

Scientific Evidence in the Third Sector – Follow Up Dianova Portugal

Summary

What is scientific evidence in the third sector for? This article aims to answer this central question based on a sustained argumentation in a follow-up study carried out at the therapeutic community Quinta das Lapas of the Dianova Association, in Portugal.

The study of the integration trajectories of ex-dependents after the therapeutic process carried out at that community between 1999 and 2009, permitted the identification of some critical aspects in the process of social reinsertion. These are the aspects we discuss here, defending that from this analysis and discussion changes will result impacting the level of improvement of the services of treatment and reinsertion, and also the level of related public policies. Thus contributing to a more effective social reintegration of persons in a situation of vulnerability and consequently to the promotion of social cohesion.

Key-words: reintegration; scientific evidence; improved services

Introduction

Trajectories, from dependency to integration - study of social trajectories of drug addicts after therapeutic process was a project of investigation developed within the scope of CIES-IUL and financed by FCT (PTDC/CS-SOC/099684/208). This study was undertaken as a contribution to understand and explain the complex reality of social reintegration of drug addicts, after going through a process of detoxification and treatment at a therapeutic community. For this, we studied the users of the therapeutic community Quinta das Lapas, of the Dianova Association, in Portugal, who had completed the therapeutic process between 1999 and 2009.

After a previous analysis of the admission processes of all ex-users with a concluded therapeutic process, a survey by questionnaire was prepared, applied via phone to all who still had a valid contact and accepted to participate, in a total of 63. In this article we provide and discuss the results of the questionnaire, highlighting the data that show the difficulties felt by these subjects, ex-users from the referred therapeutic

community, during their reintegration, as well as the existence of some factors associated with these difficulties.

Dianova follow-up - difficulties of reintegration

The survey by questionnaire to the ex-users of the therapeutic community Quinta das Lapas, of the Dianova Association, in Portugal, who had completed the therapeutic process between 1999 and 2009, was applied between 20 September 2010 and 20 February 2011 (N=63). In its structure, this questionnaire contemplates a block of questions related to the difficulties of reintegration that are now analysed and discussed with more emphasis.

In particular, the questionnaire enabled the identification of sociability difficulties, which means, socially relating with other people or, in a more personal field, difficulties in making new friendships; difficulties of integration in the labour market; and also financial difficulties. Inversely, it was also possible to identify situations where no types of difficulties were felt.

The descriptive measures of these indicators are shown in Table 1. We emphasise the fact that the most frequent situation is the statement that no type of difficulty was experienced. The second more frequent situation was the difficulty to develop interpersonal relationships. With residual weights, appear the difficulties to make new friends, to get a job and financial difficulties.

Table 1: Difficulties of reintegration

| | N | % |
|-----------------------------|----|------|
| Interpersonal relationships | 11 | 17.5 |
| Make new friends | 3 | 4.8 |
| Get a job | 5 | 7.9 |
| Financial | 4 | 6.3 |
| None | 17 | 27.0 |

Note: possibility of multiple replies, except for the none item, which required an exclusive reply

Subsequently, it was intended to know which factors would be associated with these difficulties felt in the process of reintegration. For this, a matrix of correlations was created in an exploratory manner. As the items “make new friends”, “get a job” and “financial difficulties” were the replies of a very reduced number of participants, they were not contemplated in the correlation analysis. In this analysis all the variables available in the database were considered. The significant correlations are provided in table 2.

A first block refers to two variables related to the labour market: the passage of unemployment situations after treatment, the duration of these unemployment

periods. A second block refers to evaluation factors of the treatment. The proposed argument is that a large part of the evaluation of the treatment made by the subjects depends on the difficulties experienced and that besides these difficulties there are other important factors to be explored.

Considering that, besides the evaluation of the treatment the only two relevant factors where those related to the labour market and that the number of respondents who declared having difficulties was very small. It is necessary that more subjective replies be analysed with some precaution and that they be, whenever possible, validated with more objective indicators.

