

FROM RESIDENTIAL CARE TO INDEPENDENCE

An Evaluation Of Transition Support Services Offered to Care Leavers in Uganda

MA Childhood and Youth Studies
Dissertation

By Barbra Toffee Basirika
Supervisor - Professor Lisa Holmes

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE



The legislative gap with regards to structured support offered to care leavers during their transition to independence reinforces existing disadvantages and increases vulnerability to homelessness, unemployment, social exclusion, and mental health challenges. Research examining care leavers' experiences in Uganda remains limited, making their perspectives particularly important for informing contextually relevant policy and practice.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS



The aim of this research was to assess the challenges faced by care leavers in Uganda as they transitioned from residential care to independent living and evaluate the effectiveness of the existing support services.

- What are the key challenges faced by young people aging out of the care system?
- What kind of transition support services are currently available for care leavers and how effective are they in facilitating independent living?
- How do care leavers perceive and experience the support provided to them by statutory and voluntary services?



METHODOLOGY



Research Design: Qualitative research adopted to explore the lived experiences of care leavers navigating the transition to independent living in Uganda.



Participants: 4 care leavers invited using purposive sampling to ensure lived experience of the transition



Data Collection: In-depth interviews via zoom guided by semi-structured interviews



Data Analysis: Thematic analysis focusing on education, employment, housing and social relationships, to identify recurring patterns, experiences, and themes across participants' accounts



RESULTS



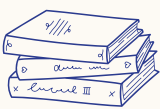
• **Employment and financial insecurity:** Regardless of higher education achievement, participants experienced difficulties securing appropriate and stable employment. This contributed to financial insecurity and increased exposure to precarious employment.



• **Social exclusion:** Participants described experiences of social exclusion following their transition into the community, both within employment and broader society. Limited social inclusion contributed to feelings of isolation and vulnerability.



• **Mental health:** The challenges associated with employment, financial insecurity, social exclusion, and navigating independence contributed to difficulties with mental wellbeing. Participants frequently experienced these challenges while having limited formal support.



• **Readiness for independent living:** Participants reported feeling underprepared for independent living, identifying gaps in practical and life skills alongside limitations in the support available to them during and after the transition from care.



• **Resilience and informal support:** Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated considerable resilience. Informal support networks, particularly peers and friends developed through university, played an important role in supporting successful transitions.



ANALYSIS



- The findings indicate an urgent need for collaborative and holistic aftercare provision that extends beyond professional services. Effective support should recognise the wider social and community contexts in which care leavers build independent lives and should involve care professionals, communities, higher education institutions, employers, and policymakers.

CONCLUSION



Transitioning from care to independent living is not simply an individual process; it is shaped by employment opportunities, financial security, social inclusion, mental wellbeing, practical skills, and access to supportive relationships. Strengthening both formal and informal support systems is essential to enable care leavers to achieve sustainable and fulfilling independence.

“Care Leavers' voices must be amplified to inform responsive services and policy that truly supports independence”

