Abstract

The probability of recidivism in delinquency is approximately three times more for the recidivist than for the non-recidivist prisoners. In this sense, it has been suggested a relationship between the degree of anti-social and delinquent behavior, and the development of the cognitive competence. Thus, it presumes that recidivist prisoners have less cognitive competence than non-recidivist. To test this hypothesis, 104 prisoners, 54 non-recidivists and 50 recidivists, which have no previously submitted to an in-prison treatment to empower the cognitive and social competence, were assessed on the attribution of responsibility, self-concept, coping strategies and emotional intelligence. Results showed that recidivist prisoners had less developed the emotional intelligence and the self-concept than non-recidivist. Moreover, recidivist prisoners, in comparison to non-recidivist, evidenced a greater tendency to cope with stressful and risk situations through non-adaptive strategies (i.e., centered on emotions, avoidance). Nevertheless, recidivist and non-recidivist were similar in the attribution of responsibility. In summary, recidivist prisoners have a less cognitive competence than non-recidivist. The implications of these results for prisoners’ reeducation, resocialization and social rehabilitation are discussed.

Keywords

Prisoner; cognitive competence; recidivism; rehabilitation