

Maternal Incarceration, Prison Programs and Child Development: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Motherhood plays a pivotal role in the development of the child, and the child's best interests should be the primary consideration in every matter involving children. However, maternal incarceration negatively affects the well-being of children, creating a dilemma between co-residing and separation from mother. Though multiple studies have examined this phenomenon, the current study aimed at systematically identifying the objectives, research methodologies, and prominent themes highlighted in those studies. Hence, a qualitative study with a sample of 26 papers published between 2001 and 2021 in the Taylor and Francis database was selected and thematically analysed. The study could identify three themes, including the relationship between incarcerated mothers and their children, the effectiveness of prison-based child development programs, and the development of children incarcerated with their mothers. Further, the study identified qualitative approaches being predominant throughout these studies. The study concludes with recommendations on identifying the necessity of reinforcing mother-child attachment by means of uniform criminal justice practices based on the best interests of the child.

Key Words: Child development, Maternal incarceration, Mother-Child relationship, Prison programs, Systematic review



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1. INTRODUCTION

Motherhood is considered one of the most precious roles one can achieve. As the famous Russian novelist Maxim Gorky once stated in his classic 'Mother', the world remains incomplete without the mother's love and the sun's rays. Her role is versatile and crucial in making her child's world complete. Motherhood is especially associated with providing security and comfort, where the child seeks attachment and warmth. As identified by Bowlby (1988), the most fundamental aspect of attachment with the mother is her role as a secure base for the child to explore the world and return for comfort. Apart from safety, Cassidy and Shaver (2016) view motherhood as an internal working model, where interactions with the mother help children develop mental representations of self and others. They further elaborate that children with a secure attachment to their mother demonstrate higher levels of socio-emotional responses, including resilience, empathy, and social competence.

On the other hand, her child is equally important; thus, their rights are given due recognition as a non-exclusive set of human rights that should be protected in every circumstance. Especially in the modern socio-economic context characterised by fast-paced technological innovation, socio-political awareness, and high literacy rates, these rights receive more attention than ever. Article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) has emphasised the necessity of considering the best interests of the child. Whether the action is undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities, or legislative bodies, it remains the same. Even the separation of the child from his or her parents should be executed by having the best interests of the child as the primary consideration. "State parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child" (Article 9, UNCRC). In the meantime, the right to development has been given value and recognition via Article 27 of the UNCRC. In particular, the right of every child to physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development is considered of utmost importance. Here, the role of both the parents and the state is underscored. Since the primary responsibility lies with the parents, they are required to secure this right within their abilities and financial capacities. In addition, the state has an obligation to take appropriate measures to assist parents in implementing this right by creating suitable policies and regulations.

Meanwhile, amidst contemporary socio-economic changes, the landscape of global corrections is undergoing significant transformations, with more women being incarcerated over various convictions. As estimated by the Prison Policy Initiative (2025), the number of imprisoned women has increased by 60% since 2000, with more than 740,000 females incarcerated worldwide. However, the most crucial factor is that 80% of women in jails and 58% of women in prisons are mothers, and the majority are the sole caretakers of young children. This can be identified as a 'global crisis' because motherhood has no geographical boundaries, and the silent victims are none other than their innocent children. Though parental incarceration is disruptive in common, maternal incarceration is unique because of her exclusive role in the psychosocial well-being of the child, primary socialization, and personality development. As evident in Gadian et al. (2025), when a father is incarcerated after conviction, children remain at home with their mother. But when the mother is incarcerated, children will move with her or will be taken into statutory or grandparental care. Hence, the nature of the problem is well demonstrated.

Hence, the problem is obvious. If the mother-child relationship is essential to child development, and is deeply intertwined with the quality of the child's personality and psychosocial development, and if the separation from mother should be done based only upon the child's best interests, what guarantee can state parties, or correctional institutions, provide that the development of the child will not be affected?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Maternal role in primary socialization

As social beings, humans are required to adapt to the existing social system by internalizing established social norms and expectations. This transformative process from the biological being to the social being is defined as 'socialization,' and Little (2016) argues that it is based on human interactions and social engagement. During this continuous long-term social integration process,

specific socio-cultural experiences, especially during childhood, have a significant impact. Since the child spends much of his time with family, and many lessons of equality, development, and coexistence are learnt from this basic structural unit of society, the family is considered the main agent of the primary socialization process. Within this familial influence, the role of women, led by the mother, plays a decisive role in learning and internalizing established social norms. Especially as structures that hold families and their roots together, the role of women is critical. Supporting the argument that women's roles are dynamic, flexible, and continuous, traditional feminine roles based on qualities such as affection and sensitivity, Sekscinska et al. (2016) have identified how they have undergone significant changes with rapid socio-economic changes. However, among the multiple roles women play in the contemporary social context, the universal concept of motherhood is the core of primary socialization. Since this concept is attributed with a range of social expectations, experiences, and structures, it is considered the core of primary socialization. Since Eisenberg et al. (1998) have underscored the powerful impact of mothers' responses and emotional attachment during childhood socialization, the social world of a child is opened through the maternal figure.

