

Who is guilty?

A comparative study of the presence of guilt and forgiveness in three different health areas

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Background

Guilt occurs in multiple manifestations and in diverse ways. This study examines both to what extent, and in what form, the phenomenon of guilt presents itself in three very unique contexts: in a maternity/children’s hospital dealing with highly complex hospitalizations in mental health hospitalization and in penitentiary mental health care.

There are two types of guilt:

Moral Guilt	Cognitive emotional psychological experience, by which the person realizes that he/she is responsible for (...) a behaviour resulting in harmful consequences to him/herself or other people (Rosal, 2014)
Existencial Guilt	Conscious of ethical imperfection and indebtedness of a person in totality. It can be experienced when a person has not realized his/her true potential

Methods

A **comparative study** examining the ways in which the phenomenon of guilt presents itself in three very unique contexts:

Mental health hospitalization (n=77), mental health care in prisons (n=27) and highly complex maternity and children’s hospitalizations (n=95)



Study Phases

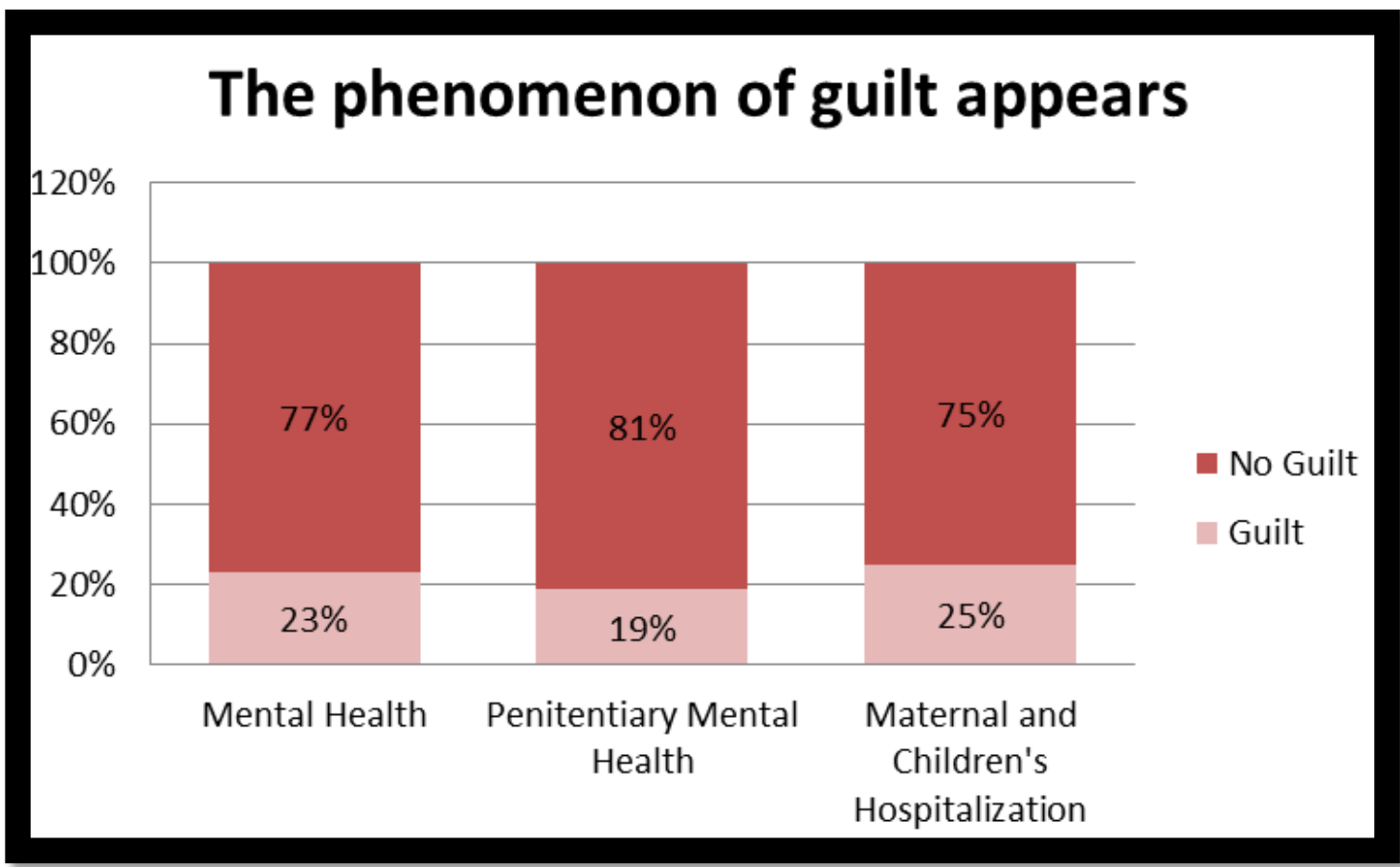
1ª Phase: Retrospective, cross-sectional quantative analysis of the total population served during 2017 by the Spiritual & Religious Services (SRS) in the maternity and children’s hospital of Sant Joan de Deu Barcelona and in the mental health & prison mental health areas of the Parc Sanitari Sant Joan de Deu Sant Boi de Llobregat.

