

# **Self-Efficacy: The Perception of Self-Preparedness for Leaving Institutional Care and Becoming an Independent Individual**

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## **Abstract**

The family is the main socializing factor for the child and it should perform its role in relation to the healthy development of the child's personality. If the family fails systematically to perform its functions, another possibility of securing the child's needs would be sought. Children's Home is a type of institutional facility in the Czech Republic where a child from a dysfunctional family can get into. It mainly serves as a pedagogical, educational, and social stimulant for the children. Despite the fact that the children's homes are trying to stimulate the family environment as best as possible, they can never completely replace and restore all family functions. Children living long-term in institutional care often have problems in the psychological and social areas. Their socialization and successful functioning in the society is in many ways difficult and complicated.

The paper presents partial results from a quantitative research that focuses on the relationship between self-efficacy of the respondents and their sense of preparation for leaving the children's home as independent persons. Data was collected using a questionnaire consisting of two parts, standardized and non-standardized. The target group used was children's home clients within the age of 17 to 26, who were soon expected to leave the children's home for the purpose of becoming independent. The essential research sample consisted of 263 clients of public children's homes and the selective sample included 208 respondents. The data was then statistically verified using Shapiro-Wilk normality test and Mann-Whitney test. The correlation between variables was determined by the Spearman correlation coefficient.

It was proven that clients who evaluate their self-efficacy better also feel better prepared to leave the children's home than low self-efficacy clients.

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**Keywords:** Children's home, quantitative research, readiness, independence, self-efficacy.

## **Introduction**

Children's homes are one of the types of institutional facilities in the Czech Republic. They provide background for children who, under all circumstances, cannot grow up in their original family. These individuals may remain in the children's homes until they are 18 years of age. In the case of continued preparation for their future occupation, this period can be extended up to 26 years. Individuals who grow up in this type of institution, in the long term, have considerable difficulty in leaving the institution and moving into independent living and they are included in one of four sub-groups of socially disadvantaged pupils in the context of Czech education (Němec & Vojtová, 2009). Often times, children leave the homes without a deeper understanding of what awaits them, and they cannot rely on their biological family to take that important step of their life. Preparing for an independent life is an important phase of the social rehabilitation process in the substitutional educational care in the Czech Republic. So far, however, not enough attention has been given to this process by experts. Czech legislation and methodological concepts are also insufficient in this area. Much of the responsibility is transferred to children's homes, their employees, and to clients themselves (Štenclová & Čech, 2018).

Therefore, this paper presents a part of the quantitative research implemented between January and March 2019. It follows the first part of the research, which was carried out in 2018 (Štenclová & Čech, 2018a; 2018b). The first part worked with the directors of 98 children's homes in the Czech Republic. The same children's homes were also included in the second part, where the respondents were clients who would soon be leaving their children's home for independence (n = 208). To ensure a high degree of reliability of the research tool and the validity of the results obtained, the questionnaire used was triangulated by several independent experts from among academics, directors, and educators of selected children's homes.

## **The Structure of the Substitute Care in the Czech Republic**

Many children in the Czech Republic cannot grow up in their own family. If the family does not want to take responsibilities for the child, or is unable to take care of the child for various reasons, he/she is then placed in one of the types of alternative educational or substitute family care. Generally, there is a tendency to place these children in family care which includes foster care for a temporary period, adoption, personal custody, and care by a person other than a parent (MLSA, 2006). If this kind of care cannot be realized, it is necessary to place the child in one of the types of alternative care under three ministries of the Czech Republic. The Ministry of Health (MH) manages special children's institutions such as infant homes and children's homes for children aged 0-3. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MLSA) has, in

addition to the above-mentioned substitute family care, a facility for children requiring immediate assistance. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) manages school facilities for institutional and protective education. This section also includes children's homes (hereinafter CH), which are crucial in terms of contribution.