2.2. Maternal incarceration on the rise

On the other hand, females also get imprisoned owing to being arrested or convicted for criminal offences. In circumstances where the mother is incarcerated, the primary socialization process of her child can be characterized by multiple anomalies. Though an on-point assessment is impossible, maternal incarceration is a critical juncture of the child's socialization process. Hence, Dallaire (2007) has described that separation from the incarcerated mother can sometimes become beneficial for the child, but sometimes it will not. As incarcerated mothers often experience poverty and social instability, their children are more vulnerable to mental health issues. Hence, it is justifiable to identify the children with incarcerated mothers as a high-risk population.

2.3. Origin of a chain of disruptions

As consistently indicated in previous studies, maternal incarceration leads to the disruption of various factors required for the well-being of the child. Studies including Glaze and Maruschak (2008) and Dallaire and Wilson (2010) identify the importance of the maternal role as the primary source of attachment, and caregiving as the underlying vulnerability of this phenomenon. Arresting or sentencing the mother to imprisonment separates the crucial mother-child bond and generates a chain of instabilities that can reproduce delinquency. As highlighted by Kjellstrand and Eddy (2011), this 'cascading effect' of instability results in the replacement of caregivers, disruption of bonds among siblings, and disorganization of the routine atmosphere that the child was used to, in school and in the community.

2.4 Psychological risks and behaviour changes

Owing to such disruptions, the likelihood of problems, both internalizing and externalizing, as well as attachment trauma, can be increased. As emphasised by Turney (2014), such children are more vulnerable to poor mental health conditions, including grief, anxiety, and depression, than those who experience paternal incarceration. The psychological impact does not remain hidden but can be explicitly visible via increased aggression and anti-social behaviour. As identified by Murry et al. (2012), children with incarcerated mothers face a 10% elevated risk for externalizing aggression, due to being disrupted in emotional regulation. Yet the most crucial impact is on the mother-child attachment through which the psychological development of the child is fulfilled. As identified by Poehlmann (2005), children who witnessed the arrest of their mother can suffer from long-term difficulties in forming strong relationships. Since the single incident of the mother being arrested was internalized, the psychological readiness for a secure attachment is threatened.

2.5. Hindered socio-educational development

The development of such children is further compromised by severe impact on the continuation of education, social stigmatization, and decreased social support. Though education is considered the mode of vertical social mobility, maternal incarceration can hinder the opportunities for continued

education. Studies, including Bell et al. (2018), identified how maternal incarceration was associated with reduced school attendance, poor academic performance, and increased dropout rates. Even the inclusivity of education can be jeopardized in such circumstances. When school communities and peer groups maintain prejudice-based discriminatory practices toward such children, the above-described drawbacks can be further aggravated. As illustrated by Turney and Haskins (2019), stigma, social isolation, and labelling can lead to decreased academic support from the school itself.

2.6. Does co-residing with the mother solve the problem?

Since separation from mother can result in such unprecedented negative outcomes, co-residing with an incarcerated mother, under specific conditions, is considered an alternative. However, the reality is more nuanced, with both positive and negative outcomes. For instance, Martínez-Álvarez and Sindeev (2021) emphasized how negative interpersonal experiences, deficiencies in perceived health and treatment, and violation of fundamental rights are associated with the living experiences of incarcerated mothers and children. From the trauma of incarceration to developmental decline, this co-residing solution has become a source of multiple sufferings for both mother and child.

2.7. Vacuum to be replenished

Though multiple studies have explored various dimensions of this phenomenon, the current scholarship has a gap for systematic reviews that analyse the scientific value of studies conducted so far. Especially, how recent studies have perceived the relationship dynamics between incarcerated mothers and children, what programs are in place to reinforce this attachment, and what consequences are being witnessed worldwide have not been addressed in an organized manner.

3. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Since the maternal role is essential in guaranteeing desired outcomes of primary socialization, maternal incarceration poses a great threat to the development of the child. On the other hand, correctional policies advocate that the best interests of the child should be the primary consideration in every circumstance dealing with children. However, the lack of resources and the vulnerabilities of keeping children within prison institutions pose a great threat to the well-being of the child. In addition, the separation of children from their mothers also pushes the child into a range of vulnerabilities. Hence, how can this dilemma be addressed? Mother-Child Units within prison institutions are introduced as a solution, yet remain controversial with regard to their impact. On the other hand, this phenomenon of maternal incarceration and child development is negatively affecting the future of a country.

4. PURPOSES

Hence, the study aimed at achieving the following objectives.

- Identifying the most prominent objectives that have guided each research
- Examining the research methodologies employed in those studies, with a special focus on sample, data collection, and analysis methods, and limitations
- Illustrating the outcomes of each research in alignment with the thematic priorities.

5. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative research design and a systematic literature review of 28 research papers selected from SAGE and Taylor and Francis databases. The inclusion criteria were strict thematic relevance to the topic 'children with incarcerated mothers' and published between 2001 and 2021. The post-COVID-19 period (2021-present) was characterized by large-scale socio-economic crisis, rapid technological advancements, and global political instabilities; it was excluded from the sample. Since the amalgamation of these two unique periods can hinder the

identification of specific trends identical to each period and can affect the results and interpretation, a separate study will be conducted in the future.