2ª Phase: Analysis of the discourse of those people who were attended to, in order to understand the number of cases where the issue of guilt and foregiveness occurred.

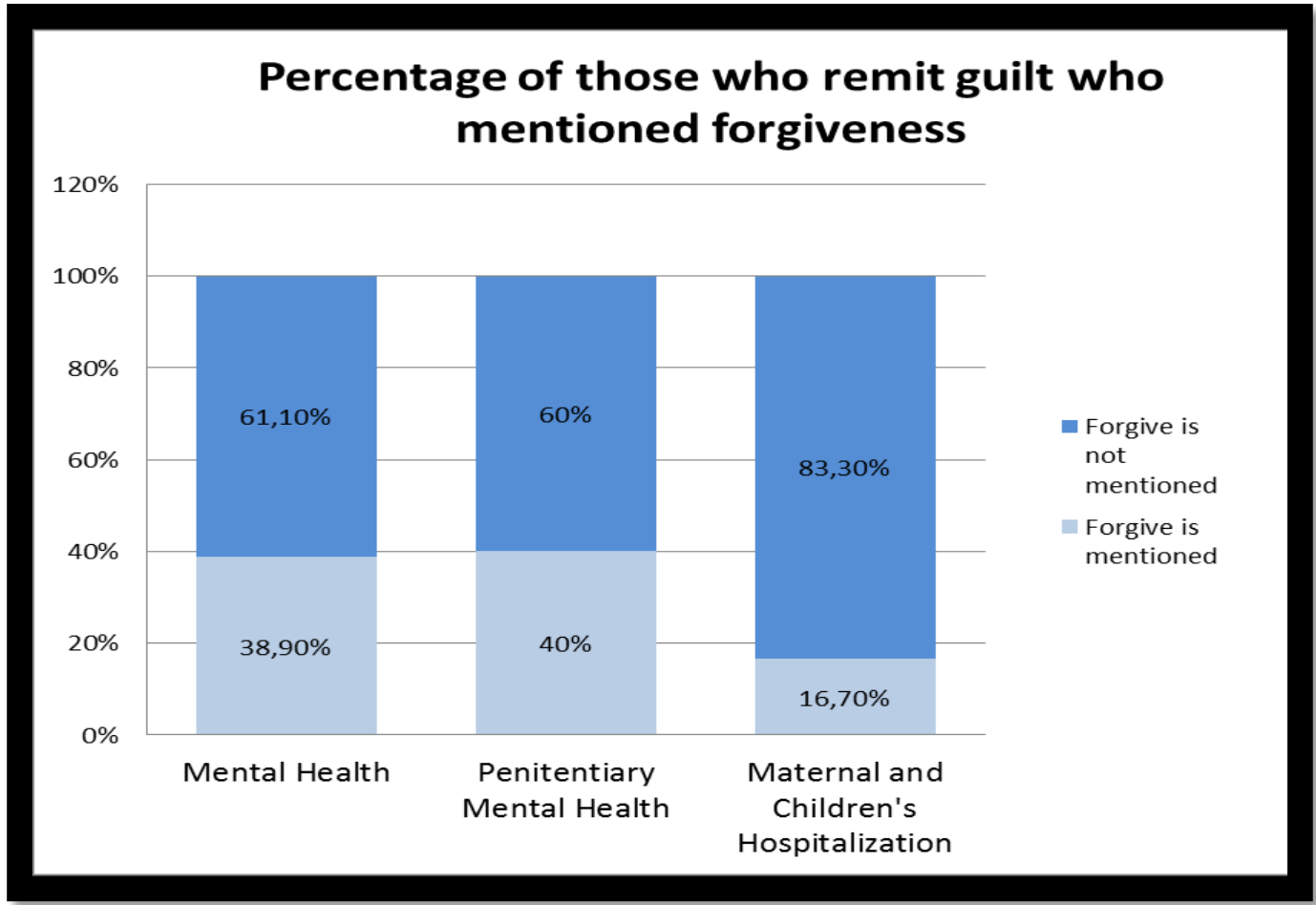
3ª Phase: Analysis of the discourse in those cases identified in order to categorize what types of guilt occur and whether they related them to a need for forgiveness and reconciliation.

