International Journal of Environmental Sciences
ISSN: 2229-7359
Vol. 11 No. 24s, 2025
https://www.theaspd.com/ijes.php

The Role Of Therapeutic And Intervention Programs In Transition From School To Adulthood For Youth With Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) In The Arab Sector In Israel

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Abstract
This study examines the contributions to transition to adulthood in regard to youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the Arab community in Israel of both therapeutic and intervention programs, because there is a total absence of culturally competent services in the transition to adulthood population. The study aims to address the social, emotional, and vocational barriers faced by youth with ASD, and their families. Employing a qualitative design with semi-structured interviews and focus groups conducted with 40 parents, research highlighted important service and structural system gaps. Common themes ranged from little, or zero continuity of programs after school; preparation for work; and cultural adjusted transition programs that lacked a theoretical, or practical framework. The research concluded that while early intervention (EI) is important, but EI wasn't enough without supports and adaptations into adulthood relevant to context. It recommends developing a National, community-based, and family-centered service structure that supports Arab families with ASD at transition, and beyond. Theoretically, the study responds to a gap in the ASD transition programs literature; and practically the study may provide an avenue to introduce equitable policy and program change for an underserved population.

Keywords: *Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), transition to adulthood, therapeutic programs, intervention programs, Arab sector in Israel, vocational development, cultural responsiveness, family-centered support.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

This research seeks to explore how therapeutic and intervention programs contribute to bridging the transition for youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) from school into adulthood in the Arab sector in Israel. Specifically, this research considers if these programs helped youth reach their social, emotional and vocational development; which parts of transition seemed to be affective; and systemic barriers facing families. The research further explores what similar or different long-term outcomes the systemic barriers result in their degree of community connection. Recognizing the significant barriers and transitions encountered by youth with ASD and their families, the study adopted a qualitative methodology, collecting semi- structured interviews and focus groups with 40 parents of youth with ASD. The research finds that there were limited culturally appropriate transition services or supports after high school, indicating a significant gap in transition policy and practice. The overall results lead to a series of recommendations for developing a culturally responsive, accessible and sustainable support systems for this marginal population.

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), as defined by the American Psychological Association (2023), is a neurodevelopmental disorder defined by deficits in social communication and interaction, and the presence of restricted and repetitive behavior. In transitioning to adulthood, people with ASD must contend with a number of problems including low employment rates, limited autonomous living, and remaining dependent on family support (Anderson et al., 2021; Taylor et al., 2021). For youth in the Arab sector of Israel, these challenges are exacerbated by systematic disparities in health, education, and service access (Davidovitch et al., 2020). This study has a specific focus on this population to address the gap in knowledge and practice of culturally relevant transitional support.

The significance of this study is that it opens up an area that is under-researched: autism services, transitional care, and cultural context in Arab communities in Israel. ASD early intervention opportunities for children have tremendously expanded (Blank & Silverman, 2023), however, much of the service system remains siloed as it transitions into adolescence and adulthood, particularly in minority populations. There is research willing to show that many Arab families face additional challenges, including language, geographic distance, and insufficient representation from professionals (Lee et al., 2019; Segev et al., 2019). This study highlights relative gaps to understanding service access, utilizing parent and providers voices and lived experiences, to improving understanding for accessible policy development, service redesign, or cross-sector partnerships.

Data collection was qualitative, depending on rich, descriptive accounts from parents, and was analyzed thematically. Major findings signal: there is no continuity beyond school-based services, there is limited vocational preparation, and critically, there are no culturally adapted transition programs. The study firmly recommends the need for (immediate) policy intervention to support the development of community- based, long-term supports, family-centered models, that capture the socio-cultural realities of Arab families, and enable individuals with ASD to live independently and with dignity, as adults.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