In determining the sample size, the numerical equation presented by Robert V. Krejci and Daryl W. Morgan was employed. Accordingly, a sample of 26 research papers was selected from the population of 28. Following the selection, each research paper was scrutinized under a content analysis criterion aligning with research objectives. Hence, the following steps were followed in the thematic analysis stage: Identification of topics and phenomena relevant to the study, scanning research papers, and developing main themes aligning with research objectives. After that, under each theme, the study attempted to identify the prominent objectives, employed methodologies, including the sample, data collection, and analysis methods, limitations, and featured outcomes of each study.

The study could identify three themes as listed below.

- Relationship between incarcerated mother and her child : 10 papers
- Effectiveness of early childhood development programmes in prison : 10 papers
- Development of the child, imprisoned with his mother : 06 papers

Below is a tabular summary of the sources of research articles categorized under each theme.

Journal	Theme 01: The relationship between the incarcerated mother and child	Theme 02: Prison early childhood development programs	Theme 03: Development of the child imprisoned with his mother
SAGE	• Burgess and Flynn (2013) • Nuytiens and Jehaes (2020)	• Campbell and Carlson (2012) • Carlson (2018) • Craig (2009) • Dodson et al. (2019) • Walker et al. (2019)	• Ferrara et al. (2009) • Goshin et al. (2014) • Poso et al. (2010)
Taylor and Francis	• Baradon et al. (2008) • Byrne et al. (2010) • Byrne et al. (2012) • Cassidy et al. (2010) • Eloff and Moen (2003) • Farrell (2016) • O'Malley and Devaney (2015) • Slead et al. (2013)	• Carlson (2001) • Dolan et al. (2019) • Linonge-Fontebo and Rabe (2015) • Fritz and Whiteacre (2015) • Goshin and Byrne (2009)	• Candelori and Dosso (2007) • Condon (2016) • Stewart (2016)

Table 1: Papers under each theme

6. FINDINGS

6.1. Relationship between incarcerated mother and her child (Theme 01)

6.1.1. Prominent objectives

Burgess and Flynn (2013) have aimed at studying long term impact of prison programmes that support interpersonal relationships between mother and child. Limiting themselves to one selected program, Baradon et al. (2008) concentrate on identifying the thinking behind the 'New Beginnings' program, and its impact on the mother-child relationship. A similar attempt has been made by Cassidy et al. (2010) since their focus has been to analyse the maternal role of incarcerated pregnant mothers and the enhancement of secure attachment in infants under Tamar's Children Program. Since motherhood is severely affected by incarceration, Nuytiens and Jehaes (2020) have focused on examining whether incarcerated mothers experience maternal pain, how motherhood is shaped by prison-related mother-child interactions, and what support is available to maintain positive mother-child relationships. Diving deeper, Byrne et al. (2010) have attempted to discuss the quality of bonding representations of incarcerated mothers and children, analyse the quality of attachment of these infants, and to examine the discrepancies between mothers' attachment representations and infant attachment classifications. Similarly, the objective of Eloff and Moen (2003) has been the understanding of patterns of interactions between incarcerated mothers and children within prison atmospheres. Focusing more on the consequential aspect, Sled et al. (2013) have aimed to determine whether any changes in the quality of mother-infant interaction happen over time in the above-mentioned New Beginnings program, and to identify the outcome of this intervention and compare that with those who did not participate in this program. An extension of this approach is found in both O'Malley and Devaney (2015) and Byrne et al. (2012), since they have studied the impact of prison processes and child development programs on maintaining motherhood and supporting mother-child interactions. While every other study has dealt with contemporary contexts, Farrell (2016) has investigated the history and motherhood of incarcerated mothers, the impact of the prison penal system on the care of children born in prison, the tension between the roles of women as prisoners as well as mothers, and parental benefits during periods of confinement.

6.1.2. Employed methodologies

In terms of the methodology, the majority of studies employed a sample of mother-child pairs from prison institutions. While Baradon et al. (2008) had a sample of 27 mothers and their babies who participated in the New Beginnings program in two UK prisons, Cassidy et al. (2010) examined 54 pregnant mothers from Tamar's Children Programme in the USA. Adhering to a comparative approach, Byrne et al. (2010) employed 30 mother and baby pairs (as two groups based on co-residence period) from the New York State Department of Correctional Services (NYS DOCS) prison system in the USA. Similarly, Sled et al. (2013) involved 88 mother-infant dyads in the intervention group, and another set in the control group from 7 Mother-Baby Units (MBUs) under the New Beginnings program in the UK. Meanwhile, Byrne et al. (2012) dealt with a larger sample of 197 imprisoned mothers and babies from New York State Prison's Early Childhood Development program. Diving deeper, Eloff and Moen (2003) have used a case study approach, with 4 imprisoned mothers and their babies from Pretoria Bar Prison, South Africa. In contrast to previous studies, Nuytiens and Jehaes (2020) have utilized two small-scale samples from Burges Prison in Belgium. The study employed 6 incarcerated mothers and 17 prison officers. Narrowing in on this approach, O'Malley and Devaney (2015) have relied solely upon an 8-person sample consisting of staff members from the Irish prison system, including prison governors, probation officers, and external care prison support workers. Meanwhile, the rest of the two studies have utilized secondary sources, including review papers and annual prison reports in Ireland.