Children are placed in the CH on the basis of a preliminary measure or a court order of institutional care. This happens in cases where biological parents are unable or unwilling to care for their children, they cannot find a substitute family for them, and children do not show signs of serious behavioural disorders. CH care for children according to their individual needs and they fulfil mainly educational and social tasks. Also, children can usually be placed in the CH at the age of 3 to 18 years (Act No. 109/2002 Coll.). At the age of 18, individuals in the Czech Republic reach legal majority. At this time, individuals who have been placed in the CH on the basis of a court decision may terminate their stay on their own request. They can also stay in CH, but their condition is to prepare them for the future. In such a case, this person usually concludes a written contract, which creates a so-called stay for agreement. CH provides full direct service until he/she reaches 26 years, under the terms of the contract. Although the individual remains among his/her friends and people he/she knows, it is still only a temporary solution, as he/she will have to leave the CH and become independent (Štenclová & Čech, 2018a).

According to information from the Statistical Yearbook of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (2018), there are about 3500 children in CH with ordered institutional care in the Czech Republic. However, only a very small number of these children are full orphans (33 children). In most cases, they are called "social orphans". In this case, the child's own family has not been created, disintegrated, or are unwilling to take care of the child.

### **Specifics of Individuals Growing Up in the Institutions**

A child growing up in institutional care is considered to be a vulnerable child in the Czech Republic. Such a child, according to Dunovsky et al. (1995), is considered to be at risk in his/her natural development. Schneiberg (2011) also adds that his/her needs are not adequately met or satisfied. The life conditions of the child are so deviated from the usual norm that they can threaten the child's health and development, including inclusion in society by limiting, deviating, or even disabling the anticipated development. Despite the fact that individual institutional care facilities try to substitute the family as much as possible to ensure the best possible needs of the child, they will never completely stop all family functions. In addition, Matoušek (1999) states that a long-term stay of a child in an institution may lead to various personality deformations in the areas of social relationships, attitudes, value systems, or

self-esteem. However, the need for self-esteem, positive self-appreciation, and unconditional self-acceptance is essential for the proper development of the child's personality. Fulfilling this need directly influences motivation for human behaviour and influences the way we perceive reality in adulthood (Bittner et al., 2007).

A great risk for these children is the emergence of psychological deprivation, which Langmeier and Matějček (2011) define as a psychological state that arose as a result of life situations, when a person is not given the opportunity to satisfy some of his basic psychological needs in a sufficiently long time. Mental deprivation usually occurs in children who have been in institutional care for a long time, commonly from early childhood to adulthood. The consequences of this deprivation are very serious due to the long time the child has been in institutional care (Mühlapachr, 2001).

Deprivation may manifest itself in various forms. These are deficiencies in social, intellectual, emotional, and character areas. After leaving the institution, it represents a considerable handicap for the individual. In connection with becoming independent, the emphasis is mainly on planned strategies for preparing the child leaving the children's home. In a biological family, this strategy takes on a more unconditional form; individuals prepare for their independent life on an ongoing and unorganized basis, with the support of their family (Běhounková, 2012).

### **Social Integration of Individuals Leaving Institutional Care in the Context of Self-efficacy**

The family is the main socializing factor for the child. However, if the family is nonfunctional, socialization of the individual becomes difficult. Social integration is the highest level of socialization, which is a process of integrating man into society and his everyday life. Through socialization, an individual adopts complex forms of behaviour and regulates his attitudes and values (Kauffman, 2007). Many mechanisms have influenced the child's socialization throughout its life including the quality of early emotional attachment (Bowlby, 1965), the quality of language acquisition (Bernstein, 1971), and the quality of social learning (Bandura, 1977). In the context of social learning, the child acquires and consolidates patterns of behaviour and also acquires a basal experience with the functioning of society (Běhounková, 2012).

In the context of social cognitive learning, Albert Bandura comes with the concept of self-efficacy. Bandura (1997) understands self-efficacy as self-confidence in our own skills and belief in control of events and ability to influence our life. If the individuals are convinced of their ability to manage theirs, they have a better idea of coping with the difficulties that arise in their life. This sense of self-efficacy refers to the future, but it depends on the past

performance of the individual (Bandura, 1994). Self-efficacy affects many aspects of life. For example, high self-efficacy is a strong predictor of academic success and aspirations. It has a positive impact on social relations or prosocial behaviour (Bandura, Barbaranalli, Caprara & Pastorelli, 1996). At the same time, it prevents depression (Bandura, Pastorelli, Barbaranelli, & Caprara, 1999) and it has a positive effect on shyness (Caprara, Steca, Cervone, & Artisticco, 2003). Consequently, it has also been found that there is a connection between the sense of self-efficacy and life satisfaction.