The American Psychological Association (2023) defines autism spectrum disorder (ASD) as a collection of disorders that usually emerge in early childhood and have persistent, substantial deficits in social communication and interaction. This includes deficits in social-emotional reciprocity, which includes response in expressions of emotion, use of nonverbal communication, and ability to establish relationships. Autistic characteristics include restrictive and repetitive patterns of thoughts, interests, behaviors, and activities. Several years ago, ASD consisted of diagnoses such as autism, Asperger's disorder, childhood disintegrative disorder, and Rett syndrome with significant overlap of symptoms that led to the former name of pervasive developmental disorders. In the DSM-5 and DSM-5-TR, the term ASD for the former terms of autism, Asperger's disorder, childhood disintegrative disorder. Associated medical or genetic conditions such as Rett syndrome are now specified as related to ASD (American Psychological Association, 2023).

2.2 ASD youth Transition to adulthood:

Moving from school to the adult world continues to be difficult for young people with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Specifically, those with ASD face unique challenges regarding postsecondary employment outcomes (Wisner-Carlson et al, 2020). Although a study noted the original symptoms of ASD may slightly decrease over time, it likewise noted that individuals with ASD encounter significant challenges involving social interactions and communication throughout adolescence and adulthood (Okoye et al, 2023). Many of these students do not achieve success when they reach adulthood, even with educational support provided in public and private Schools (Taylor et al, 2021).

Adolescents with ASD, who have difficulties with interpersonal skills such as understanding personal space, recognizing facial expressions and body language, and keeping the conversation on track, frequently experience feelings of isolation (Beato et al. 24). Studies showed that Parents and teachers most often observed symptoms of depression, anxiety, more inappropriate behavior, and victimization by peers in these adolescents with ASD (Rhodes et al., 2023).

The transition from adolescence to young adulthood presents challenges for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and their parents and caregivers (Chun et al. 2022). Parents confront many difficulties and barriers to access service systems for their children. A study by Lee et al. (2019) found that parents of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) reported greater barriers to accessibility in finding services than parents of adults with Down syndrome (DS) and indicated that 20.83% of parents of individuals with ASD and 18.18% of parents of individuals with cerebral palsy (CP) reported stronger barriers, compared to only 10.87% of parents of adults with DS.

Many individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) graduate at the end of high school without the skills and readiness necessary for adulthood, with its myriad of decisions related to employment, higher education, and community integration. Recent research indicates that young adults diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are significantly less likely to complete college, obtain employment, live independently, or to have lasting friendships after graduation (Anderson et al., 2021). These results suggest that as a group, individuals with ASD do not achieve the level of independence or autonomy that is expected in general throughout the transition from youth to adulthood. Instead, they continue to depend on their families for fundamental needs, financial support, housing, day-to-day instruction, and companionship. The results suggest that high schools are failing to successfully transition individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) into adulthood (Wei et al., 2019).

2.3 The Prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

The prevalence of autism spectrum disorders (ASD) has been increasing worldwide, and there are increases in prevalence rates in many countries. For example, in the USA there was an increase in the prevalence of ASD in 8-year-olds from 1.47% in 2010 to 2.7% in 2020 (Maenner et al., 2023), and for Canada the prevalence among children and adolescents aged 5-17 years increased from 1.5% in 2015 to 2.2% in 2019 (Palmeter et al., 2019). This information reinforces the increasing importance to have appropriate prevalence estimates with which to plan and develop services by age groups, which is something that many studies unfortunately do not adequately address (Shaw et al., 2023). The variation in prevalence estimates across different studies has been attributed to the age, geographic location, race and gender of the population studied, as well as differing methodologies (Zeidan et al., 2022). For example, in the USA the frequency was higher for 8-year-olds than for 4-year-olds; and in the UK it was higher for teenagers than it was for older adults (O'Nions et al., 2023).

