

Adolescents and parents describe insufficient educator and peer understanding, employment options, and transitional programs as impacting on the transitions to school and employment post acquired brain injury.

Clinical bottom line: There is beginning level qualitative understanding that adolescents and parents identify a lack of educator and peer understanding, decreased employment options, and inadequate access to formal transitional programs as impacting on the transitions to school and employment post acquired brain injury.

Citation:

Backhouse, M., & Rodger, S. (1999). The transition from school to employment for young people with acquired brain injury: Parent and student perceptions. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, 46(3), 99-109.

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Clinical Question: What issues do parents perceive as impacting on their adolescent child's return to school post acquired brain injury?

Search Strategy:

Databases	Search Terms	Limits
PubMed	["brain injuries" (MESH and text) OR "brain injur*" OR "head injur*" OR "head trauma" OR "acquired brain injur*" OR "traumatic brain injur*" OR "ABI" OR "TBI"] AND [adolescen* OR teenage*] AND [school OR education OR "school re- entry" OR "school reentry" OR "school integrat*" OR "school re-integrat*" OR "school re-integrat*" OR "return to school" OR "class* re-integrat*" OR "class* re-integrat*" OR "class integrat*" OR "school transition" OR "transition to school"]	English
Cinahl		Human
PsychINFO		Adolescent 13-18 years (when available)
ERIC		
ScienceDirect		Randomised Control Trial (unsuccessful)

SUMMARY OF STUDY:

Aim: To explore the perceptions and experiences of parents and adolescents with acquired brain injury in relation to the transition from school to employment.

Method:

- An inductive, qualitative inquiry method, which utilised focus groups. The groups were moderated by an occupational therapist and were between 1.5 and 2 hours in duration.
- There were 5 focus groups with a total of 14 participants
 - 7 people with acquired brain injury, aged between 14 and 16 years
 - 7 parents, 3 of whom were parents of participants, therefore 11 adolescents with acquired brain injury were represented.
- The focus groups were held at five different locations, one each at a hospital, home, motel, school and McDonald's.
- The focus groups addressed three broad questions, including perceptions of school integration, goals for the future, and issues that help or hinder goal attainment.

Sampling:

- Opportunistic sampling from two ABI clinics at hospitals, and one program for students with brain tumours at a school of distance education.
- Inclusion criteria were that the student had some level of continuing disability, had returned to the community, was in the post-acute stage of recovery, and was in mainstream schooling prior to their injury.
- All adolescents were reported to have experienced deterioration in their academic achievement since their injury, and seven had moved from mainstream schooling to an alternate education setting.

Data Analysis:

- The focus groups were taped and later transcribed verbatim, and field notes were also written during and after the groups. Qualitative analysis software was used, and the data was categorised according to the research questions and other emergent themes.

Results:

The following themes were identified from the data, in relation to each of the research questions. The proportions described below were reported in the original study.

Research Question	Identified Themes
School Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13/14 participants reported incidents of feeling misunderstood or disliked by teachers and peers • 7/7 parents felt that teachers did not listen to them and that their child's needs were not sufficiently accommodated • 5/7 adolescents wanted to leave school due to teasing and insufficient help • Ongoing involvement of rehabilitation personnel is valued

Future Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some goals were based on pre-injury abilities, and some students had little capacity to plan for their future • 7/7 parents were concerned about employment options • 5/7 parents were not familiar with employment alternatives, training or services • Physical disability was identified as an additional barrier
What helps or hinders goal achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3/4 students who had been involved in formal transition programs found them helpful, and were aware of community employment services • 2/7 parents reported low confidence in school guidance officers' ability to provide vocational assistance • 5/7 parents expected to be caring for their child for a long time and to be responsible for future options • Some parents felt that assistance to achieve at school is necessary for future attainment • Schools were reported to be unable to locate work experience • 2/7 parents had made inquiries, and only found employment services for people with intellectual disability, or supported employment agencies with long waiting lists • 7/7 parents requested easy access to relevant information

COMMENTS:

Rigour:

- Opportunistic sampling was used, with participants recruited by telephone from only three settings in Brisbane. In addition, two of the settings were ABI clinics. People with ongoing involvement at a clinic may not be characteristic of the entire population.
- Focus groups were made up of parents, students, or a combination. The strategy used to place participants into groups was not rationalised.
- The moderator was reportedly more involved in the facilitation of the student groups, which may have influenced the data collected. There is no discussion of the levels of participant participation.
- The five focus groups were completed at five different settings, ranging from private to public locations. No rationale for the choice of the settings was provided.
- The data collected was transcribed verbatim, however the method used to categorise this data was not clearly described.
- The study does not discuss whether or not redundancy in emerging themes was reached. It is assumed not, considering that sampling was finalised prior to data collection.

Trustworthiness:

- The prior assumptions of the researcher were not identified. Pre-conceived ideas may not have been bracketed. This may have influenced the researcher's analysis of the data, and the themes that were consequently identified.
- The study reports the use of member checking, peer review and an independent reviewer, which increase trustworthiness of study. The use of both focus groups and

field notes was positive, however methods of analysing data from field notes was not adequately described.

Contribution to Theory:

- This study contributes to the development of an in-depth understanding of the issues that adolescents and parents identify as impacting, both positively and negatively, on the transitions to school and employment post acquired brain injury.
- The study reports being a preliminary investigation for a larger study that aims to develop a service model, and thus plays a role in the future development of theory.
- Exploratory, qualitative research forms an appropriate and useful starting point for research in areas that have not yet been addressed in higher-quality studies.

Appraised by:

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Kill or Update By: 1st May, 2005