The majority of the studies categorized under this theme have relied on primary data collection, followed by qualitative data analysis. While both Baradon et al. (2008) and Byrne et al. (2010) have utilized interviews and analysed qualitatively, their analytical approaches are different, with the former using grounded theory, while the latter employed comparative analysis. Similarly, O'Malley and Devaney (2015) and Nuytiens and Jehaes (2020) have collected primary data through semi-structured interviews, while qualitative thematic analysis was conducted afterwards. Taking a further step, Cassidy et al. (2010) have used both questionnaires and interviews to collect primary data, while the analysis remained qualitative. Even Byrne et al. (2012) have employed a continuous

field survey as the primary data collection method, while Eloff and Moen (2003) used both field observations and semi-structured interviews. In addition, a unique analytical method named 'Marschak interaction methodology' has been employed by Eloff and Moen (2003) for their qualitative data analysis. Though the data collection methods remained unchanged, Sleed et al. (2013) utilized SPSS-backed quantitative data analysis. However, the other two studies have employed secondary sources for their data collection, followed by qualitative data analysis.

However, due to the small sample size and short follow-up period, the results of Baradon et al. (2008) must be interpreted cautiously. The same concern related to generalizability is associated with Cassidy et al. (2010) and Eloff and Moen (2003), but from two different perspectives. Since all participants were referred to the same prison intervention program in the former, the latter has restrictions on generalizability due to its focus only on one South African prison and limited objectivity. Similarly, Byrne et al. (2012) are also representative of a selected historical period, not the entire timeline. Even Farrell (2016) experienced this limitation, with its exacerbated emphasis on maternal pain and punishment during the 19th century, while completely ignoring its contemporary dynamics.

On the other hand, overreliance on standardized research methods has limited both Byrne et al. (2010) and Sleed et al. (2013). While the former has over-relied on standardized comparisons between groups due to the absence of a randomly selected control group and ignored how the emotional deprivation and childhood experiences of incarcerated mothers impact their present relationship with infants, the latter's intervention and control groups were not completely compatible. Simultaneously, the voices of incarcerated mothers are completely ignored in O'Malley and Devaney (2015), since their sample consisted exclusively of professionals. Even Nuytiens and Jehaes (2020) were restricted to prison administration regulations in Belgium, which resulted in a lack of details regarding the pain of maternal incarceration and its impact on the child. Further, Burgess and Flynn (2013) have only looked at the long-term impact of the programmes on nurturing mother-child relationships.

6.1.3. Featured outcomes

As identified in the pre-stage of Baradon et al. (2008), mothers find it guilt for bringing their baby into the prison. Hence, many incarcerated mothers expressed a desire for their children to have a different, better experience than them. Yet her self-identity as the saviour and comforter of the infant is identified. But after participation in the New Beginnings program, mothers were found to have a significantly increased ability to think more about babies, recognizing their internal situations, and obstacles that distort their attachment to the baby. Simultaneously, Cassidy et al. (2010) identified that experiences of incarcerated pregnant mothers place their infants in insecure attachment. Yet the Tamar's Children program had a greater level of security than high-risk samples. Mothers in this program had higher maternal sensitivity than the general community comparison group. Keeping mothers and infants together has been identified as contributing to reducing the risk of insecure attachment. Advocating for the same argument, Burgess and Flynn (2013) found that prison-based programs can support mother-child relationships during incarceration if the institutions recognize her role as a mother and assist the maintenance of basic requirements. However, it is unclear whether the benefits continue even into the post-release period. Hence, the study proposes long-term effectiveness of such programs needs to be developed, drawing attention to the new challenges after the transition from prison to the community. The rationale is that a maternal prisoner should leave prison with knowledge and skills for strong mother-child relationships.

Highlighting a positive aspect of the examined phenomenon, Byrne et al. (2010) identified that incarcerated mothers can safely raise their infants under institutional conditions, and additional protection is given to the attachment process. However, disorganization of mother-infant interaction is a major threat to the development of child psychology. Hence, attention should be given to potential threats of separation from an incarcerated mother. Another crucial finding is that children raised with an incarcerated mother have more secure interactions than those from low-income, depressed, and substance-abusing mothers in the general community. Similarly, Byrne et al. (2012) identified that prison infant units can provide uninterrupted care for children until the

age of kindergarten. However, this is particularly ineffective because most of the infants leave before the mother leaves prison, due to the infant's death, the mother's request, disciplinary actions against mothers, or correctional policies. Hence, the study found the necessity of a coordinated system process for corrections and the community to maintain safe interaction, with counselling services and parenting support, in the community and prison. Even in Sleed et al. (2013), only the mothers in the control group experienced a decline in their levels of interaction with their infants over time, while mothers in the intervention group developed positive relationships.

