

- **Name of the study:** The contribution of academic education and vocational training programs to the professional knowledge of head staff in person-oriented services in out-of-home housing frameworks for people with intellectual developmental disabilities
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- **Type of research:** PHD
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Abstract

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Background: As of November 2023 ,33,375 people with intellectual developmental disabilities (IDD) have been registered with the social service departments of the local authorities of the State of Israel. According to data from the division for the care of persons with IDD in the Ministry of Welfare, about 0.5% of the general population born each year, will be diagnosed at an early or advanced stage of their lives, as people with intellectual developmental disabilities.

This population has significant therapeutic needs far beyond those imagined by the general population.

In order to improve both the quality of care and the quality of life for people with IDD and in order to promote person-oriented service in out-of-home housing settings, there is a need for professional and skilled manpower.

In light of this, service providers for this population should undergo appropriate training, so that upon entry into employment, they will recognize and understand the needs of this population, as well as use the professional jargon applicable for this specific and complex field.

Consequently, it is essential to increase the knowledge and capabilities of the staff through early and comprehensive training.

The purpose of the present study is to check the contribution of academic education and professional training in acquiring the relevant knowledge needed for work in IDD out-of-home housing frameworks in terms of professional knowledge and the subjective perception of person-oriented services.

Study aims: The purpose of the present study is to check the contribution of academic education and professional training in acquiring the relevant knowledge needed for work in IDD out-of-home housing frameworks in terms of professional knowledge and the subjective perception of person-oriented services.

Pending this, seven research hypotheses were formulated.

1. A difference will be found in the perception of the contribution of academic education on professional knowledge as compared to the contribution of vocational training on professional knowledge, among head staff employees in out-of-home housing settings for people with IDD. Perception of the contribution of vocational training towards professional knowledge will be high when compared to the perception of the contribution of academic education to professional knowledge. This hypothesis has been confirmed.
2. A difference will be found between officials whose academic education is from the Department of Social Work and those whose academic education has been acquired from an alternate academic department in the perception of the contribution of academic education to professional knowledge among the head staff in out-of-home housing settings for people with IDD. The perception of the contribution of academic education to professional knowledge will be higher among graduates of the Department of Social Work when compared to the perception of the contribution of academic education to professional knowledge among graduates from other academic departments. This hypothesis has been partially confirmed.
3. A difference will be found between the head staff in out-of-home housing settings for people with IDD who received their academic education from a Department of Social Work, and those whose academic education has been acquired from an alternate academic department, with respect to the concept of person-oriented service. The concept of person-oriented service will be higher among graduates from the Department of Social Work. This hypothesis has not been confirmed.
4. A difference will be found between the head staff in out-of-home housing settings for people with IDD who have undergone vocational training within the previous two years of work and those who have not undergone vocational training in the previous two years concerning the perception of the contribution of vocational training to vocational knowledge. The perception of the contribution of vocational training to vocational knowledge will be higher among the head staff, who have undergone training within the previous two years when compared to those who have not undergone vocational training in the previous two years. This hypothesis has been confirmed.
5. A difference will be found in the perception of person-oriented service between lead staff employees in out-of-home housing settings for people with IDD who have undergone a vocational training program in the last two years and head staff employees in out-of-home housing settings for people with IDD who have not undergone a vocational training program in the last two years. The concept of person-oriented service will be higher among employees, who have received training in the last two years compared to those, who have not received professional training in the last two years. This hypothesis has not been confirmed.

6. A negative correlation will be found between the perception of the contribution of academic education to professional knowledge and the perception of the contribution of vocational training to professional knowledge, among members of the head staff in out-of-home housing settings for people with IDD. As the perception of the contribution of academic education rises, the perception of vocational training as a contributing factor to professional knowledge decreases and visa-versa. This hypothesis has been confirmed.
7. A positive correlation will be found between the concept of the contribution of vocational training to vocational knowledge and person-oriented service among head staff in out-of-home housing frameworks for people with IDD. As the perceived effects of vocational training on vocational knowledge rise, so do the perceived characteristics of person-oriented service. This hypothesis has been confirmed.

