

The Cultural Influence on Care Leaving: Jordan

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Purpose & Outline

- Brief on research journey
 - Member since 2006 (PhD on leaving care)
 - 1st study to examine comprehensive experiences of care leavers
 - Ad hoc and limited support for care leavers
 - Nascent stage of professionalisation of social work
 - Dearth of research on CW and LC in Jordan and ME
- Sharing research findings and contributions from Arab / Middle Eastern contexts (main research but not the only research)

Key Messages

- Transitioning through and post-care does not take place in a socio-cultural vacuum
- Key influencing domains: Socio-economic, care and cultural contexts
- Research argues for a cultural dimension to be included to understanding leaving care

Methodology

Qualitative study examining what Jordanian care leavers face in Jordanian context, and longer term developments

- W1 (2007) : 42 (50% female) aged 17 -28 (1m – 10ypc)
 - In care: 14 (3-21)
 - 25 (60%) no qualifications
- Follow-up study (N=29) (ages 26 – 37) (7 – 17 ypc)

Introducing the Participants

- Known families 57%, Unknown/ Concealed 43%
- Length of stay in care homes: 14 (3-21)
- 61% left care without any academic qualifications
- 68% left without health insurance
- 38% of males left without ID
- Post-care (W1): 1 month – 10 years
 - (W2): 9 – 19 years

Care & Socio Economic Contexts

Care Context	Socio-economic Context
Residential care main form	Regional instability consistently strains already scarce resources (artificial growth, lack of ability to recover)
800 – 1200 in 32 homes	Developing-economy
Predetermined number of placement changes (2-3)	High poverty 15% < PL (504 Euros, annually)
No minimum care standards, SW nascent stage	74% under age 30
UN CRC is a significant driver	High youth unemployment of 13% unemployed, 51% 15-24 years
	Underdeveloped welfare system

Cultural Context: Patriarchal, Patrilineal, Collectivist

- Intrinsic value of individuals part of 'kin-group' ■
- Families are primary safety nets for members; interdependence and reliance throughout the life course
- Conditional transitions: for positive reasons and with continuous social capital
- High expectations of members: accomplishments and transgressions reflect on whole family: honorable, generous and celibate
- Repercussions for 'dishonorable': Concealment, 'honor' crimes, abandoning babies, institutional separation of babies (no family names).

Cultural Implications for Care Leavers

Challenges

- Continuous challenge of enforced individuality in a collectivist culture
- Deprived of family and of entitlements of kin-group memberships
- Stigmatized and linked to height of immorality (children of sin)

Benefits *

- Supporting those without natural network (orphans)
- Assisted in life domains ■
- Overcoming challenges, promoting resilience

A note about support

- W1: 36 (87.8%) received a form of support (4 only formal)
- W2: 29 combined
- **Sources of Informal Support:** Peers, previous carers, volunteers, friends/families from school and college, in-laws, landlords, neighbours, colleagues and especially employers.
- **Characteristics of Informal Support:** Informal support accompanied by emotional and moral support, tailored to individual needs, but dependent on willingness and ability of individuals.
- **Sources & Characteristics of Formal support:** Gov't, NGOs, 1 Care home, targeted, specific time frame, not always a straightforward process and often insensitive to emotional and material needs.

Accommodation

How

- Access: Mediated access, exceptions made, proactive landlords invited to rent, taken-in emergencies and long term (females 2 – 13 years).
- Setting up & buying home: ranged from basics to full furnishing.
- Expenses: Discounted – full sponsorship

Implications

- Stability/secure base, allowing for professional personal growth,
- Normalised transitions
- Feeling looked after
- Sense of belonging

Employment

How

- Access, tolerant of lack of skills/ abruptly quitting, high expectations, encouragement, mentorship, promotions, hiring siblings and peers

Implications

- Stability in employment, enhancing skills, self-esteem and careers
- Support in other life areas and meeting personal goals
- A sense of belonging

Combination of Formal & Informal support

Employment & Housing

I've been with the same employer for 14 years. Ever since I lost my job after leaving care ... He's like an uncle to me. He has my back. I'm secure. I have a steady income ... The government helped me with this house, and its for life ... So both [formal and informal support] are really important ... I have my own family now and children. I can provide for them. People help now and again, but I rely on myself.

Finances

How

- Sponsorship of education, sponsorship in housing/ expenses, support in difficult times, pocket-money, gifts (wedding, car payment), down-payment for a flat.

Implications

- Decreased concern for daily survival
- Allowing for personal and professional growth, decreased longer-term reliance on formal support
- 10 / 29 continued education (2 masters, after dropping out)

Relationships

- Source of empowerment, guidance, remaining afloat/ strong during difficult times, at times the only stable factor, sense of belonging, reason to invest in themselves and paying-it forward.

'He's my Godfather [employer of 13 years] . He was there through it all. Always pushing me to get out of my comfort zone and doing more[for myself]. I got a car. I got a home in my name. I continued my education. I ended a bad marriage and kept the stability for my children ... Now I do the same [for younger peers] ... I'm their big sister'

... so the presence of support at different stages, even if it's little, is very helpful for us ... material support, emotional and moral support all intersect ... if I got material support without emotional support, I'd be like, it's like a body without a soul'.

Practice & Policy Implications

'The business of equipping young people with the resources and skills to manage in life is a long-term process'

(Arnau & Gilligan 2015: p.190)

- Individual agency
- Both formal and informal support are equally important
- Extension of formal support ('comprehensive and into adulthood' Stein, 2011)
- Formal support needs to be better tailored to individual differences and needs
- Importance of social capital and proactively building network of young people from care
- Importance of learning from longitudinal studies, positive turning points

Developments & Promising Practices

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- **Interest from influential figures (eg. Princess Alia & Sakeena)**
- **Continuous research initiatives: Follow-up, mixed methods social stigma study**
 - Advocacy campaign to combat discrimination
- **Persistent challenge:** Addressing root causes of relinquishment and separation (Article IV.A. 32 & 340)
Research on unwed teens

Final Note

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- ... Alongside improving practice and developing services
- Cultural assumptions based on gender, religion, socio-economic status and historical moment shape transitioning (in and out)
- We must identify socio-cultural influences
 - Capitalise on the positive
 - Mitigate and eliminate the negative

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