In contrast, Farrell (2016) found that the trauma of separation from their mothers was exacerbated by the gender segregation imposed in Irish institutions at the time. Displacement of the family and the permanent breakdown of family ties under penal servitude had a profound impact on the mother-child relationship. Supporting this notion, Eloff and Moen (2003) also found that the restrictive environment in prison hinders the development of young children by putting constraints on their interaction with mothers and exploring abilities. Also, the study found that some children did not form a specific bond with their mother, thus affecting the long-term relationship with their mother. Also, the study identified that mothers are unaware of the stressful conditions children face, the lack of imaginative play, and recreational activities. Hence, they suggest that though incarcerated mothers cannot be generalized with other mothers, integrating parental and postnatal programs into the prison environment is appropriate. Even O'Malley and Devaney (2015) questioned whether there is any way of verifying whether an incarcerated mother has statutory child protection or welfare services. When facilitating the re-establishment of a normal mother-child relationship, prison capacities are reduced; thus, children have vastly limited opportunities to interact with their mothers. However, since keeping her child enhances mothering experiences, which is beneficial to her rehabilitation process as well, they suggest that the risks of housing children with other prisoners should be managed correctly, in alignment with international best practices. Moreover, the awareness of the pain of the child's imprisonment is an additional pain for mothers. Hence, Nuytiens and Jehaes (2020) emphasize that incarcerated mothers, with strong feelings of being unable to physically separate from their children, are particularly vulnerable to maternal pain, particularly 'witnessing and worrying about the pain of their children's imprisonment. The only reason for incarcerated mothers to cope with the daily activities of prison and to fight and live with courage in the face of imprisonment is the vision of their children. But it is revealed that incarcerated mothers have always developed a stronger bond with their children than with anyone else in the outside world through training and orientation. Hence, it is suggested to have semi-open or open prisons that can stimulate maternal autonomy and mother-child interactions, to minimize maternal pain.

6.2. Effectiveness of Prison Early Childhood Development Programs (Theme 02)

6.2.1. Prominent objectives

Since policies and principles govern the objectives, performance, and outcome of prison institutions, examining the historical evolution of such policy frameworks remains significant. Thus, Craig (2009) aims to present a historical review of such programs and to underline the government's attempts to psychologically and physically punish women and the ongoing problems of the existence of imprisoned mothers. Similarly, Carlson (2001) and Walker et al. (2019) also examined the status of policies and operational models in two maternal-child development programs in the USA and Australia, respectively. On the other hand, it is normal that policies cannot be turned into everyday practices in the same format as documented on paper. Hence, Linonge-Fontebo and Rabe (2015) attempt to study the discrepancies between policy and practice regarding maternal incarceration with children in Cameroon, and how they deal with pregnancy, childbirth, and motherhood under prison constraints.

Whatever theory underpins the programs, the real impact is measured through its outcome. This can be two-fold, as before and after the release. Dolan et al. (2019) aimed to measure depression levels and quality of life among incarcerated pregnant women, and the level of maternal-infant bonding-related interactions among women who maintain care and contact with the child, while Fritz and Whiteacre (2015) compared the birth experiences of women participating in such programs and those who gave birth before the implementation. In terms of the post-release

outcome, Carlson (2018) investigated the effectiveness of the second-oldest prison maternity-baby program for female prisoners in the United States. Simultaneously, Campbell and Carlson (2012) aimed to explore the administration's understanding of the impact of correctional practices on mother-child relationships and to assess the recidivism rates of women who kept their children with them. Taking the same route, Dodson et al. (2019) also examine whether prison mother-infant programs are effective in reducing maternal hardship in prison, and whether participation in prison maternal-child development programs helps reduce recidivism. Finally, bridging the gap between policy and practice, Goshin and Byrne (2009) have investigated the impact of policy and political events on the development of opportunities in such programs and analysed evidence on effectiveness and policy options.

6.2.2. Employed methodologies

The majority of the studies had maternal inmates as their sample, while a few had prison staff as well. For instance, Carlson (2001) had 42 maternal inmates from Nebraska State Prison, the USA, as the sample, while Carlson (2018) employed a sample of 147 consisting of both pregnant and lactating inmates from Nebraska Correctional Centre for Women (NCCW). Integrating a comparative approach, Dolan et al. (2019) examined a sample of 75 maternal inmates, each from and outside the mother-infant units in 12 women's prisons in England. Similarly, Fritz and Whiteacre (2015) had 15 and 12 incarcerated mothers, respectively, selected before and after the implementation of Wee Ones Nursery (WON) in Indiana prison. Meanwhile, Linonge-Fontebo and Rabe (2015) employed a diversified sample of 25 individuals, including female inmates, staff, and NGO representatives from 6 prisons in Cameroon. Walker et al. (2019) also employed the same routine; thus, the sample consisted of incarcerated mothers and staff members in 7 Australian prisons. However, the sample for Campbell and Carlson (2012) consisted entirely of administrators from 28 state prisons in the USA. In contrast, the rest of the studies categorized under this theme relied upon secondary data, including scientific studies, prison reports, and policy papers.