In Israel, the National Insurance Institute (NII) has a central registry that has been used to monitor the prevalence of ASD since 1981. The combined data from the NII registry and the services available through the Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs) in Israel paints a comprehensive picture of ASD prevalence. The NII provides a monthly disability payment for children diagnosed with ASD, which incentivizes parents to make sure a diagnosis is recorded. Disability payments also encourage the NII to accurately maintain the registry (Dinstein et al., 2024). The HMOs (Clalit Health Services, Maccabi, Meuhedet, and Leumit), provide a range of diagnostic and therapeutic services, which also help facilitate accurate data collection. The information has shown a consistent increase in the prevalence of ASD among 8-year-olds, increasing from 0.12% in 2005 to 0.65% in 2015 (Segev et al., 2019). There is considerable variance in estimates of prevalence of NII versus some of the HMOs, such as Maccabi, suggesting some social and regional discrepancies. Recently, another analysis utilized NII data and data from Clalit Health Services and compared the discrepancies, from 2017 to 2021 to help address the bias but also emphasizing the value of clear age-specific prevalence data when planning for health care service and education (Davidovitch, et al, 2020).

2.4 Interventions Programs for Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD):

The educational system is a major provider of ASD-specific interventions in many countries, including the United States and Israel, offering treatment practices that target social, communication, and other developmental objectives. Interventions may be implemented in individual and group formats, with preschool environments providing children with naturalistic opportunities to generalize their skills, engage with peers, and enact social skills through direct experiences (Freeman & Kasari, 2013; Vivanti, Duncan, et al., 2017). Research has shown that evidence-based early intervention models, for example, Joint Attention, Symbolic Play, Engagement, and Regulation (JASPER), as well as Pivotal Response Training (PRT), are successfully delivered in community settings (Chang et al., 2016; Mohammadzaheri et al., 2015). In Israel, ASD preschool programs offer 14 hours a week of community-based therapeutic services delivered by clinical and educational professionals, most do not adhere to a single comprehensive treatment model (CTM) but implement various treatment techniques (Sinai-Gavrilov, et al., 2020).

The Early Start Denver Model (ESDM) is a manualized CTM designed specifically for toddlers and young children, using elements of behavioral, developmental, and relationship-based pedagogy. This is a CTM that embeds behavioral teaching practices into joint activity routines characterized by high positive affect and adults' responsiveness to the child's communicative prompts (Sinai-Gavrilov, et al., 2020). ESDM provides naturalistic learning opportunities within routine activities and delivers a developmental curriculum that engages multiple domains. ESDM encourages active parental participation through coaching which enables parents to carry out and use ESDM principles during daily routines (Waddington et al., 2019). Therapists should adhere to fidelity criteria for therapy during both training and treatment delivery (Rogers & Dawson, 2010). ESDM has functions successfully in intensive treatment one on one, has demonstrated positive outcomes in low-intensity programs, and parent-delivered, as well as demonstrated group-based models in daycare designed for this (Colombi et al., 2018). However, little is known about its effectiveness in community preschool programs, which already exist (Vivanti et al., 2018).

There is a clear need for additional research looking at the ESDM across range of intervention delivery contexts, as well as the effectiveness of the ESDM based on child pre-intervention characteristics (Rogers et al., 2019). Research on early intervention has begun to examine child factors associated with outcomes of interventions. For example, child factors, like cognitive level, positive affect, social engagement, severity of ASD symptoms, age, adaptive skills, imitation, play skills, and joint attention (Hudry et al., 2018; Vivanti et al., 2018) may all factor into the effectiveness of an intervention and may change the ways in which a child will respond to a particular intervention profile. This research is important for efforts using a community-based treatment programming, where resources are limited and the treated population is heterogeneous. Relatedly, understanding the response profiles in order to inform decisions about treatment assignments for children, across treatments, can allow for proactive, child-intervention assignments, effectively making the treatment most cost-effective, number one, and number two, more appropriate to the child's unique needs (Schreibman et al., 2009). It should be noted though, that there are not many studies in this area looking at treatment response profiles.

3. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present research used a qualitative research design to examine the role of therapeutic and intervention programs in supporting the transition process from school to adulthood for youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the Arab sector in Israel. This chance sample study design was selected because qualitative research is well-suited to capture the depth and complexity of participants' lived experiences and social contexts. As stated by Tenny and colleagues (2022), qualitative research is a strong way to study how participants perceive and experience their unique environments. Accordingly, a qualitative research design is a strong approach to investigate how families understand the transition process, from the nuanced perspectives of transition families. As a qualitative design, the research will provide an interpretive, holistic understanding of what therapeutic programs are like for the parents of youths with ASD, particularly in regard to their children's social, emotional, and vocational development.

The study sample comprised of forty parents of youth with ASD from the Arab sector in Israel. Purposeful sampling was followed to guarantee that participants had experienced first-hand therapeutic and intervention programs during the transition between school and adulthood. This supported the description of Frechette and colleagues (2020) that purposeful sampling permits researchers to pick participants who have had a rich experience relevant to the study that provides valuable qualitative data. Two methods of data collection were employed in this study: semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The semi-structured interview format allowed parents to communicate their thoughts more freely and allowed the researcher to ask participants about their experience while also addressing key research questions. Additionally, the semi-structured format opened the researcher to pursue the analysis of emerging themes by expanding, clarifying, and asking about central issues (Bearman, 2019).

The data collection methods that were used allowed participants to discuss what they felt was effective in the programs, what they saw as critical elements of support, and what barriers already exist. Interviewing and in the focus group setting, participants were put in a comfortable and trusting position, which allowed participants to speak about very sensitive reflections related to their child's developmental transitions. The qualitative interviews allowed for access not only to what participants said, but also, how participants felt, which could uncover meanings that were both explicit and implicit (Aspers & Corte, 2019). It was critical in this study to develop an understanding of parents' emotional systems who work with the discombobulation of the demands of supporting their children with ASD. Together, the qualitative methods provided a detailed framework for recognizing patterns, building relationships between experiences, and getting both theoretical and practical perspective on transition services in underrepresented context (Zhang et al., 2025)

4. RESULTS

The results of this research were couched within rich narratives that were based on interviews and focus groups given by parents of youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the Arab sector of Israel. These narratives led to meaningful insights related to their perceived success, limitations and gaps in therapeutic intervention programs as young people with ASD transitioned from school to adulthood. Thematic analysis of the interviews and focus groups produced six leading themes based on different experiences that included, in some cases, incremental success in emotional and social development related to their child with ASD but were also interspersed with significant concerns about systemic failure, lack of vocational readiness, and almost complete absence of transition services that were culturally relevant to their families. It became increasingly clear that the narratives also described the uncomfortable conflation of therapeutic program effectiveness, both from a cultural perspective and systemically, with the long-term outlook for families in a culture or system where support services used to promote successful adulthood were essentially gone right when needed.

Theme 1: Varying Effectiveness of Therapeutic Programs in Supporting Transition to Adulthood

Participants noted some differing views regarding the ability of therapeutic programs to assist in transitioning to adulthood. One mother said, "The program helped my son be more independent in the home, but as far as the world, work, or even college is concerned… there's a gap—we weren't prepared." Another stated: "Yes, we saw progress with social behavior. We did not see real skills to help him in life, like job training or some kind of earning power." These comments are consistent with what Anderson and others (2018) found, where despite initial gains from therapeutic intervention, many individuals with ASD do not develop life skills that are acceptable to thrive throughout adulthood. Tews (2021) found that many students with an ASD classification exit high school without any transitional preparation for work and independent living. This points to a systemic program design issue, especially for underserved populations, such as the Arab sector in Israel, where there may be no permissible transition services, or they are limited in what they can offer.

