

Educational Disengagement and Learning Needs Among Incarcerated Juveniles in Albania: Evidence from a Qualitative Study

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Abstract

This qualitative study examines educational disengagement and learning needs among juveniles serving prison sentences in Albania. It explores their educational status and relationship with school before imprisonment, family support for education, school-related difficulties, and perceptions of an effective learning process. The study was conducted with 13 juveniles aged 15–18 years serving sentences at the Kavajë Special Institution. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed through qualitative content analysis, complemented by a review of relevant literature.

The findings indicate that educational disengagement generally preceded imprisonment. Participants had left school at an average age of 12.46 years, while nine had dropped out before receiving a prison sentence. Learning difficulties were reported particularly in mathematics, alongside irregular school attendance and limited study at home. Participants also described uninteresting teaching materials and activities, large classes, limited teacher attention, and insufficient respect for their opinions as important school-related problems. Family support was uneven, with limited communication between many juveniles and their family members. Despite these previous difficulties, all participants expressed a desire to continue their education, with interests extending from compulsory and secondary education to vocational and university pathways.

The findings highlight the importance of individualized, flexible, practical, and supportive educational approaches within juvenile correctional settings in Albania.

Keywords: education; incarcerated juveniles; learning difficulties; school disengagement; Albania