4ª Phase: Comparative analysis of the results.

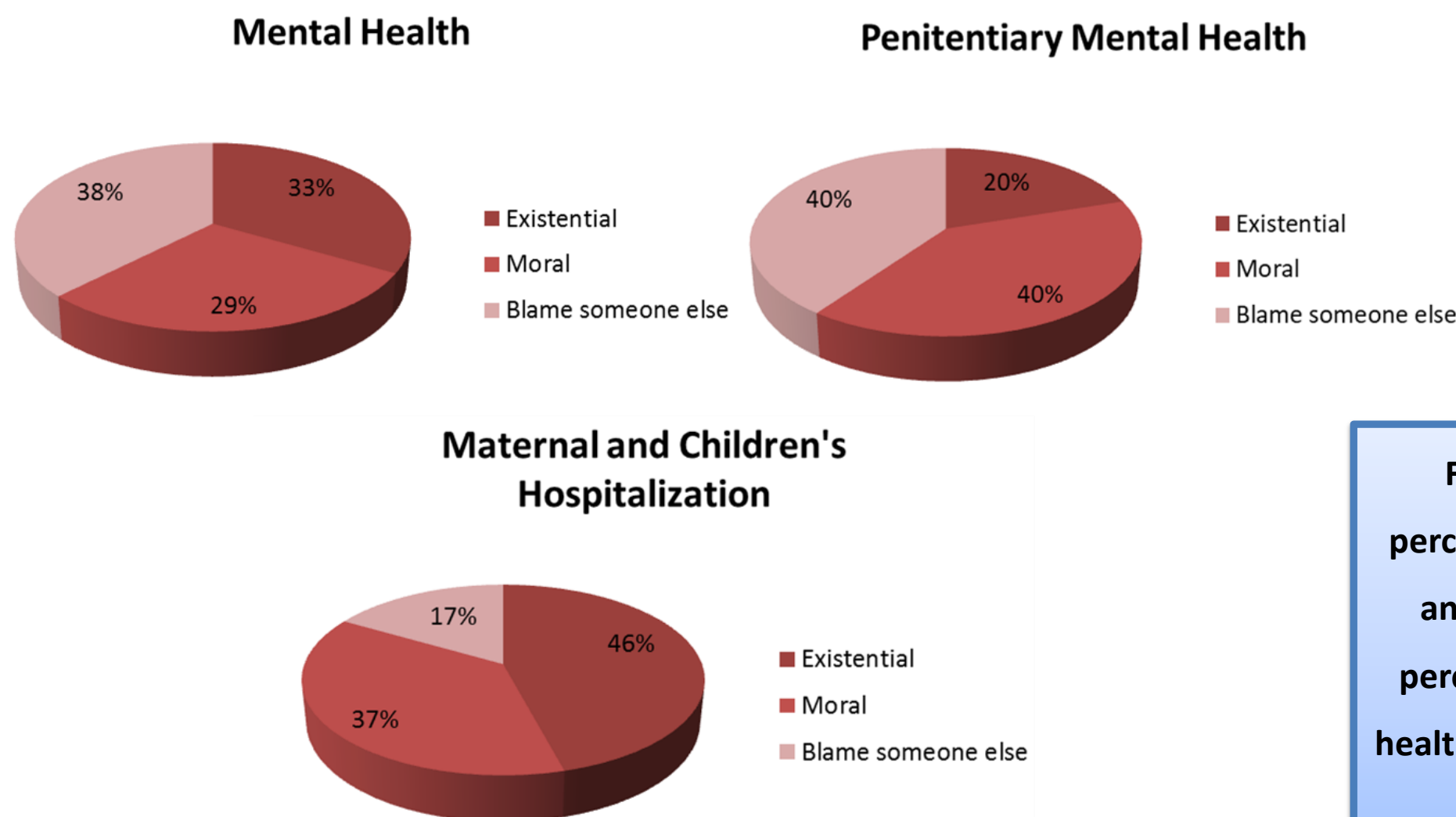
Results



Guilt appears more often in the field of maternity and children’s hospitalization and less frequently in the penitentiary mental health context

