (REINAC project (Ref. EDU2016-79322-R)).

Professional Strengths	Educational Degree						Level of Job Satisfaction					
	N-%	E/P/T	Psych	S.W.	Other	Total	<i>p</i>	M	Q	VS	Total	<i>p</i>
Experience	13 (25.5)	4 (26.7)	3 (16.7)	2 (25.0)	4 (40.0)	13 (25.5)		1 (25.0)	11 (33.3)	0	12 (24.5)	
Social skills	13 (25.5)	4 (26.7)	3 (16.7)	4 (50.0)	2 (20.0)	13 (25.5)	NA	1 (25.0)	6 (18.2)	5 (41.7)	12 (24.5)	NA
Motivation and vocation	16 (31.4)	7 (46.7)	6 (33.3)	2 (25.0)	1 (10.0)	16 (31.4)		1 (25.0)	11 (33.3)	4 (33.3)	16 (32.7)	
Others	9 (17.6)	0	6 (33.3)	0	3 (30%)	9 (17.6)		1 (25.0)	5 (15.2)	3 (25.0)	9 (18.4)	
Total	51 (100.0)	15 (100.0)	18 (100.0)	8 (100.0)	10 (100.0)	51 (100.0)		4 (100.0)	33 (100.0)	12 (100.0)	49 (100.0)	

Notes: E/P/T (Educators, pedagogues, and teachers), Psych (Psychologists), S.W. (Social workers), M (Medium satisfied), Q (Quite satisfied), and VS (Very satisfied).

Regarding the needs that professionals demand in order to improve their job performance, 61.1% require more training, while 22.2% demand professional retraining. According to their educational degrees, 61.5% are psychologists, 57.1% are social workers, 55.6% are E/P/T and 71.4% from the rest of the degrees express an occupational need for training (Table 12).

Table 12. Professional needs. Source: Own elaboration (REINAC project (Ref. EDU2016-79322-R)).

Professional Needs	Educational Degree						Level of Job Satisfaction					
	N-%	E/P/T	Psych	S.W.	Other	Total	<i>p</i>	M	Q	VS	Total	<i>p</i>
Training	22 (61.1)	5 (55.6)	8 (61.5)	4 (57.1)	5 (71.4)	22 (61.1)		1 (33.3)	15 (65.2)	5 (62.5)	21 (61.8)	
Professional retraining	8 (22.2)	1 (11.1)	3 (23.1)	3 (42.9)	1 (14.3)	8 (22.2)	NA	1 (33.3)	3 (13.0)	3 (37.5)	7 (20.6)	NA
Resource enhancement	2 (5.6)	1 (11.1)	1 (7.7)	0	0	2 (5.6)		0	2 (8.7)	0	2 (5.9)	
Others	4 (11.1)	2 (22.2)	1 (7.7)	0	1 (14.3)	4 (11.1)		1 (33.3)	3 (13.0)	0	4 (11.8)	
Total	36 (100.0)	9 (100.0)	13 (100.0)	7 (100.0)	7 (100.0)	36 (100.0)		3 (100.0)	23 (100.0)	8 (100.0)	34 (100.0)	

Notes: E/P/T (Educators, pedagogues, and teachers), Psych (Psychologists), S.W. (Social workers), M (Medium satisfied), Q (Quite satisfied), and VS (Very satisfied).

Relating these needs and the level of satisfaction, we obtain that 33% of professionals with average satisfaction, 65.2% are quite satisfied and 62.5% are very satisfied, with training needs. Professional retraining appears in 33.3% of professionals with average professional satisfaction (Table 12).

Finally, interviews with women in open prisons on the aspects to be improved in professional action revealed that 44.7% demanded more individualised and more personalised treatment. However, 23.8% stated that no professional improvement was needed, although it should be noted that 31.3% of women did not know how to respond.

4. Discussion

The professional and personal dimension and the social perceptions of professionals in the Spanish penitentiary environment are analysed, with emphasis on those in the area of socio-educational intervention as the main agents responsible for promoting the re-education and recognition of the rights of convicted persons in order to facilitate their reintegration [1,3,9,21,23,34]. For a better interpretation of the results, the information is organised into three thematic blocks: socio-demographic characteristics, professional perspectives on reintegration, and the work and personal dimension.

- Socio-demographic characteristics. A comparison was made between the professionals in charge of the ordinary and the open regime. In both professional groups, there is a high prevalence of women (72.2% in the ordinary regime and 69.7% in the open regime), in accordance with Caravaca, Carrión, and Pastor [32] and with the General Secretariat of Penitentiary Institutions [21]. Likewise, there is a difference in the age range of the workers in both regimes, with a range of 25 to 49 years in the ordinary regime and 36 to 60 years in the open regime. This situation is repeated in terms of time worked, with the most experienced professionals in the open regime (57.6%) with more than 10 years of experience, while in the ordinary regime the range drops to just over 5 years. In this manner, the open environment is presented as a workspace with more experienced work profiles, which may be positive; however, due to the polluting work environment of the prison context [26,32], it may be harmful to the socio-educational action itself. The educational degrees of these professionals are very similar in both regimes; however, there is a greater presence of psychologists in the ordinary regime (51.5%) compared to 33.3% in the open regime. The next most common degrees in both regimes are social work (18.2% in ordinary regime and 19.7% in open regime) and social education (12.1% in ordinary regime and 15.2% in open regime). These data support Burgos, Tardón, Martín-Solbes, and Pozuelo [19], who point to a greater presence of psychologists and social workers in prison socio-educational action, which is a symptom of the lack of recognition of social education in the prison setting [26].

