

Vulnerable young people in Israel : Their stories about transition to adulthood

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The Israeli context

- **Strong tradition of placement to residential facilities (~80:20)**
- **Mandatory military service**
- **Major immigration waves (FSU and Ethiopia)**
- **Care leavers status does not seem as bad as reported in other countries**
- **No legislation (or policy) for care leavers**

The context of this study

Vulnerable youth: Not only alumni of the care system, but also children of immigrants and/or of poor families.

Part of ongoing efforts to unfold the complexity of the transition to independent living of vulnerable youth.

The study goals

- 1. To explore differences between vulnerable youth who spent time in residential care and youth with similar characteristics in the community.**
- 2. To identify key issues for future studies.**

Methods

- **Open-ended, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, conducted by an experienced social worker.**
 - Gift certificates (€30)
 - Difficulties to schedule a time for the interview

Participants:

- **Twenty vulnerable young adults were recruited in ‘Youth Centers.’**
- **Age range 19-25 (3 from each age group); 15 females**
- **Half spent their adolescence in residential care (coercive and voluntary removal)**
- **Twelve were Israeli born**
- **Eleven currently live with their parents**
- **One is married and another one is a (single-mother) parent**
- **Fifteen completed military service**

What are the outcomes?

1. **Compared to the ‘coercive removal’, youth with voluntary removal report that they could best benefit from the opportunities offered by the residential services.**
 - **Coercive removal involves other issues.**
2. **Participants who remained at home said that their families sometimes could not contain and support them.**
 - **Could have benefit from being in residential care?**
3. **Participants indicate that the mandatory military service was a turning point in their life, even if they did not complete service.**
 - **Provision of life skills, independent (but supervised) living.**

What are the outcomes? (cont.)

4. **All participants describe financial burden as their major need.**
 - **BIG problem: unemployment; housing; higher education.**
5. **Their current use of services is inefficient**
 - **Is it because services are inadequate or because they are not aware of the availability of the services?**
6. **Many indicate that lack of emotional support and guidance is even more troubling.**
 - **Lack of networks and services that are not stigmatized, and are intended for young people**
7. **The dark side: Youth from Ethiopian origin mention exclusion and discrimination.**

Implications

The findings stress:

- That youth, and especially care leavers, are not well prepared for independent living.**
- The lack of designated services is crucial.**
- It is important to develop national policy, guidelines and services NOT only to care leavers but to all vulnerable young people in Israel.**

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