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Hidden Dropout from the Education System among Ethiopian Adolescents in Israel

The study examined aspects of hidden dropout among adolescent students of Ethiopian origin. Hidden dropout describes a situation in which a student is often absent from the education system or is present but only passively. The research focuses on hidden dropout among three groups of Ethiopian adolescents in Israel (normative learners, hidden dropouts and disengaged youths) as evidenced in several fields: perceived discrimination, environmental support (from the family and from the education system) and social relations. Thirty semi-structured interviews conducted with adolescents from the three groups were aimed at identifying patterns that characterize hidden dropout from the interviewees' point of view. The findings reveal distinct patterns among the three groups in the addressed fields. Hidden dropouts and normative learners reported that their parents encourage them to stay in the education system, whereas disengaged youths retrospectively reported a lack of family involvement. Hidden dropouts also reported experiencing discrimination in the education system due to their Ethiopian origin; normative learners reported discrimination mainly at the group level and less at the personal level; and disengaged youths recalled past alienation towards them at school. Furthermore, the hidden dropouts and the normative learners reported limited relations with Israelis who are not of Ethiopian origin, while the disengaged youths reported that they have almost no relations with friends who are not Ethiopian. In addition, the hidden dropouts and the disengaged youths reported non-normative leisure behaviors, whereas the learners reported mostly normative leisure behaviors. Implications for the identification of hidden dropouts as well as for teacher and parent interventions are discussed.

Keywords: hidden dropout, adolescents, Ethiopian immigrants, perceived discrimination, social support, social contact