High self-efficacy in connection with the research presented in this paper may point to better coping with the transition to independent life for individuals leaving institutional care. In substitute care institutions, preparation for independent life is an important phase of the social rehabilitation process. However, the Czech environment has not given enough attention to this issue. The surveys carried out (Hanáková & Kormaňák, 2015; Gjuričová, 2007; Matoušek, Pazlarová & Baldová, 2008) point to the lack of preparedness of young adults to leave the children's home. Thus, this may in many cases lead to various life failures (drug addiction, prostitution, stealing, etc.) in their own lives.

On the basis of the UN documents (2009), children's homes should secure successful integration into the society, particularly through the cultivation and acquisition of social and life skills. However, the development of social skills complicates e.g. the so-called institutional dependence syndrome. This phenomenon is, according to Musil (2008), characterized by a state of adaptation to artificial institutional conditions which helps to reduce the ability to adapt to life outside the institution.

Clients of children's homes are provided with food, finance, and accommodation without any stronger participation. At the same time, the daily schedule is applied. These individuals are then unable to satisfy their needs and manage the situations of everyday life (material needs, a daily routine organisation, finding a job, an apartment, finance management or communication with the authorities). According to Matoušek, Pazlarová and Baldová (2008), the common reason for the problems of individuals after leaving the children's home is a lack of experience with life outside the institution, which leads to the unrealistic expectations and ideas about their own life. Another problem is a low degree of education and insufficient social competences (Matoušek, Pazlarová & Baldová, 2008). The impossibility of mastering a successful personal development leads to a crisis that Macek (2003) sees as a clash of biological, psychological, and social aspects. This conflict causes the disruption or non-creation of moral attitudes and opinions, the relationship with the outside world, self-reflection, and self-concept.

## **Methodology**

The aim of the paper is to present the partial results of the quantitative research carried out between January and March 2019. The presented results represent the second part of the research. The first part was made in 2018 (Štenclová & Čech, 2018a; 2018b) and was focused on finding how the children's homes prepare the children for independent living and what aspects are affected by this preparation. The respondents in the first phase were the directors of children's homes.

In the second phase, this research focuses on finding how the clients, who are about to leave the children's home, evaluate their current readiness for this action. The area of preparation for leaving the institution is still insufficiently addressed in the Czech Republic. There is no uniform definition of how, or by what means and approaches, should the clients be effectively prepared for leaving the institutions so they can be integrated successfully into the society (Štenclová & Čech, 2018a).

## **Main Research Question and Tested Hypotheses**

The main research question was defined in connection with the aim of the research as follows: How do clients who are expected to leave the children's home to become independent evaluate their current readiness for this action in the context of their self - efficacy?

This paper presents an analysis of one of the hypotheses:

H1: Clients who evaluate their self-efficacy higher, feel better prepared to leave CH than low self-efficacy clients

## **Research Design and Method of Data Collection**

For the quantitative data collection, we used a questionnaire consisting of two parts as a research tool. The first part was a questionnaire developed for this particular research. This section contained 17 questions focusing on finding out the respondents' subjective opinions regarding their departure from CH aimed at becoming independent. The questionnaire was compiled on the basis of information from professional literature and also in cooperation with some executives and educators of selected children's homes. The second part of the research tool was a structured self-efficacy questionnaire (GSE) created in 1981 by Jerusalem, M. and Schwarzer, R. (1995). It is based on Bandura's concept of self-efficacy (see above). However, the standardization of the Czech population questionnaire was conducted by Jaro Křivohlavý in 1993 (Křivohlavý, Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1993).

The questionnaire has ten items and answers are recorded on a four-point scale. The questionnaires were distributed among the clients through the managers of the individual institutions. This distribution was either through online communication, followed by return of scanned documents or by email.

The questionnaires were anonymous and, therefore, no informed consent or other documents on the preservation of personal data had to be signed.