Theme 2: Perceptions of Youth and Families on Social, Emotional, and Vocational Impact

While parents remarked on their kids' improvements in emotional stability and fundamental social skills, they highlighted frustration with a lack of preparation for reality and work life. One stated, "My daughter is calmer and communicates better, but she doesn't have a road to a job." Another remarked, "We anticipated she would be more emotionally stable, and she is - but socially she still struggles with peers." The parents' comments are consistent with Du and others (2024), who noted that therapy programs often are successful at helping youth with ASD increase emotional stability and communication with others, and they tend to underperform on helping them prepare for meaningful work. In addition, Sánchez Amate and others (2024) recognized that youth with ASD still experience interpersonal difficulties and negatively impacted emotional health despite therapeutic interventions, indicating the need to include community contextualized goals such as work-readiness and independent community functioning in therapeutic aims, rather than just targeting core symptoms.

Theme 3: Beneficial Components of Therapeutic and Intervention Programs

Participants identified particular program features as very useful: family- specific therapy plans, ongoing contact with parents, and adaptive and daily living skills. One participant said, "The therapist had come to our home, where everything happened. The home setting made a huge difference in how my son responded to his therapy." Another reported that her child learnt more about confidence from routine activities, " ... where to get what we need (including where things were ...) ... shopping, taking a bus, etc." The existing research supports this assertion in part (Waddington, Dempsey, & Hodge, 2019), on parent related service delivery models (like the Early

Start Denver Model), which can include aspects of naturalistic developmental behavioral interventions. Sinai-Gavrilov, Shapira -Lishinsky, and Harel (2020) examined preschool programs for the support of families of children with ASD in Israeli settings, and they found when the interventions were woven into home routines, and also included family collaboration with the therapists (related services), which supports the generalization of skills better. These family-related dependent, individualized, relationship-based components seem to play a major role in the supporting of Arab families, who can face barriers to access the supports to meet the cultural and practical aspects of service delivery gaps.

Theme 4: Challenges and Barriers in the Transition to Adulthood

Throughout the interviews, participants indicated that systemic and cultural barriers to transition were an ongoing theme. Parents expressed limited access to Arabic-speaking professionals and few regionally appropriate services. "We had to go far to find someone who speaks our language and understands our culture" said one parent. Another commented, "There is support for Jewish kids but we feel like we have been forgotten." The statements of the parents were corroborated by Davidovitch and others (2020), which reported variances in diagnosis and service delivery for children with disabilities based on ethnicity, between Jewish and Arab children in Israel. Moreover, Lee and others (2019) found that parents of youth with ASD faced significant service-access barriers compared to parents of youth with other disabilities. Both studies provide evidence that inequities in access diminish the benefits of well-designed programs, especially those that do not take community trust, accessibility, and cultural responsiveness into consideration.

Theme 5: Long-Term Outcomes and Community Integration

While a few families were reporting slow change in community participation, most families were still dependent and worried about the future. One parent stated, "After school time is finished, the support quits. We don't know what is next. He is just at home." Another parent said, "My son wants to work; he just does not have a program that helps him get there." These comments are in line with the findings from Taylor and others (2021) as they concluded most individuals with ASD do not progress toward autonomy into adulthood. Additionally, Rhodes and others (2023) advocated that without consistent adult services the findings of increased societal isolation and mental health concerns are always increasing. Early intervention will set a framework but not having adult follow along programs significantly impacts the quality of life and inclusion, in employment or independent living, as evidenced even more in Arab communities' fewer options.