Interviews and questionnaires are identified as the most featured primary data collection mechanisms. While Campbell and Carlson (2012) completely relied on primary data collected through interviews, both Carlson (2001) and Dolan et al. (2019) have employed both face-to-face interviews and questionnaires in their process. While interviews have been instrumental in general, Linonge-Fontebo and Rabe (2015) and Fritz and Whiteacre (2015) have also utilized prison observations and field notes, respectively. Meanwhile, the rest of the four studies depend upon secondary data, including scientific papers and annual reports. Notably, every study categorized under this theme, except Dolan et al. (2019), which employed a scale-based quantitative assessment criterion, has employed qualitative data analysis. While Goshin and Byrne (2009) have used Kingdon's three-metaphor model, Walker et al. (2019) have used grounded theory and the NVIVO software.

Even though Campbell and Carlson (2012) have categorized data based on standard geographic regions, which maintained confidentiality and allowed for geographic comparisons, the final interview has been limited to three open-ended questions. On the other hand, Carlson (2001) has selected only state-sponsored prison maternal-infant units, while Linonge-Fontebo and Rabe (2015) have limited themselves to prisons with a high concentration of male prisoners. Extending on the institutional limitations, Dolan et al. (2019) have also relied on self-reports from maternal inmates. Due to the discrepancies regarding the representativeness of the sample caused by the obstacles to entry at the time of data collection and language barriers, results should be analysed with caution. Similarly, Fritz and Whiteacre (2015) have emphasized the recall issues among inmates due to the length of time that respondents were sentenced in prison. In contrast, Walker et al. (2019) have well analysed the institutional factors, yet the differences in the quality of experiences remained outside the scope. Meanwhile, the inadequacy of impact measurement indicators has dominated both Carlson (2018) and Dodson et al. (2019). While Carlson (2018) has limited the study to three key performance indicators (KPIs), Dodson et al. (2019) have completely relied on the Maryland Scientific Methods Scale. Apart from that, Craig (2009) has provided only a synopsis of the historical evolution of Mother-Baby Units (MBUs). Although the research objectives focus on the historical effects, they do not justify the policies, and the cause of the social process is not discussed in detail. Similarly, Goshin and Byrne (2009) have provided evidence-

based information regarding current policies, yet the costs associated with those policies, and the alternatives, including community support and effective resource management, are not examined.

6.2.3. Featured outcomes

Throughout history, imprisonment has been based on multiple theories, principles, and policy frameworks. Based on the period, heads of state, and the opinions they hold have shaped the way maternal inmates and their children are handled. However, despite different agendas and policies during different periods, Craig (2009) identified how the state has consistently tried to control the mental and physical effects on mothers in prison. From capitalist and progressive values to sociological priorities, the foundational principles have evolved. In the 1990s, the theme of welfare reform gradually focused on motherhood and the development of creative skills. But in the 21st century, contemporary social values based on public acceptance should shape the underpinning theories.

Whatever the theory that will underpin the policy on maternal inmates, the programs aimed at the development of the mother-child relationship should be positively impacted. In terms of the level of public acceptance, efficiency, utility, and the empirical outcomes, these programs should be further advanced. In their analysis based on efficiency and equity, Goshin and Byrne (2009) identified that the most empirically supported positive outcome related to the effectiveness of these programs is the reduction in recidivism. In addition, the willingness demonstrated by administrators in correctional settings to implement new mother-infant development programs remains beneficial from the institutional point of view. Supporting this argument, Carlson (2018) has also identified that prison motherhood programs have reduced recidivism by 28% over 20 years (1994-2014). It has been shown that the implementation of prison motherhood programs in 1994 has resulted in savings in rehabilitation and reduced care costs. Thus, policymakers should be aware of these cost-saving models and consider implementing prison maternal and child development programs in their states. On the other hand, studies including Dodson et al. (2019) advocate that strong and secure attachment reduces the likelihood of engaging in delinquent or deviant behaviour. Hence, the priorities in designing such programs should be the maternal experience and the best interests of the child.

However, over-reliance on specific concepts can become disadvantageous to the development of a secure mother-child relationship. As emphasized by Walker et al. (2019), separation from the incarcerated mother based on a narrow view of children's rights, keeping the child behind bars with over-reliance on mother-child attachment, and personalizing the responsibility and risk factors can aggravate the problematic experiences in prison. Since the co-residence of a child remains controversial and is a dilemma between the child's best interests, availability of resources, nature of the mother's offenses, and her ability to care for the child, the two narratives should have a balanced approach. Hence, they advocate for an improvement of the values and skills of prison staff, social welfare policies aimed at the proper functioning of family atmosphere, and futuristic policies on education and employment.

In contrast, the sad reality is that not all prison institutions housing mother-child duos have information related to the benefits of child development programs. As identified by Campbell and Carlson (2012), not all states have plans to implement similar programs, and there is no common mechanism for child development programs in prison. Further, 50% of senior administrators in US prisons reported that there was no information about the benefits of maternal-child development programs. In addition, 30% of administrators reported that there was a lack of resources for the implementation of such programs. Yet the challenge of implementing effective mother-child development programs within prison institutions is not limited to a lack of information or resources but is aggravated by several other factors as well. Even the discrepancies between policy and practice can hinder the expected outcomes. As identified by Linonge-Fontebo and Rabe (2015), interpreting policies in favour of child development, in a background of outdated policies that aimed solely at penal objectives, has made it difficult to achieve the expected outcomes of programs. Such discretionary practices are sometimes beneficial to maternal prisoners, but sometimes they are severely detrimental. To restore their dignity and sense of responsibility for their dependents,

maternal prisoners should be given options for how to deal with pregnancy, childbirth, and childcare.

