Social Research Call

Title:

Retrospective Evaluation of Foster Care in Portugal: Using Data to Inform Policy

Acronym: DATA2FOSTER(CARE)

Project leader: Helena Grangeia

Host organisation: ProChild CoLab Against Poverty and Social Exclusion – Association

Main purpose of the project: To evaluate the implementation and outcomes of Portugal's foster care system (i.e., placement stability and duration) through the analysis of retrospective data. By identifying key gaps, emerging trends, and opportunities for system improvement, the study will generate actionable insights to inform evidence-based policymaking.

Design/methodology/approach: The adoption of a data-driven, multilevel, and mixed-methods approach enables rigorous triangulation of findings. To ensure contextual relevance and applicability, the data strategy is co-designed with key stakeholders. The methodology seeks to describe the system and explain placement outcomes through robust and innovative analytic techniques, enhancing the evidence base for child protection policy.

Potential results: The project delivers a data-driven evaluation of Portugal's foster care system since the 2019 reform by 1) identifying factors affecting placement stability and duration, 2) uncovering regional disparities in placement rates and outcomes, 3) evaluating service effectiveness, 4) introducing a robust mixed-methods approach, and 5) generating reliable, policy-relevant evidence to inform and redesign Portuguese foster care system.

Social relevance of the research: DATA2FOSTER(CARE) addresses the gap between Portugal's political commitment to deinstitutionalization and the lack of implementation data. It delivers a timely, evidence-based evaluation to support improved foster care policies. By generating actionable evidence, it contributes to better outcomes for children, stronger support for families, and a more equitable and effective foster care system.

Originality/value of the project: The project stands out for its data-driven orientation and commitment to evidence-based policymaking in the child protection field. Using robust statistical techniques, it provides nuanced insights into placement outcomes and for future design of tailored interventions and resource allocation strategies. The participatory approach engages key stakeholders to ensure the relevance and applicability of indicators.