

ABSTRACT

From Institutionalization to Reintegration: Un-silencing the Lived Experiences of Females Who Have Left Residential Care in Trinidad and Tobago

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This study explored the lived experiences of females between the ages of 18-35 and their experiences of re-integration following discharge from residential care in Trinidad and Tobago. Using a qualitative research design, data was obtained from 10 participants through semi-structured interviews and analysed using general and ecological systems theoretical frameworks. Findings show the unique challenges participants experience upon leaving institutionalized care, including exclusion resulting from inability to develop social networks, unemployment, stigmatization, and lack of adequate housing. The study makes significant recommendations regarding institutional development and implementation of re-integration programmes for females while transitioning from care. The study also highlights areas for development which can better assist girls leaving residential care by providing a network of support to enhance their reintegration experience thus ensuring greater social functioning.

This study is significant because it makes several recommendations to government, social service agencies and other key stakeholders which will improve the transition and reintegration process for future care-leavers.

Keywords: Donna, Marcelin-Samuel; Females; Institutionalized care; Reintegration; Care-leavers; Social exclusion; Transitions