

(23) The Willingness of Parents of Children with Mental Retardation to Apply for Out-of-Home Placement: A Comparison between Immigrant Parents from Ex-USSR and Israeli Born Parents

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the variables that have influence on the willingness of ex-USSR immigrant parents of developmentally disabled children to apply for out-of-home placement for their children, and to compare this population to that of Israeli born parents.

The sample included 100 parents, which had children, aged 6-21 with mild to moderate mental retardation that lived at home. 50 participants were ex-USSR immigrants and 50 participants were Israeli born. The parents filled out a study questionnaires.

It was found that the older the children with mental retardation were and also the higher the stress levels felt by their parents were, the higher were the possibilities of these parents seeking out-of-home placement, regardless of parent's origin (immigrants or Israeli born) and regardless of social support available to them. Immigrant parents tend to report significantly slightly higher stress levels than Israeli born parents. No difference was found in the scope of social support available to both research populations.

For immigrant parents, when the child's mental retardation level is medium and as the period that they have stayed in Israel is longer, so is the parent's stress level higher. Amongst Israeli born parents, the stress level is higher amongst parents that are religious/pious and/or with insufficient income and/or when in addition to having mental retardation the child suffers from medical problems.

The research results were intended for referring in an integrative way to families with children with mental retardation, regardless their parents' origin. The study is meant to raise the awareness of professionals to the influence of stress on coping ability of parents of developmental disabled children and its influence on parents' willingness to place their child in an out-of-home institution.

Key words: out-of-home placement, children with mental retardation, immigration, parents, stress, social support.

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