

**Statement from the Ethical Commission, AMBIS University, regarding a request for a scientific research project assessment including human participants**

**Research Proposal: Between Two Worlds: The Educational and Social Challenges of Children in Institutional Care with Incarcerated Parents. The Dual Trauma: Institutionalization and Parental Incarceration**

**Principal investigator:** PhDr. Alois Daněk, Ph.D.

**Project Introduction and Rationale:**

Children growing up in institutional care often experience significant emotional and psychological distress due to the absence of a stable family environment. When this situation is compounded by parental incarceration, these children face a double trauma—the loss of their primary caregivers to both the child protection system and the criminal justice system. This dual separation creates a complex interplay of emotional, social, and educational challenges that can have long-term consequences on their well-being and life trajectories.

The experience of institutional care is inherently disruptive to a child's attachment, emotional security, and identity development. The lack of consistent, individualized caregiving often results in feelings of abandonment, distrust, and emotional detachment. Many children in institutional care struggle with low self-esteem, difficulties in forming secure relationships, and heightened vulnerability to mental health issues.

Simultaneously, the incarceration of a parent represents another profound loss. Research has shown that children with incarcerated parents are more likely to experience:

Feelings of shame, guilt, and stigma lead to social isolation and difficulties in peer relationships, anxiety and depressive symptoms stemming from uncertainty about their parent's well-being and the disruption of family bonds.

When these two forms of trauma intersect, children may develop complex emotional responses, maladaptive coping mechanisms, and a diminished sense of agency over their future. Institutional settings are often not adequately equipped to address the specific emotional needs of children coping with both separation from their parents and the stigma of incarceration. This study aims to critically examine these overlapping vulnerabilities and identify strategies for intervention, resilience-building, and social inclusion.

This research is planned for implementation in 2025. Our project is crucial for developing targeted policies and support mechanisms that address the unique needs of children growing up in institutional care while coping with parental incarceration. As a key outcome, the research will produce a series of academic articles, each presenting partial findings from different study phases. One of the main articles will be the paper: The Impact of Parental Incarceration on Children in Institutional Care: Challenges and Interdisciplinary Solutions for the International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies. The project's publications will contribute to the scientific discourse on child welfare, the psychological impact of institutional care, and the educational challenges faced by children with incarcerated parents.



## **Project Methodology Overview**

This project will employ a mixed research design, complemented by structured questionnaire-based data collection, to explore the experiences, challenges, and coping mechanisms of children in institutional care whose parents are incarcerated. The study will focus on subjective experiences, emotional responses, and social dynamics, aiming to understand the long-term impact of dual trauma on their well-being and educational outcomes. The methodological approach will include:

**Structured Questionnaires:** Used to collect basic demographic and contextual information about the children, including age, length of institutional care, parental incarceration status, educational progress, and access to support services. This data will help identify patterns and contextual variables influencing their experiences.

**Semi-structured Interviews:** Conducted with children, caregivers, institutional staff, and social workers to gather insights into their perceptions of family separation, institutional care, and educational challenges.

**Focus Groups:** Discussions with children in institutional care to explore their narratives, emotional coping strategies, and aspirations in the context of parental incarceration.

**Participant Observation:** Direct observation of children's interactions in institutional settings, assessing peer relationships, emotional expressions, and behavioural patterns in response to their family situation.

**Case Studies:** Longitudinal tracking of selected children's progress through detailed personal narratives, capturing changes in emotional resilience, educational motivation, and social adaptation over time.

### **Data Analysis Approach**

The collected data will be analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and Grounded Theory (GT). IPA will be used to explore the lived experiences of children, caregivers, and educators, emphasizing personal meaning-making, emotional processing, and coping strategies in response to institutionalization and parental incarceration. GT will be employed to systematically identify emerging patterns and themes, developing a theoretical framework that explains the psychosocial impact of dual trauma on children's education, mental health, and future prospects.

The combination of structured questionnaire data, IPA, and GT ensures a rigorous, contextually rich, and theory-driven analysis that captures both individual perspectives and broader systemic factors shaping the experiences of these vulnerable children.

## **Ethical Aspects of the Research**

The research will be conducted with complete adherence to ethical guidelines, ensuring the protection and well-being of all participants. Special attention will be given to the vulnerability of children from institutional care and those with special educational needs (SEN).

**Informed Consent:** Participation in the study will be entirely voluntary. Informed consent will be obtained from legal guardians, institutional representatives, and, where appropriate, the children, using age-appropriate explanations of the study's purpose and procedures.



Informed consent will be sought through correctional facility procedures for interviews with incarcerated parents, ensuring that participation is voluntary and compliant with prison regulations.

Their professional and institutional consent will also be secured when engaging with prison staff or social workers involved in family support programs.