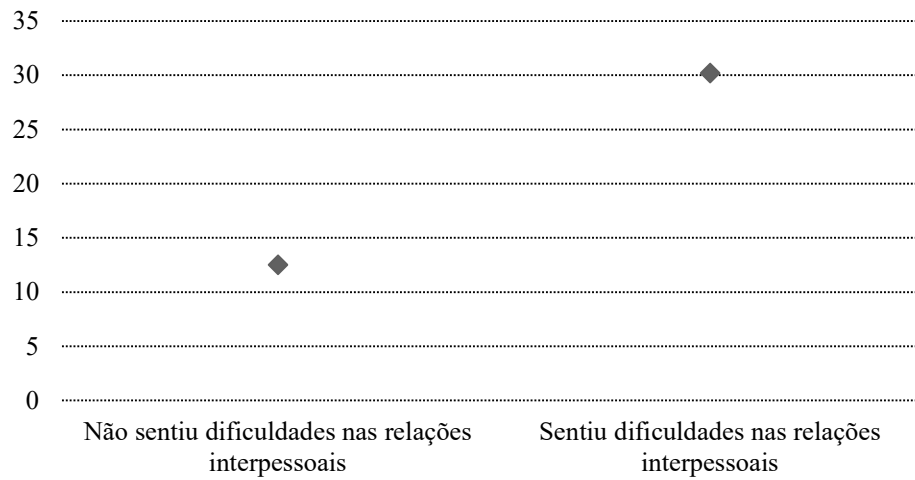
Table 2: Matrix of correlations

| | Interpersonal relationships | No difficulty |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Unemployment after treatment | -0.092 | 0.232(*) |
| Duration of unemployment periods | .364(**) | -0.100 |
| Evaluation - performance of technicians | -.358(**) | 0.186 |
| Evaluation - results of treatment | -0.171 | .288(**) |
| Evaluation - general operation of institution | -.489(***) | 0.103 |
| Evaluation - support for reinsertion after leaving community | -.281(**) | 0.164 |

* $p \leq 0.1$, ** $p \leq 0.05$, *** $p \leq 0.01$

After the exploratory analysis of the matrix of correlations, a bivariate analysis shows more clearly the meaning of the relationships found. Figure 1 shows that the difficulties experienced in interpersonal relationships are related to periods of unemployment of an average of 30 months. While the inquired who declared not having difficulties in relationships with other person were unemployed on an average of 12 months.

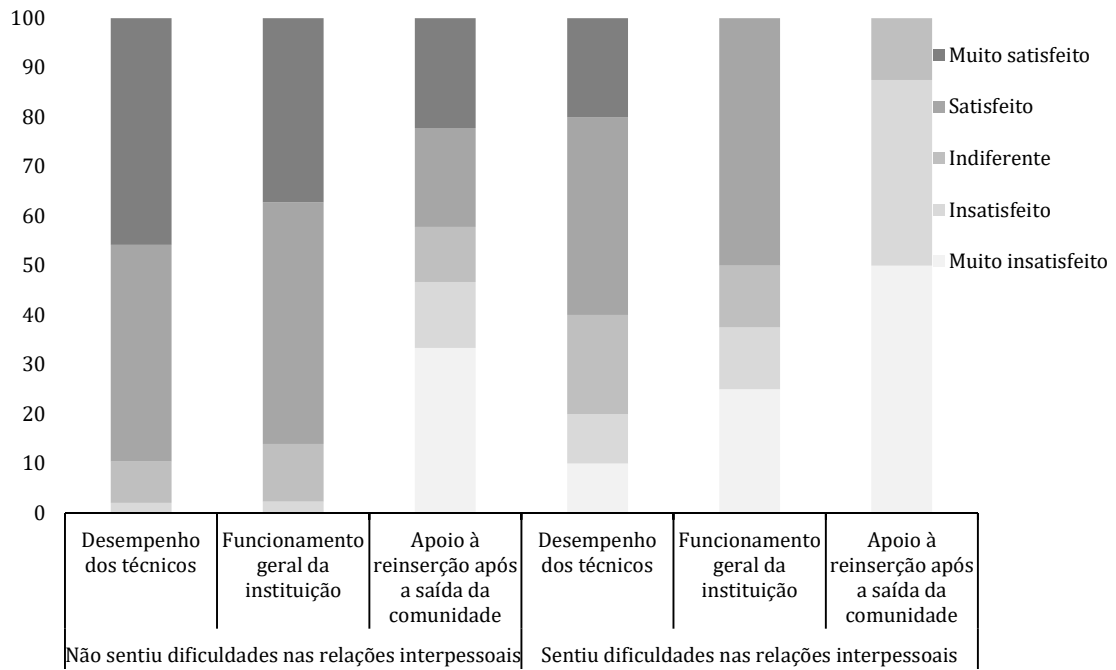
Figure 1: Average duration of unemployment periods in accordance with difficulties of interpersonal relationship