Even when implemented, mental health disorders may be a barrier to entering prison maternal-infant units, writes Dolan et al. (2019). Since the feeling of separation increases the risk of developing mental or personality disorders, parental depression can negatively impact mother-infant interactions and attachments, which can affect the child's emotional and cognitive development. Hence, more support is needed for women in prison who are separated from their babies. Hence, positive experiences are required to outweigh the negative experiences during incarceration. As Fritz and Whiteacre (2015) identified, key experiences influencing prison maternity and childcare include pregnancy experiences, birth experiences, restrictive experiences, and the experience of separation. Simultaneously, positive experiences, including experiences in prison, maternal and child development programs, drug control, and rehabilitation, are required to surpass the impact of the previous. Yet the question arises whether the expected outcomes of such programs are achieved. As identified by Carlson (2001), such mothers have never been taught the skills needed to care for a newborn. Though there has been a decrease in inmate-related misconduct reports and a decrease in recidivism rates after participating in mother-infant development programs, the cycle of women's imprisonment must be broken, and the education of incarcerated mothers must be uplifted by breaking the generational cycle of abuse and incarceration from mother to child.

6.3. Development of children imprisoned with their mothers (Theme 03)

6.3.1. Prominent objectives

The third theme is the development of children who are imprisoned with their mothers. While Ferrara et al. (2009) aimed to discuss the characteristics of children living in the 'nest areas' of prisons and compare their health status with that of two control groups, Candelori and Dosso (2007) focused on the development of mother-child relationships during the first two years of a child's life in the unusual context of a prison. Simultaneously, Condon (2017) sought to examine the contributions of infants' experiences, inner worlds, and health relationships to their development. Meanwhile, Stewart (2016) attempted a comparison of two therapeutic client groups: incarcerated pregnant women and mothers with children, on the development of the child. Bringing the concerns to a less examined study area, Poso et al. (2010) focused on the issues related to the development of children imprisoned with mothers in Nordic states like Finland, which are reputed for respect for child rights and the welfare of prisoners. Finally, the post-incarceration period has become the focus of Goshin et al. (2014), who focused on studying the long-term developmental outcomes of preschool children co-residing with incarcerated mothers.

6.3.2. Employed methodologies

In terms of the research methodology, Candelori and Dosso (2007) have employed the case study approach with one imprisoned Italian mother and her baby in an early childhood development centre in an Italian prison. Though Stewart (2016) has also utilized the case study method, the employment of two groups, incarcerated pregnant women and incarcerated mother-baby dyads from a UK sample, has differed from the approach. Meanwhile, Condon (2017) has utilized a sample of 17 mother-infant dyads under the Residential Parenting Program (RPP) unit in the USA. Though both of the above two studies relied upon incarcerated mothers and children, Ferrara et al. (2009) have expanded their sample to include 91 mother-and-child dyads outside the prison, in addition to the 300 children sample from Rome Rebibbia Women's Shelter, in Italy. Similarly, Goshin et al. (2014) have also utilized two samples: 47 preschool children who lived in Prison Early Childhood Development Centres in the USA, and 64 preschool children under the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS). However, Poso et al. (2010) have assigned a weight even to the prison staff by including 19 staff members into his sample, in addition to the 213 female inmates from two Finnish prisons.

All six studies, categorized under this theme, except Ferrara et al. (2009) and Goshin et al. (2014), have relied on primary data collected via field studies in prisons. For instance, both Candelori and

Dosso (2007) and Stewart (2016) utilized participatory observation for primary data collection. In addition, Condon (2017) collected primary data using child observation and interviews with mothers and caregivers. Similarly, Poso et al. (2010) employed interviews with incarcerated mothers and prison staff as their primary data source. In contrast, Ferrara et al. (2009) employed secondary data with clinical diaries of the paediatric sub-wards, while Goshin et al. (2014) conducted a literature review based on scientific sources. Like in the other two thematic areas, the majority of these studies have also employed qualitative methods for data analysis. Though multiple variations are utilized, i.e., Condon (2017) using empirical phenomenological techniques, and Goshin et al. (2014) using ANCOVA models, the prominent design remains qualitative. However, Poso et al. (2010) have utilized mixed methods, while a comprehensive quantitative analysis using Statistica has been conducted by Ferrara et al. (2009).

To add credibility to this review, the limitations of each study will also be analysed. Generalizability has become a prominent concern, with subtle variations. For instance, the selection of only one mother-child dyad as the sample for their study has limited Candelori and Dosso (2007); the selection of only one women's detention centre has been associated with Ferrara et al. (2009). Simultaneously, lack of data reporting on children in prisons has restricted boundaries for Poso et al. (2010), while ethical concerns for control groups and unavoidable variables, including maternal mental illness, have limited Goshin et al. (2014). Even Stewart's (2016) study was conducted under the limitations of therapeutic confidentiality. Finally, the non-inclusion of post-release mother-child relationships and non-specification of health assessments of infants have limited Condon (2017).