**Confidentiality and Data Protection:** No personal or sensitive data will be collected, and all information will be anonymized. Data will be handled according to GDPR and ethical research standards. No personal or sensitive data will be collected that could identify participants, either children or their incarcerated parents. All information will be fully anonymized. In cases where correctional facilities are involved, data handling procedures will align with prison system regulations to ensure ethical compliance.

**Minimization of Psychological Risk:** Given the potential emotional sensitivity of the topic, the study will ensure a safe and supportive environment for all participants. The psychologist will be available for consultation if needed.

**Compliance with Ethical Guidelines:** The study will be conducted according to the Helsinki Declaration and the ethical principles for research with children established by relevant academic and professional bodies.

### **Gender Sensitivity, Inclusive Language, and Anti-Discriminatory Practice**

This research is committed to gender sensitivity, inclusive language, and anti-discriminatory practices in all study phases, from data collection to analysis and dissemination of findings.

**Gender Sensitivity:** The study acknowledges participants' diverse gender identities and will ensure that research instruments, interviews, and discussions are inclusive and free from gender bias. Data collection will be designed to respect individual identities and avoid reinforcing gender stereotypes.

**Inclusive Language:** All communication, research materials, and publications will use nondiscriminatory and inclusive language, avoiding terminology that could marginalize or exclude any group. The study will employ person-first language (e.g., "children with special educational needs" rather than "special needs children") to emphasize the individual before the condition.

**Anti-Discriminatory Practice:** The research will actively promote equity and inclusion, ensuring that children from institutional care and those with SEN are respected and valued. The study design will consider intersectionality, recognizing that factors such as gender, disability, socio-economic status, and cultural background interact and shape individual experiences.

**Equal Participation:** Measures will be implemented to facilitate equal access to participation, including necessary accommodations for children with disabilities and additional support for those who may need it due to their background in institutional care.

### **Informed Consent and Right to Withdraw**

Participation in this research will be voluntary, ensuring all respondents fully understand the study's purpose, procedures, and rights before participating.

**Informed Consent:** Participants and their legal guardians (where applicable) will provide at least minimal verbal consent before engaging in the research. In cases where written consent is not feasible, verbal agreement or non-verbal assent (e.g., nodding or engaging willingly in the activity) will be



considered sufficient, particularly for younger children or those with communication difficulties. Consent procedures will be designed using accessible and age-appropriate language to ensure comprehension.

**Right to Withdraw:** Participants will have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without providing a reason and without any negative consequences. This right will be clearly communicated before data collection begins.

**Ethical Conduct in Data Collection:** Interviews, focus groups, and observations will only be conducted with participants who have given explicit consent. Researchers will remain sensitive to participants' comfort levels, and any signs of discomfort or distress will be taken as a cue to pause or terminate participation.

### **Conclusion**

This research is committed to the highest ethical standards in all design, implementation, and dissemination phases. Special attention will be given to ensuring the safety, dignity, and autonomy of all participants, particularly children from institutional care who experience the additional challenge of parental incarceration.

We fully acknowledge the sensitive nature of this study and commit to:

Ethical engagement with both children and incarcerated parents, ensuring that participation is entirely voluntary and free of coercion.

Trauma-informed approaches prioritise the mental health and emotional well-being of all participants.

Anonymity and confidentiality, maintaining strict data protection measures for both institutionalized children and parents within the correctional system.

Compliance with national and international ethical research guidelines, including regulations governing research in institutional and correctional settings.

We hereby commit to absolute adherence to ethical standards as set forth by the relevant institutional ethics committee. This research will be conducted with the utmost integrity, transparency, and respect for all participants, ensuring that the findings contribute meaningfully to the scientific, educational, and social policy discourse while upholding the highest principles of research ethics.

### **Members of the committee:**

Ethical Committee head: doc. Ing. Milan Půček, Ph.D., MBA

Committee Member: doc. Mgr. Irena Tušer, Ph.D.

Committee Member: Ing. et Ing. Veronika Linhartová, Ph. D.

The Ethics Committee of Ambis University in Prague has reviewed and evaluated the submitted application along with all materials provided by the qualitative researcher. The Committee has concluded that the aforementioned document does not contradict the valid principles of research



outlined in the Code of Ethics of Ambis University in Prague. The principal investigator will take all necessary steps to ensure the ethical integrity of the research, including voluntary participation of research subjects, the provision of relevant information to them, and obtaining consent from the legal guardians of children. No sensitive or personal data will be collected as part of the research. Given its nature, the dignity, rights, and health of the respondents will not be compromised in any way.

Prague 12. 2. 2025



doc. Ing. Milan Půček, Ph.D., MBA  
signature of the Ethical Committee head