### **Characteristics of the Research Sample**

The research group consisted of 98 children's homes in the Czech Republic, which were involved in the first phase (Štenclová & Čech, 2018a; 2018b) and 61 institutions were involved in the second phase of the research. The target group for data collection were clients in the age range of 17 to 26, who are expected to leave the children's home in the near future. Of the total number of 263 questionnaires collected, a sample of 208 clients was selected, including 104 girls and 104 boys. The average age of respondents is 18 years. The average self-efficacy score of clients is 28.6, which indicates a rather high self-efficacy value for the research sample.

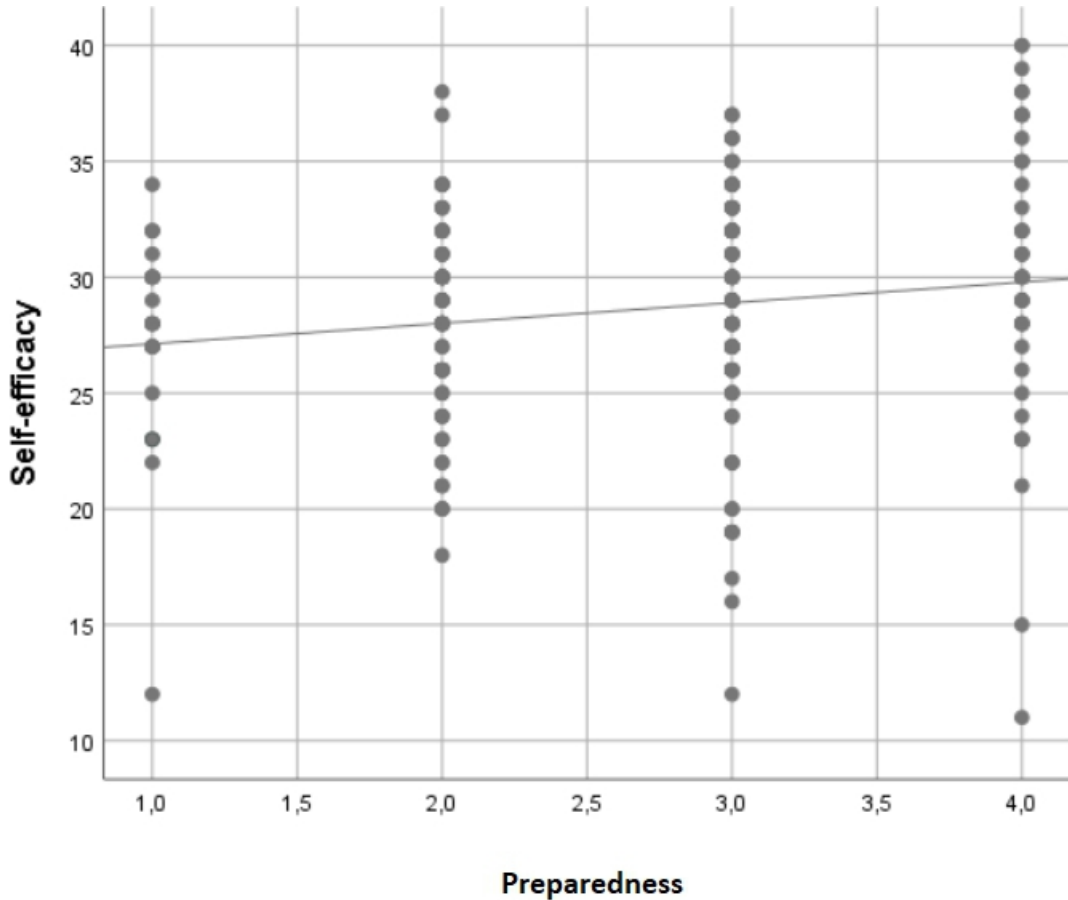
### **Data Analysis**

A statistical analysis was made in the statistical programs R and SPSS. Based on the Shapiro-Wilk normality test, it was found that the data did not have a normal distribution. In addition, a nonparametric correlation test was applied to verify the existence of a positive relationship between self-efficacy and readiness for leaving from CH.

### **Statistical Hypothesis**

$H_0$  = self-efficacy and readiness to leave DD are independent variables.

$H_A$  = self-efficacy and readiness to leave DD are dependent variables.



