

## **Successful Integration of Youth without Parental Care in Egyptian Society. A case study**

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One of the main challenges facing youth without parental care living in Egyptian institutional homes is their lack of preparedness for transitioning into independence. The onset of such challenges arises with the development of insecure attachments and the lack of self esteem caused by the high rate of careleaver turnover. Often due to limited resources, children end up receiving low quality education which in turn affects their chances for higher education, limiting their job opportunities. The stigma faced by society and the lack of training often affect the inclusion and adaption of youth without parental care into society (Mbambo, 2013; Muthoni, 2005).

In response to the above mentioned challenges, Wataneya Society for the Development of Orphanages launched a program in 2011 called "Forsa" which means opportunity in Arabic. Forsa program targeted young adolescents to empower them, raise their self-esteem, as well as to work on their capabilities to help broaden their horizons and to aid their inclusion in Educational settings and their inclusion in society. From 2011 till 2016 there have been around 87 adolescents who joined the program over the years. An evaluation of the program was undertaken five years after it was launched with 25% of the participants joining. It became evident that most of the participants were able to understand themselves better and became more open to discuss their identity and upbringing in institutional homes. Some participants received vocational training in reputable private sector companies and others earned employment opportunities.

Further a group of the graduates continued their growth journey of learning and giving back by joining the "Youth Forum for youth without parental care", which developed a support network, a platform for exchanging knowledge with experts and a safe space for expressing challenges and proposed solutions.

### **Current Research:**

The positive impact that the "Forsa" program had on the lives of youth without parental care was investigated with three of the successful graduates of "Forsa". Two males and a female participant were chosen and the criteria of choice were the fact that they were admitted in the program and that they considered themselves successfully integrated in society.

The research questions included:

1. What are the factors that facilitate the educational and societal inclusion of adolescents growing up in institutional homes?
2. What are the main challenges that face adolescents growing up in institutional homes in order to be included in educational settings and in society?

Methodology:

The case study method was used, and qualitative tools of data collection included semi-structured interviews, consultation of the evaluation report of the "Forsa" program that was collected through two focus group discussions, and analysis of media interviews with the participants.

Findings:

1. The factors facilitating inclusion of adolescents:
  - Exposure to different participants and trainers broadened their horizons
  - Personal skills' workshops enhanced their self esteem and improved their self-concept and led to more self acceptance and self expression
  - Training opportunities provided broader scopes and diverse opportunities
  - It facilitated their joining the workforce, and equipped them with most of the soft skills needed in their chosen jobs
  - the participants coined "Forsa" program as *the turning point* in their lives.
2. The main challenges they faced:
  - Limited educational opportunities especially in high school
  - Society's negative attitude towards children who live in institutional homes, which is evident starting from school to recreational activities, to opportunities of higher education, job opportunities and marriage
  - The need for continuous support from trainers, something similar to a mentorship program
  - The need to start more inclusive activities starting from early childhood

## References:

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