

***Preliminary results of the SASCA project:
Lifestories of young people who lived through
contemporary Romanian residential homes.
Results of surveying professionals.***

Maria Roth, Imola Antal, Eva Laszlo, David-kacso
Agnes, Rozalia Poc sai-szasz
BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY

Scope of the project

- *Revealing the perspective of young people who spent their childhoods, or parts of it in a residential home.*
- *Understanding the perspective of professionals and their attitudes towards the issues faced by children in residential homes*
- *Analyzing the modalities of therapeutic and judicial assistance which can improve the lives of young people who suffered different forms of violence in residential care.*

On-line Surveys

We aim to a nationally representative sample of professionals

- From 105 responses, 97 were valid, covering 28 counties of a total of 46.

Evaluated aspects:

- Experiences of professionals when working in residential care and their attitudes towards to children, focusing on situations of violence they witnessed
- Valuation of the needs of children and youth in residential care
- How did experiences with violence and trauma of children in residential care affect them
- Awareness of professional responsibilities related to children and young people in care.
- Opinion on possible compensation for suffered abuse for young adults out of care.

Survey results

- *From 97 respondents, 45 were saying that they were aware of child maltreatment suffered by children in residential care.*
- *As we gave an example which was made public by the media, they said the cases they knew were similar to those from the St. Maria center in București: physical abuse, emotional neglect, sexual and work exploitation, even trafficking.*
- *38 from 97 think that it is necessary to publicly apologize to those who suffered trauma i residential child-care*
- *95 of 97 think that such cases need to be reported*
- *And 26 said they reported such cases.*

Methods: Livestory Interviews

Interviews with adults who spent a period of their lives in residential care,

Sampled with the snow-ball technic, using personal contacts, social media (face-book, messenger).

Face to face and telephone (skype, mess) interviews

Sample: 45 young people interviewed from different areas of the country.

Topics

- Free autobiographic story telling, with key events,
- attachment figures,
- general and mental health scales (1999 Pfitzer),
- experiences with violence,
- Social and emotional support from family, educators, friends and caregivers,
- relationship with the justice system,
- expectations for compensations etc.

Results of interviews

- Few of the respondents mentioned an attachment figure, and positive memories. These were exceptional educators in the foster-home, or school teachers, who knew how to handle children. Sometimes they mentioned a volunteer, or a cook, or other auxiliary care personnel. .
- Neglect of emotional needs is a general phenomenon, and it leads the absence of an attachment figure. Young people talk about educators who did not care, even when they asked for help, because of their difficult situation, so they did not have anyone to go to, when they were bullied or abused..
- Most have experienced painful memories due to repeated violence (bullying, physical violence perpetrated by adults, or sexual violence)
- It was mentioned that because the lack of help, there were long term painful consequences: they felt paralysed. Verbal aggression contributed to these feelings (they were addressed in a shaming manner by peer in the residential home, in school and the personnel.
- Family foster care represented a chance for several of them, although physical and psychological abuse often occurred in family foster-care. Often they were required to work instead of participating in education or recreation, thir money was taken away, they were severely beaten humiliated or blackmailed to be sent back in residential care if they complained.

Results of interviews (2)

- Lack of cognitive and cultural stimulation: n educational games, lack of access to computers and books, no reading allowed in the evening, a lot of TV watching.
- Many abuse took place during daily routine: toileting, cleaning, eating.
- Older boys and girls committed violence against younger children
- In many large residential homes sexual abuse was a known phenomenon, especially in the case of boys. Perpetrators were both older boys and educators.
- Several young people mentioned that they asked for help from personnel, teachers, doctors, managers and even police, but they did not receive it. They felt they are not taken seriously. Many adults in the institutions knew about the abuses and did not know how to react. No measures were taken.
- Few of the respondents felt encouraged to learn, and continue their education. They did not get any career counseling.
- Those with integration difficulties think that they did not get any useful support. To build independent life-skills.
- Respondents signaled they their rights to the financial support were not respected. They did not receive money, but objects: food, once per month, and this was not useful for the students or workers who were living in other cities than the institution. They could not buy their own clothing, but got out of fashion standard clothing.

To conclude

- *Life-stories abound in painful experiences, young people in residential care clearly suffered trauma*
- *Several suffered long term effects and developed PTSD as a result of their violent experiences in their lives. Some have cumulated traumatic experiences from their own homes and families, and the child protection system did not respond to their emotional and developmental needs.*
- *Their education needs and career aspirations were not supported.*
- *Even young people who were quasi successful (became students, or have steady jobs) disclose violations of their physical, psychological and health integrity. They are now aware that they were maltreated and other children continue to suffer in residential care, as they did.*
- *Some of them are now involved in claiming their rights back, and offering help for other children in care. A movement has started for the rights of the institutionalized children, and for justice for those who suffered violence, but it is weak for the moment.*
- *A large percent of the professionals seem to be aware of violence in residential homes, but only a small percent (1/4) seem to want to do something against it.*

On-line survey address

- https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfP6V5nf2YfZ-LdFUh1QuC-ywdj7-Va077k0sJDGkO_q6kHOQ/viewform?c=0&w=1&includes_info_params=true&usp=mail_form_link

This publication has been produced with the financial support of the Justice Programme of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the authors and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Commission.