A second level of analysis shows that the difficulties felt in interpersonal relationships seem to have an impact on the evaluation of the treatment made by the ex-users (figure 2). Therefore, it is clear that the first group, those who declare not having difficulties in interpersonal relationships, the evaluation is clearly higher. In other words, the perception of global satisfaction with the treatment is higher in the group of subjects who indicate not having difficulties in interpersonal relationships than in the group of the subjects who indicated difficulties at this level.

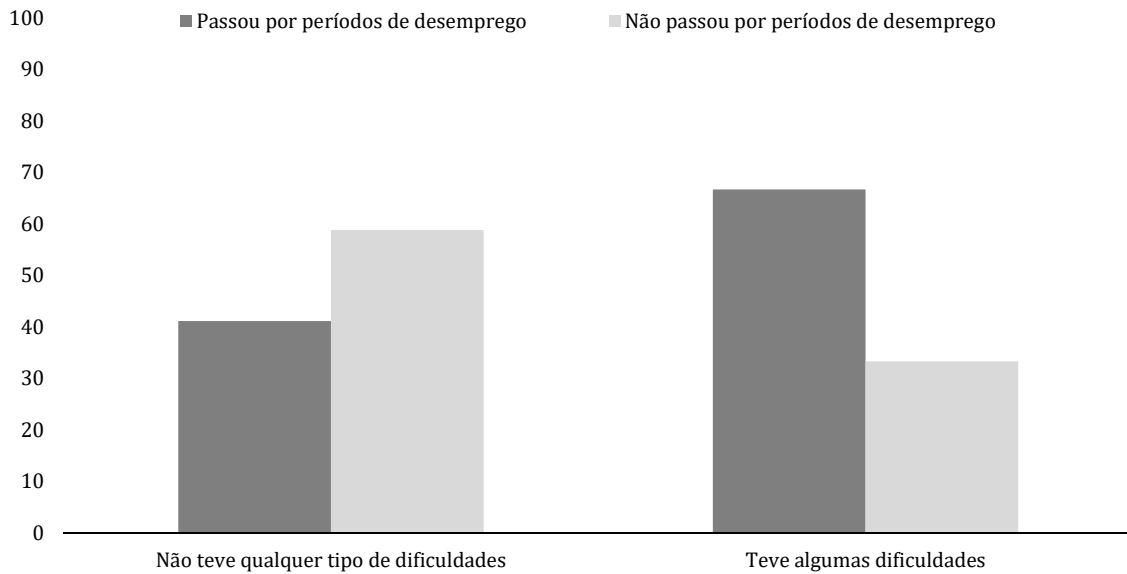
At this point it is interesting to explore in the future whether these difficulties of relationship occur before or after the treatment.

Figure 2: Duration of evaluation in accordance with difficulties of interpersonal relationship, %



Next, we analysed the factors related to the absence of difficulties. Of all the existing variables in the database, the existence of periods of unemployment was the only one with a significant correlation with this indicator. This reveals the centrality of accessibility to the Labour market for a positive self-evaluation in terms of difficulties of reintegration.