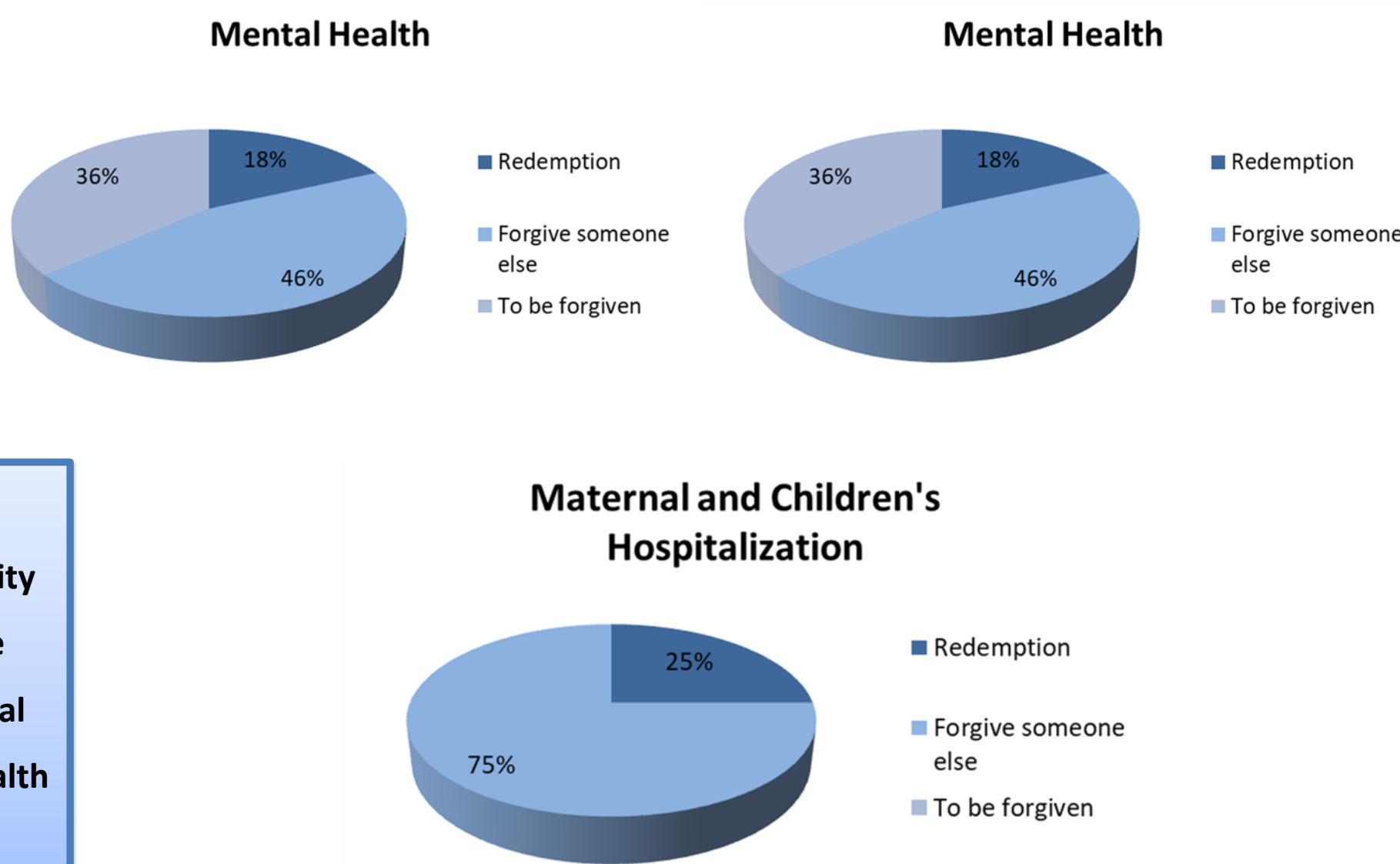


Classification of the types of guilt that occur



Forgiveness happens in a low percentage of cases in the maternity and children’s hospital while the percentage of occurrence in mental health and penitentiary mental health care was average

Classification of the types of forgiveness that occur



Conclusions

- In the three areas studied, guilt appears as a relevant issue of spiritual accompaniment
- The area of penitentiary mental health is where guilt appears in a smaller percentage of the treated cases
- Regarding the types of guilt, in the maternity and children’s hospital there is a greater prevalence of existential guilt and a lower tendency to blame other people. On the contrary, in the prison context, moral guilt or blaming someone else arises
- In all cases where the issue of guilt has appeared, the possibility of forgiveness occurs in less than 50% of the cases, with an especially low prevalence in the maternity and children’s hospital
- In the penitentiary area, there appears no need for redemption and a low level existencial culpability is observed
- In the maternity and children’s hospital, blaming other people accounts for a low percentage of cases, while the need to forgive other people is the most common occurrence

Bibliography

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