The employment situation of the professionals is very similar in both regimes, with prison staff ranking highest, 54.7% in the ordinary regime and 47% in the open regime, compared to those employed by collaborating entities (27.3% in the ordinary regime and 25.8% in the open regime), who are coordinated by the prison institution [15].

With regard to the level of job satisfaction of the professionals in the open regime, the highest level of satisfaction is obtained in profiles with degrees in psychology, followed by E/P/T and social work, both with a positive level of satisfaction. This level of satisfaction is essential in their social, reflective and community performance, which may be conditioned by a polluting, demanding and exhausting work context [26,31–33].

- Professional perspectives and perceptions on social reintegration. In the open regime, 29.7% of professionals believe that reintegration is possible, while 50% state that its achievement requires more professional and institutional involvement; reintegration in the penitentiary environment is presented as a professional challenge, especially in socio-educational action, which is based on the co-responsibility between the prisoners themselves and the professionals involved [23].

If we relate these perceptions to their educational degree, there are greater conviction in the social reintegration process among psychology (47.6%) and E/P/T (27.3%) graduates, while the low belief of the group of social workers (9.1%) stands out, which may condition their actions [8,29,30]. Women in open prisons express a better treatment by the professional groups that value social reintegration.

On the other hand, the period of incarceration in an ordinary regime is considered a conditioning factor by the majority of open regime professionals with positive convictions in the reintegration process (94.3%), who consider that incarceration in penal units is a mechanism of social vulnerability and exclusion that hinders reintegration [3,10,17,36]. In

response, the Prison Institution introduces the open regime (3rd degree and 2nd degree art. 100.2), an administrative strategy that facilitates professional accompaniment and socio-occupational insertion [37].

Drug consumption is also perceived as an obstacle in the reintegration process by 85% of the professionals in the open regime, since drug dependence generates serious physical and psychological consequences [38,39] that affect reintegration, which is why the SGIP has specific programmes and therapeutic modules for their treatment [21].

Women are considered to be a group with a high probability of insertion (61.9% of professionals), despite the great difficulties they experience due to their vulnerability and social stigma [20]. Women prisoners in an open regime report that only 10.3% consider the socio-educational actions received by the technical team to be useful, therefore, the prison context has limitations in terms of institutional suitability for women [16–18].

Likewise, while the level of professional satisfaction increases, the belief in the prison reintegration process increases; 58.3% of professionals who are very satisfied professionally state that they believe in reintegration. Thus, socio-educational action in prisons requires actions based on a pedagogical, civic, and community nature [27], which allow them to become promoters of the recognition of rights and the reintegration process [34], through a suitable climate of satisfaction in their work, without any conditions of stress, demands and psychological exhaustion [33].

- **Work and personal dimension.** The main work-related difficulties considered by professionals in an open regime include lack of resources (35.8%), bureaucratic and institutional problems (26.4%), stress, and workload (18.9%). These problems also appear in the studies by Jaskowiak and Fontana [22] and Minuzzi Kieling [33]. In this regard, some administrative decisions may condition the performance of professionals due to rigid strategies and structures in the development of action policies [26,30,35], while Caravaca, Carrión, and Pastor [32] point to mental exhaustion as a factor of job dissatisfaction.

In terms of the professional strengths most frequently mentioned, we find motivation and vocation (31.4%), followed by experience and social skills (both with 25.5%). In association with educational degrees, motivation/vocation is the strength most identified in psychologists and E/P/T, while social workers highlight social skills.

The relationship between these strengths and the level of job satisfaction reveals that professionals with a lower level of satisfaction identify the experience as their main work virtue, while motivation/vocation and social skills are reflected in profiles with high satisfaction. The analysis of professional needs identifies the deficit in training (61.1%) and professional retraining (22.2%) as the main professional demands. The need for more training is generalised in all academic groups, while professional retraining increases in social workers (42.9%) and psychologists (22.2%). Therefore, prison socio-educational professionals demand a permanent training process from an interdisciplinary curricular perspective [29] in order to adapt their actions, despite the fact that the SGIP has training actions for its employees [15].

The Prison Institution needs political and administrative decisions, through monitoring, and continuous training among its professional agents, beyond their academic-professional situation [28].

We conclude by noting the socio-demographic similarity between the professionals in charge of the open and closed regimes. Specifically, the difference lies in their age, since the open regime is a space attended by more experienced profiles, where women stand out in socio-educational positions. By focusing on the open regime, a greater perspective of reintegration in women is noted, improving the convictions of reintegration with the level of professional satisfaction. Finally, we highlight that socio-emotional competencies are identified by socio-educational agents, as well as the need for continuous training and professional retraining. However, the evidence of the lower presence of educational professionals could point to the need to grant greater leadership and pedagogical and educational protagonism to these professionals [40]. The question is to analyse whether

experience, social skills, motivation, and vocation are sufficient tools to exercise the socio-educational profession while ignoring the political, ethical, and technical analysis linked to socio-educational action, which are usually acquired in undergraduate studies in social education [35].

Finally, we point out that, despite the difficulties that prison life may bring to prisoners and professionals, it has been possible to gain access to both groups for the development of the study. We also highlight the importance of this study due to the methodological approach we used and the population sample we worked with, aimed at getting to know the prison reality and highlighting the value of socio-educational action for the dignification of prisoners and their preparation for life in freedom, and therefore promoting, social reintegration.

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