Graph 1. Self-efficacy link with readiness to leave CH

The graph above provides a first idea of the relationship between variables. From a point graph and a growing regression line, it can be assumed that with increasing levels of self-efficacy, on an average, readiness for leaving the CH also increases. However, this dependency is likely to be small. Whether there is a dependency between variables and what dependence is, it has been investigated throughout the research sample separately in the male and female groups.

	Research Sample ( $n = 208$ )	Men ( $n_m = 104$ )	Women ( $n_z = 104$ )
$r_s$	0,175	0,078	0,239



$p \leq \alpha$	0, 012 < 0, 05	—	0, 014 < 0, 05
$p > \alpha$	—	0, 433 > 0, 05	—

Table 1. Results of Spearman's correlation coefficient for H1

Since the p-value is less than the significance level (see Table 1), the null hypothesis was rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. A positive dependence between self-efficacy and readiness for leaving the CH can be assumed. This dependence is significant and small. Therefore, better self-efficacy assessment can be combined with feelings of better readiness to leave CH.

This finding also supports the outcome of a group of women with higher significant correlations between variables but it is still small. A contradiction occurs in a group of men where a statistically insignificant correlation is based. The assumption of the existence of a positive relationship between the variables was further verified by the Mann-Whitney test. Here, the readiness for leaving the CH was divided into better and worse, and the self-efficacy of the two groups was compared. It was examined whether clients who feel more ready to leave CH perceive better self-efficacy than clients who feel less ready to leave CH.

For the purpose of verification, clients were divided into two groups.  
Group 1 - Clients who definitely do not feel and rather do not feel ready to leave CH.

Group 2 - Clients who definitely feel and rather feel ready to leave CH.

	<i>p</i> -value
Group 1	0,032
Group 2	0,003

Table 2. Shapiro-Wilk normality test

Normal distribution cannot be expected. As a result, only the Mann-Whitney test was applied (see Table 2).

### Statistical Hypotheses

$H_0$  = medians are identical.

$H_A$  = medians are different.

Mann-Whitney Test results: p - value = 0.044; 044 < 0.05;

## **Results**

Group 1 Median is 28, and Group 2 is 29. Group 2 clients who definitely feel and rather feel ready to leave CH perceive self-efficacy better than clients from Group 1. The difference in self-efficacy is significant since the p-value is less than the significance level and the null hypothesis is rejected in favour of the alternative. Therefore, better self-efficacy assessment can be combined with feelings of better readiness to leave CH.

Conclusion for H1: In the research sample, a positive relationship between self-efficacy and readiness for leaving from CH was significant and small. Furthermore, there is a significant difference between clients who assess their self-efficacy better and low self-efficacy clients, where a better self-efficacy assessment can be combined with feelings of better readiness for leaving the CH. Thus, the validity of H1 can be assumed: Clients who assess their self-efficacy better feel more ready to leave CH than low self-efficacy clients.

## **Conclusion**

Children's homes are one of the types of institutions providing care to children in the Czech Republic that their original family cannot or does not want to take care of. They are set up for children from 3 to 18 years old. If individuals prepare for their future occupation, they can stay in the children's home for up to 26 years. However, their leaving from the institution is, in many aspects, more difficult than for individuals who are getting independent on their own biological families. Children who grow up in institutions in the long term have problems psychologically based on social relations, attitudes, value systems, and their own self-esteem. The social integration of these individuals is still not sufficiently, legislatively or otherwise methodologically, grounded in the Czech Republic.

Therefore, the paper presents a part of the quantitative research of the respondents of which were clients of children's homes, who would soon become independent and leave the facility (n = 208). Based on the analysis of their statements, an analysis of the H1 hypothesis is presented. It assumes that clients who assess their self-efficacy better feel better prepared to leave the CH than low self-efficacy clients. Using the Spearman correlation coefficient and the Mann-Whitney test, the hypothesis presented can be assumed to be valid. Therefore, clients who assess their self-efficacy better feel better prepared to leave CH than low self-efficacy clients. Furthermore, using the Spearman correlation coefficient, it was found that the positive dependence between self-efficacy and readiness for leaving the CH is small.

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