

No place like home: a mixed methods study on residential features and stability among young adults with first episodes of schizophrenia

Laurence Roy¹, Jacqueline Rousseau¹, Pierre Fortier^{2,1}, Jean-Pierre Mottard²

¹*École de réadaptation, Montréal (Qc), Canada,* ²*Pavillon Albert-Prévost, Hôpital Sacré-Coeur de Montréal, Montréal (Qc), Canada*

Introduction

Since the deinstitutionalisation movement, individuals diagnosed with psychotic disorders are increasingly living in the community, in a variety of settings. Occupational therapists working in mental health need to understand the impact of residential features on the rehabilitation process of their clients, as well as their preferences and needs in terms of housing.

Objectives

1. To compare features of the residential settings and residential stability between young adults with or without first episodes of schizophrenia (FES).
2. To explore the subjective perception of the home and neighbourhood for young adults.
3. To explore the meaning of residential stability and residential preferences for young adults.

Methods

A mixed methods multiple case study design was used. Data were collected among 100 young adults (50 with FES, 50 closely matched comparison participants) aged 18 to 30 living in three urban and one suburban neighbourhoods in Montreal. Data collection included a social and residential questionnaire for all participants, as well as a semi-structured interview for 45 individuals. Quantitative data were compared between groups using Student's t-test for continuous data and non-parametric equivalent for categorical data. Qualitative analysis consisted in data reduction using NVivo 2.0 and content analysis.

Results

Quantitative analyses reveal that a majority of young adults from both groups rent their home and live with their parents. However, participants with FES live more often alone, in more crowded residential environments and experience more residential instability. Key themes emerge from the interviews: 1) residential stability, 2) residential preferences, 3) meaning of the home environment and 4) neighbourhood and social networks.

Conclusion

This study suggests that the home environment has been overlooked as a key element in the rehabilitation process of young adults living with a psychotic disorder. Those results also suggest that occupational therapists should play a pro-active role in the clinical team in the choice, adjustment and assessment of residential settings.

Contribution

This original research provides occupational therapists with an in-depth exploration of the complex issue of the home environment and its relationship to the daily lives, experiences and social participation of young individuals living with a serious mental health problem.