In addition, four research questions were formulated for the qualitative analysis.

1. To what extent do academic studies contribute to professional work in the field of IDD? The contribution will be examined in its correlation to activities carried out in the 'clinical field'.
2. To what extent does professional training contribute to professional work in the field of IDD? Its contribution will be examined with respect to activities carried out in the 'clinical field'.
3. What are the differences between the characteristics of academic education and the characteristics of vocational training with regard to the professional training of the head staff in the field of IDD? Do these characteristics support the concept of person-oriented service?
4. To what extent is there an inter-system dialogue between the academic arena and the professional training arena with intent on strengthening activities carried out in the field—from theory to practice?

In the present study, data collection and analysis were done using mixed methods- quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative study included 117 lead staff members working in out-of-home housing settings in the IDD field throughout the country. In the qualitative part of the study 18 subjects involved in academic programs and professional training of MSH professionals were interviewed. The interviewees included five employee representatives, six academic representatives, one representative from the Administration of Disabilities and six representatives of families receiving service from out-of-home housing settings.

A closed research questionnaire was used as a quantitative tool and a semi-structured personal interview as a qualitative tool. Both tools were compiled and validated by the researcher.

Results: In examining differences within and between groups of subjects regarding the dependent study variables, i.e., the perception of the contribution of academic education and the perception of the contribution of professional training towards professional knowledge and person-oriented service among officials in the lead staff in out-of-home housing settings for people with IDD, findings show that the perception of the contribution of professional training to professional

knowledge is significantly higher (general grade) as compared to the concept of the contribution of academic education to professional knowledge and compared to the concept of the contribution of a person-oriented service. Each of the indicators in the perception of the contribution of vocational training was found to be significantly higher (general grade) compared to each of the indicators in the perception of the contribution of academic education. An interesting finding indicates that among the graduates of the Department of Social Work, the perception of the contribution of academic education to professional knowledge about 'rights and regulations in Israel' is significantly higher than the perception of the contribution of academic education to professional knowledge about 'needs and ways of coping'.

It was found that the perception of the contribution of vocational training to vocational knowledge among subjects who have undergone vocational training in the last two years is distinctly higher (general grade) than the perception of their colleagues who have not undergone vocational training in the last two years. The perception of the contribution of professional training to knowledge about 'basic needs' among subjects who have undergone professional training is distinctly higher than the perception of their colleagues who have not undergone professional training in the last two years. A similar and distinct finding is also found in relation to the conceived contribution of professional training on knowledge about 'rights and regulations' in Israel.

The current research sheds light on an important life-saving field, about which research is scarce. The subject of study is important and unique, due to its contribution in promoting the notion of a person-oriented service and in improving the quality of life for people residing in out-of-home housing settings. The study spotlights the importance of the training professionals (some of whom come from bachelor degree studies in education, social work, paramedical fields or nursing) receive for treating people with disabilities. Improving skills, status and authority of the therapists will reduce the broad gap between the work teams and the recipients of the service, i.e., people with IDD. This will lead to the desired improvement in their quality of life. In addition, imparting professional knowledge to employees, before they enter the work setting, will improve service, reduce the percentage of employees leaving and turning their backs on this complex profession, enabling them to carry on, providing proper and accurate care to people with IDD. Accordingly, human capital in this area will expand and stabilize. Work teams will be more professional in their field, will more likely engage in the profession for many years and will significantly and positively improve the care for people with IDD.

Of late, we have witnessed trends in academic institutions that teach practical models in caring for IDD, i.e., Bar Ilan University, the Technion, Ariel University and the Hebrew University. These models may effectively help in dealing with the problems of this specific research population. Unfortunately, trends are few and demand is scarce. In light of these research findings, it is very important to go beyond theoretical studies and combine practical experience with academic and professional training in out-of-home housing settings. The current study emphasizes the importance of strengthening academic knowledge and fieldwork, considering that the availability of

personnel with advanced training can improve the quality of life of people with IDD. They will have the skills to cope and skillfully treat the challenging issues and complexities common to the IDD population.

Keywords

intellectual development disabilities, staff training, academic education, person-oriented services, quality of life.

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