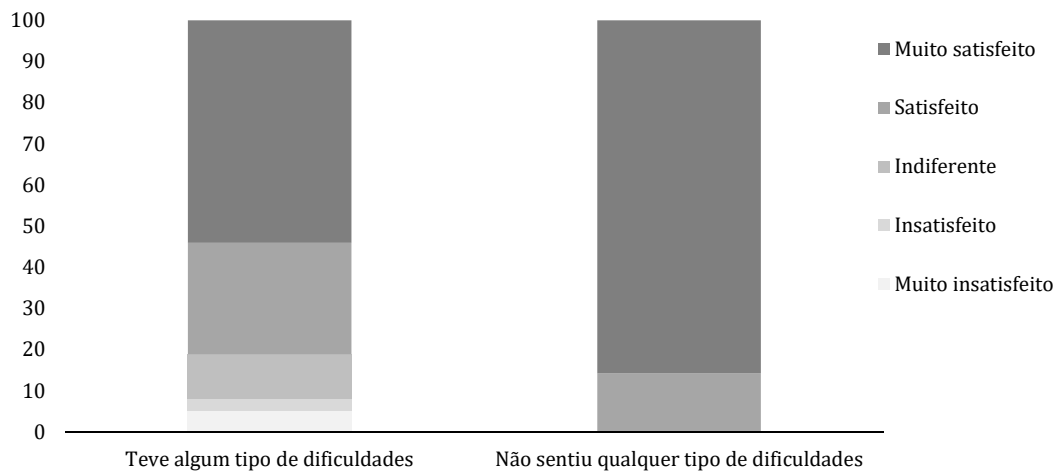
Figure 3: Absence of difficulties in the process of reintegration and existence of periods of unemployment after clinical discharge, %



Finally, the impact that this absence of difficulties has on the evaluation of the treatment made by the subjects is analysed. Although there is a general tendency for both groups to positively evaluate the treatment, it is in the group that declares not having any type of difficulty that this evaluation is more satisfactory. Based on this data, we verified that the evaluation made by the subjects greatly depends on how their reintegration process occurs, as integration in the labour market is an important factor to determine the opinions made afterwards.

In the future it would be interesting to explore a model of mediation in which the evaluation depends on the difficulties experienced, but having as mediator more concrete situation such as unemployment or time of unemployment.

Figure 4: General evaluation of treatment in accordance with difficulties experienced



Conclusion

In conclusion, we considered that the results provided and discussed in this article illustrate the importance of scientific evidence in the third sector. As it allows us to bring to light critical aspects of the reintegration process of ex-drug addicts after the conclusion of the therapeutic process, the synthesis of the investigation provided herein intends to show that attention to these aspects will have positive impact on the reinsertion practices, on the services in which these practices are developed and even on the public policies related to such services and practices.

Thus, the effectiveness of the services and practices of the third sector benefits from the results of the investigation and from an ample discussion and, whenever possible, compared to their results.

The ever-growing pressures felt on public (and other) financing increase the need to ensure its rigorous and effective application. Already in 2010 the OEDT *Annual Report* alerted to the fact that the services provided within the scope of addictions were increasingly threatened by budget cuts, with great impact on the communities (including ex-users, professionals, civil society...). In other words, we are faced with a paradoxical moment where austerity measures cause cuts to the offer of effective responses precisely when their need seems to increase and become visible.

This study and others have shown compensatory interventions from the economic point of view, as they tend to reduce the expense with problems associated with the abuse of psychoactive substances - at the social, health, criminal levels... Especially at moments of economic contention it is particularly important that the expense is directed toward proven effective interventions - this is a problem that has persistently affected the third sector. In this respect, the development of required approaches and

the adoption of innovative and adequate strategies benefits if resulting from proven efficient approaches, as there are no single or standardized answers (OEDT, 2015).

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Biography Notes

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