Theme 6: Lack of Therapeutic and Intervention Programs in the Arab Sector for Transition to Adulthood

A prominent theme in a number of the interviews was the lack (in some cases complete lack) or extremely limited availability of structured therapeutic and intervention programs related to the phase of transition from adolescence to adulthood in the Arab sector. One parent noted that, "After high school, we basically fall into a black hole. Nobody, not us or our children, knows what comes next." Another parent reported, "We have therapists until children turn 18. Then it is like everything just stops. When children are grown up it is as if the system disappears." These experiences align with the new findings of Blank and Silverman (2023) who observed that, while there has been a growth in early childhood services for people with ASD in Israel, services for older adolescents and young adults (especially in the Arab sector) still lag disproportionately behind. Segev and others (2019) similarly noted disparities related to post-diagnosis services, indicating significant regional and systemic inequities faced by Arab families. The literature indicates that a lack of structured support during transitions can place young adults with ASD at heightened risk for social isolation, dependency and unemployment (Brewe & White, 2025; Pillay et al., 2022). The void in services to support transitions from adolescence to adulthood places an emotional and financial burden on families without the benefit of professional education, support or guidance. The systemic absence of the discussed models demonstrates the need for national policies and infrastructure to support culturally responsive interventions and approaches which include therapeutic programming beyond childhood for the Arab sector.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this research highlight a mixed field of therapeutic and intervention programs to assist youth on the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) path to adulthood in the Arab sector in Israel. While some participants reported small gains in areas like independence and communicating, there were many disheartened participants who reported their children were not prepared for the responsibilities of adulthood (e.g., employment, higher education, independent living) through these programs. Anderson and others (2021) found similar results noting that while some individuals with ASD may see developmental gains through early therapeutic interventions, they usually do not prepare children with ASD for the steps needed for adulthood. Tews (2021) highlighted that many students with ASD typically leave school with no essential preparation for transition. There is clearly an issue with the systemic design and scope of available services for transitioning students with ASD. These concerns are made worse in under-served areas like the Arab sector with limited or no culturally responsive transition programs.

Furthermore, the study pointed out that while families reported emotional and social benefits identified in their children, these improvements did not lead to functional outcomes. Parents reported that their children were able to regulate their emotions better and they were able to engage in simple interactions, but they were still not able to form relationships and identify work. This finding aligns with Du and others (2024), who found that intervention programs are usually successful in developing emotional and communication skills, but generally fall short in fostering job readiness and broader social inclusion. Additionally, Sánchez Amate and others (2024) reported that despite therapy, many individuals with ASD are isolated and have ongoing emotional health issues. These findings highlight that there is a need to expand the aims of interventions to include practical and real-world competencies which are needed for adult life - especially as these apply to marginalized communities.

Analysis revealed that several factors related to therapeutic modalities; in the opinion of the study participants, characterized as effective, included family participation, contextualized intervention and building functional skills. Parents appreciated therapists coming to their homes and using interventions that were suited to regular daily routines and activities of the child. These goals demonstrated greater engagement with learning and more confidence in their child's abilities. The authors agree with the evidence presented by Waddington and others (2019); the authors noted the intervention was efficacious, an Early Start Denver model of intervention was used in a collaborative home-based approach with participants in caregiver-child interactions. Similarly, Sinai-Gavrilov and others (2020) presented that, preschool programs intended to be community integrated and family-centered provided more consistent developmental outcomes in Israel. Overall, these studies support those interventions that are culturally and contextually driven are often the most sought after in Arab communities because, sometimes through lack of knowledge of alternative service models, traditional models did not align with the norms around family and society.

Despite these positive elements, participants reported structural and cultural barriers to accessing services. Several reported a lack of Arabic-speaking professionals, a limited number of services inducing service in Arab sector and programs that did not match their cultural reality. These findings echo the results of Davidovitch and others (2020) who found Arab children in Israel received later diagnoses compared to their Jewish peers. Lee and others (2019) found parents of children with ASD tend to have more challenges in accessing services than parents of children with another developmental condition. Such inequities illustrate a systemic lack of access and service equity, and urge a call to action regarding the need for more inclusive policies and practices. Moreover, parents were very worried about their children's future, including the lack of arranged support following high school. Many parents referred to a dramatic decline in services once their kid had aged out of the educational system leaving them stuck without options and increased reliance on their caregivers. This corresponds with the findings of Taylor and others (2021), that the siblings of individuals with ASD become dependent on family. Likewise, Rhodes and others (2023) warned that if services disengage during the transition period, individuals are more likely to be isolated and develop depression and other mental struggles. These findings show, without consistent follow-up programs to adulthood there will be a radical loss of any potential gains made through early intervention process and families must manage impending concerns on their own. This transitional gap is greater among families in the Arab sector because community-based adult service options do not exist.