6.3.3. Featured outcomes

Emphasizing that the mother's psyche is an integral part of the child's development, Ferrara et al. (2009) demonstrate how the Italian law allows women to keep their infants with them in 'nest areas' of women's detention centres until they are 3 years old. Hence, these 'nest areas' are identified as suitable for the normal psychophysical development of the child. Moreover, the impact of a mother's lifestyle and her participation in child development programs in prisons are identified as an essential element for the mental and emotional development of the child. However, Poso et al. (2010) have disclosed a darker area of the development of such children by taking a rights-based approach, via exploring whether the childhood in prison caters to the best interests of the child. As identified through the study, there is a lack of, or no record of, children in prison, and no follow-up information related to them. In discussion with prison officials, the root of this institutional ignorance is disclosed. Since children are not treated as prisoners, caring for them is considered secondary to the major functions of the inmates have made children co-residing with their mothers an invisible population, hindered in their right to development as children. Hence, the study proposes a statutory responsibility to professionally safeguard the right to development of such children. Similarly, Candelori and Dosso (2007) concluded that the opportunity for child development is quite insufficient in prison environments. Feelings of separation from home environment, restrictions on communication, and the minimal stimulus sources for psychosocial development were identified as influencing the hindrance of child development in prison contexts.

If co-residing with an incarcerated mother is selected in terms of the child's development, the experiences he or she may undergo as a child will shape the future personality. Especially the interactions, attachments, and the values drawn throughout this period remain crucial. As Condon (2017) identified, infants' early experiences and attachments are influenced by infant contributions, maternal contributions, caregiver contributions, and system-level contributions. The extent to which children are intentionally protected from exposure to interactions between offenders, or between offenders and officers, can be confusing or distressing for a child. As identified, for an expected developmental outcome, mother-child attachment should exceed every other experience in prisons. Hence, the study identified the importance of cross-agency programs that promote positive early attachment through collaboration, counselling sessions, and social welfare programs. Accompanied by that should be the removal of stressful conditions that hinder the psychosocial development of the child. Thus, the necessity of developing prison therapy teams is echoed in the opening statement of Stewart (2016). Since the prison is a stressful environment and can contribute to lifelong dysfunction, principles of forensic psychotherapy are suggested to be incorporated into

the child development programs. Providing a place for the mother-child duo by confining them to mere physical intimacy would not be the optimal solution. Thus, an atmosphere where a mother stays with her child, to maintain her maternal feelings, and to think about the emotional process that underlies the development of love, is proposed through this study.

The development of a child is not limited to the bars themselves and thus expands beyond the period of co-residing with his incarcerated mother. Maternal incarceration creates a dilemma when dealing with this specific stage. Even though separation of the child might be the solution prison can offer, it is significantly associated with the worst outcomes. As Goshin et al. (2014) have highlighted, they are the most vulnerable and in-need groups. The study further elaborated that women who are separated from their infants during incarceration may have impaired maternal control after release from prison. On the other hand, the study identified that the children of mothers with a history of incarceration are more likely to have criminal justice involvement. Hence, an inter-disciplinary community partnership and the use of non-corrective rehabilitative public funds to improve alternative methods of punishment may provide resilience despite the high level of contextual higher rates of insecure attachment.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the above analysis, it can be concluded the duality in incarcerated motherhood. While evidence has consistently demonstrated that prison-based programmes can significantly enhance mother-child relationships by providing standard correctional facilities, a paradox is always accompanied by showcasing the strict penal regulations, lack of child-friendly policies, and trauma of secondary victimization. Yet the co-residence of mother and child in specialized units has indicated higher attachment feasibility. However, a critical gap was identified in longitudinal support for the mother-child relationship, with a focus on bridging the boundaries of prison and communities. Above all, it was noted that the current scholarship on the relationship of mother-child interaction relies on small, site-specific samples and generalizability constraints. The predominance of dyadic sampling can provide improved credibility, yet challenging an objective account of the issue. Moreover, qualitative centrality as an analytic mechanism was dominant throughout the study. Capturing the subtle dynamics of the examined phenomenon, the authors have illustrated a preference for qualitative approaches as a means of diving deeper into the study.

Drawing from the above analysis, multiple recommendations can be provided to safeguard the right to development of the child. Identifying the negative consequences of institutional corrections and the trend towards community-based initiatives, establishing a legal presumption in favour of non-custodial sentences for maternal convicts is suggested. This should be accompanied by a periodic assessment of whether the best interests of the child are being achieved. At each phase of the criminal justice administration, mandating the authorized personnel to conduct a test on this phenomenon will enhance the expected outcomes. Moreover, developing standardized procedures to assist criminal justice personnel in their conduct will also be advantageous. Instead of leaving it to discretionary practices on humanitarian grounds, the assumption of mother and child as a single unit will reduce several ambiguities associated with this phenomenon.

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