

SOCIAL SECURITY
ISRAEL JOURNAL OF SOCIAL POLICY



Published by

THE NATIONAL INSURANCE INSTITUTE OF ISRAEL

April 2019

No. 107

EDITORIAL BOARD

Israel (Issi) Doron, *Editor in chief*
Daniel Gottlieb, *Chairman*
Suliman Abu Bader
Leah Achdut
Jon Anson
Liat Ayalon
Orly Benjamin
Aaron Cohen
Nissim Cohen
Abraham Doron
Sylvie Fogiel-Bijaoui
John Gal
Amir Shmueli
Jochanan Stessman

Book Review Editor: Guy Feldman,
Nissim Cohen

Managing Editor: Maya Orev-Attal
Copy Editor: Hava Rimon
Typesetting: Onit Computer Services Ltd.

CONTENTS

The case against means testing

Abraham Doron

The puzzling rise of poverty among Arab households

Miri Endeweld and Momi Dahan

Return to work after breast cancer: An update

Eliezer Robinson , Lee Greenblatt-Kimron , Ronit Leiba and Miri Cohen

The ‘proper and moral’ single mother and ‘welfare to work’

Anat Herbst-Debby

The experience of female Arab social workers treating Arab fathers at parent-child centers in Israel

Romain Jammal-Abboud and Edith Blit-Cohen

Summaries of the Main Articles

The case against means testing

*Abraham Doron*¹

In the last few years we have witnessed a retreat from universality as the basis of social policies, to the pursuit of a more targeted selective approach instead. The goal of this approach is to limit the provision of welfare benefits to needy and poor population groups. The ideological premise of this policy is that the State should not and cannot be a universal provider.

One of the major policy instruments in achieving this goal is use of the means test to try to concentrate available resources on the neediest. In practice, resulting policies make social welfare benefits increasingly subject to means testing. Conditioning the receipt of a variety of welfare benefits on means testing carries with it however, serious limitations. These may particularly damage the circumstances of ordinary working people and produce among other drawbacks, disincentives to work.

The difficulty in evaluating the use of means testing in the social policy system is that in many situations it has considerable public support. Although the extended use of this policy has not shown itself as an effective way of meeting the stated goals of social welfare provision, many claims used in its support continue to misinform about the limitation of its actual functioning.

It is essential to point out that means testing constitutes a serious barrier to accessing the social welfare system. It adds an additional bureaucratic layer encumbering the take-up of services by needy populations, and inevitably causes friction between front-line officials and the user population. It is thus vital to reassess the current approach to means testing and to the variety of means tests in use.

1 Paul Baerwald School of Social Work and Social Welfare, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The puzzling rise of poverty among Arab households

Miri Endeweld¹ and Momi Dahan²

In the past two decades there has been a decline in hidden and visible discrimination against the Arab population in Israel, and yet their poverty incidence has increased. The purpose of this study is to address the question of how the incidence of poverty among Arab citizens has worsened despite improvement in government policy. This study finds that the probability of an Arab household being poor, increased in the period investigated (1995-2015) from double to close to five times that of Jewish households with the same characteristics.

The welfare state was responsible for a significant share, about 43%, of this increase in the odds ratio. This was probably the result of the redesign of welfare policy, which is now aimed less at those with low incomes due to reduction in the negative correlation between level of government support and per capita income. Possibly the transfer of cash benefits to more common characteristics among Jews, such as Holocaust survivors and immigrants, also plays a part.

1 National Insurance Institute, Israel

2 The Hebrew University in Jerusalem

Return to work after breast cancer: An update

Eliezer Robinson¹, Lee Greenblatt-Kimron², Ronit Leiba³ and Miri Cohen⁴

The number of breast cancer survivors is rising steadily. Worldwide studies have shown that breast cancer survivors have difficulty in continuing or returning to work, despite the positive effect on their well-being and the benefits for employers and society. Few studies have investigated this topic in Israel. There is a need to obtain updated data on the subject.

Aims: To identify the characteristics of breast cancer survivors who return to work, the difficulties and connection to type of treatment and symptoms.

Method: A cross-sectional study of 79 breast cancer survivors, stages I and II, 1-5 years after diagnosis. Participants were recruited from the pool of a larger study on cancer survival.

Results: Most of the participants worked before the diagnosis, and 82% returned to work. A higher rate of non-returners was found among survivors who had received chemotherapy and Arab women. About 40% of participants reported a decrease in income, of which half reported a significant decrease. Higher symptom levels were associated with a higher income decline and predicted not returning to work (OR=.21, 95% CI=.05-.89).

Conclusions: It is important to increase the awareness of social workers in health and other services to the difficulties faced by cancer survivors returning to work. We recommended focusing resources on developing national programs to deal with return to work issues.

1 Technion and Israel Cancer Association
2 Department of Social Work, Ariel University
3 Rambam Medical Center
4 The School of Social Work, University of Haifa

The 'proper and moral' single mother and 'welfare to work'

Anat Herbst-Debby¹

In Israel, as in other welfare states, a policy was adopted espousing the responsibility of adult citizens for wage income regardless of parental commitment to child care. This process was augmented by a policy encouraging entry into the paid labor market by integrating various populations into welfare-to-work programs. Through semi-structured interviews with 62 single mothers participating in the Eshet Cháyil program, we sought to examine the participants' perceptions of the model of 'good motherhood' as conveyed by the program.

This article addresses two main axes: the macro level, or the precepts of the policy of personal autonomy and paid work as a moral matter; and the micro level, or how single mothers internalize policy demands and how program participants perceive 'good' motherhood on a personal level. These levels are examined in light of a policy that espouses the centrality of motherhood in Israeli society, and its contribution to building the nation. The findings show that mothers perceive their parental role as central to their lives, and emphasize the concept of a 'proper' parental model, i.e., an example of a working mother. Moreover, mothers also placed considerable emphasis on paid care work, in which a large proportion of them are employed, and viewed this as an extension of their maternal-caring role. At the same time, some mothers cite the price their children pay for their integration at all costs into paid employment.

1 The Gender Studies Program, Bar Ilan University

The experience of female Arab social workers treating Arab fathers at parent-child centers in Israel

Romain Jammal-Abboud¹ and Edith Blit-Cohen²

The multicultural approach highlights the need to adapt social services for the general population to different cultural groups and minorities. The need for cultural adaptation is particularly important in Arab society in Israel, which is in a process of social and cultural transition. However, Arab social workers are not trained to provide culturally appropriate responses in this context. Rather, they usually act as representatives of the state in a context of political conflict, and this situation leads to cultural insensitivity on two levels. The article describes and examines the experience of social workers working with men in Arab society, and discusses the conflict inherent in their role as therapists on the one hand and as representatives of the Israeli establishment on the other. The study was based on in-depth interviews with 15 Arab social workers treating Arab fathers at parent-child centers in Israel. The findings indicate that the therapeutic encounter reflects characteristics of their culture, as well as the cultural and gender-based tensions that social workers experience in the encounter with their clients. The findings further indicate that the social workers need to be aware of the fathers' social attitude, and to recognize the similarities and differences between their own cultural perspectives and those of the fathers. The article contributes to the literature by focusing on challenges inherent in the therapeutic encounter between Arab social workers and their clients, and highlights the complexity of their situation. Finally, it points to the lack of adequate academic preparation for Arab social workers in Israeli universities, as well as to the lack of support for them and the challenges they face in their work.

1 Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Gordon College, Haifa University

2 Paul Baerwald School of Social Work and Social Welfare, Hebrew University in Jerusalem

