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.
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.
References


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