In addition, the study pointed to an extreme lack or extreme shortage of transition programming for young adults with ASD in the Arab sector of Israel. There were several parents who referred to the post-school period as a "black hole" where families receive no direction and no continuity towards the adult services they will receive. The study's findings confirm the research of Blank and Silverman (2023) who mentioned that, although there are many improvements in Israel's early childhood services, there are few (if any) therapeutic services for adolescents and adults - particularly in Arab populations. The findings of Segev and others (2019) also underscored the presentation of inequalities in follow-up care and the clear system inequities make it more difficult for Arab families. A lack of programming and structured support may lead to more young adults being unemployed, isolated, and dependent; thus, conceding youth to increased social and economic marginalization.

Taking all these facts into account, the current findings suggest that helping transitioning ASD youth from the Arab sector will require system change. Therapeutic services should not only consider developmental aspects of childhood, but also extend into adolescence and adulthood, all within the scope of culturally attuned frameworks. A national plan should be devised to mitigate the barriers that currently limit service access by investing in regionally accessible, multilingual, and family focused programming. System change will require collaborative processes between education, mental health, community organizations, and policy makers to develop co-adaptive systems for youth transitioning with ASD, so they can thrive in adulthood, not just survive.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights the critical lack of therapeutic and intervention services available for youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) moving from educational opportunities in school, into adulthood, and the transition this implies. Even while some parents noted areas improvement regarding emotional regulation and basic communication, these positive indications were primarily confined to the at home, and had not translated to broader adult competencies addressing potential opportunities for employment, social integration, or independent living in any meaningful way. Planning for the transition process from education requires structured, consideration was absent from the therapeutic supports available for youth with ASD. Families with youth transitioning to adulthood often expressed feelings of being alone and anxious about their child's future. This study and focus illustrate a national concern in considering in Israel’s autism services, in that early childhood services are significantly better developed than services for adolescents and adults with ASD. Regarding the Arab sector, cultural and regional disparities will continue to create service inequities for Arab families.

The study highlights important elements needed for successful intervention, including, but not limited to; culturally responsive care, individualized plans that reflect the client, the role of the therapist-parent partnership, and community-based practice. Outside of traditional clinical settings, culturally-based approaches are not the norm and are inconsistent for many; in Arab communities, for example, there is a lack of Arabic-speaking practitioners and others that have community-based practices. Furthermore, many of the therapeutic or specialized programs do not adequately translate into achieving real-life outcomes around job training, integration, and independence for the long term. Qualitative data captures the parent experience and perspective in their own words, and indicate that while early intensive interventions plant a seed, they can wither if there is not a continuation of the therapy in a manner that is congruent with the developmental milestones of adults. The overall finding from this research indicates that the intention behind intervention direct individuals to have shift from reducing symptoms to supporting or enhancing independence and quality of life across their lifespan.

The current lack of systematic infrastructure around youth with ASD transitioning to adult life in the Arab sector is arguably the most critical issue. Moving forward, researchers should examine scalable, community-based models culturally relevant to the Arab context and determine their sustainability. In addition, policymakers must ensure the gap between childhood and adulthood services is shortened through long-term national strategies that are inclusive. Accessible, multilingual, and multidisciplinary programs that extend beyond early childhood must be developed to make sure youth with ASD not only receive support in their childhood but develop into a meaningful adult life. In the millennial quest for equity, the equitable path in this world lies at a place where services are delivered in ways that recognize and reflect the cultural, social, and developmental realities of every community they seek to help.

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