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## The degree of social and educational integration and absorption of Arab Bedouin female students in teacher training institutions in Israel

**KEYWORDS**

Bedouins, female students, college, education, academia

**ABSTRACT**

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The issue of the process of integration and absorption of Arab Bedouin female students in teacher training institutions in Israel constitutes a significant yet critical chapter in the course of forming the personal and professional identity of the prospective teacher. The main purpose of this article is to describe the difficulties experienced by Arab Bedouin female students during the process of their social and educational integration and absorption in teacher training institutions. Also, to deal with the differences between Arab and Jewish teacher training institutions. Furthermore, to what extent the cultural encounter is perceived by the students that would enable them to have social and educational integration.

The study involved 200 Bedouin Arab female students living in the Negev and learning in four teacher-training colleges in Israel; Kaye College of Education, Achva College, Sakhnin College for teacher training and Al-Qasmi College. The students answered a questionnaire that was written for this study. The findings of the study indicated many difficulties in the process of absorbing and integrating Arab Bedouin students in various teacher-training institutions in the country. Not to mention, language difficulties experienced by them with regard to reading articles and writing papers, not in their native tongue. The multicultural encounter between the different genders also poses a great difficulty in addition to the age difference between Arab and Jewish students. Furthermore, the policy of the Israeli academic institutions does not fully represent the Arab culture and in the interaction between the academic and administrative staff and the Arab Bedouin students.

## Introduction

The present research emerges from a personal experience and a personal vision as a professional person in the academic community. Particularly, difficulties faced by Arab students in the Negev, and especially the female students from different social and cultural backgrounds. In academia, the term „integration” is especially used for marginalized and weak populations in society. The integration of Bedouin Arab female students in academia in Israel can be attributed to the following four-fold model of acculturation used by (Berry, 2003):

- A. integration: occurs when individuals are able to adopt the cultural norms of the dominant or host culture while maintaining their culture of origin. Integration leads to, and is often synonymous with biculturalism;
- B. assimilation: occurs when individuals adopt the cultural norms of a dominant or host culture, over their original culture;
- C. separation: occurs when individuals reject the dominant or host culture in favor of preserving their culture of origin. Separation is often facilitated by immigration to ethnic enclaves;
- D. arginalization: occurs when individuals reject both their culture of origin and the dominant host culture (Gathon, 2011).

The teaching profession is considered a profession with high demand and high probability of acceptance in the eyes of Bedouin Arab girls who have completed high school. Also, due to the cultural and societal pressure that sees great importance for girls to choose the teaching profession over other occupations, in order to preserve tribal and family values and norms. In recent years, the Bedouin Arab students have been going through a process of social and scholastic integration in relation to the cultural change in teacher training institutions in particular and in academia in general, accompanied by serious concerns and difficulties, especially in the first year (Abu-Ajaj, 2017). The teaching profession is considered as one of the most important means among Arab Bedouin students in the context of personal and professional development (Abu-Ajaj, 2017).

## The status of women in Arab Bedouin society

The Bedouins in the Negev are a unique group that is culturally, historically, socially and politically distinct from Arab society in the State of Israel. In the last century, Arab women were always being exposed to various forms of autonomy suppression regarding social and sexual status. One of the reasons for the oppres-

sion of the Arab Bedouin woman in the Negev stems from the tribal status and the masculine power that dominates the clan or family, which receives this support according to customs, norms and patterns of life. The Arab Bedouin society in the Negev is characterized as a conservative society as they follow a different pattern of life from the entire Arab society in the country (Abu Rabia-Queder, 2006). The cultural, social, and religious prohibition is strongly rooted in the norms and patterns of life of various strata in Bedouin society in the Negev, especially in the tribes and clans still living in the unrecognized villages in the Negev. The status of the girl and the woman in Bedouin society is considered to be controversial among Bedouin society, which severely constrains her from various interactions in the norms of civic life. Therefore, they are usually supervised by parents, siblings and relatives (Abu-Bakr, 2002). In the last decade, there has been a change in the status and lifestyle of Bedouin Arab women in the Negev in light of the transition to permanent settlements, modernization and exposure to the way of life of Jewish society in the South. This change paved the way for girls and women to become independent and to establish their own way of life by acquiring a profession for living in higher education institutions in a country that gives them a clear and constitutional freedom according to the accepted norms of tribes and clans.

Since the 1990s, there has been an increase in the rate of education in Israel, similar to Western societies advocating the principle of equal opportunities for students of different ethnic backgrounds, socio-economic status and also supporting their integration into society and opening the doors for the education to them (The Higher Education Council, 2016). Since the mid-1990s, there was a significant increase in numbers among Bedouin girls studying in teacher training colleges, particularly in the Kaye College of Education and the Achva College because of their proximity to the Arab Bedouin students' place of residence. The main difference began with the increase in the proportion of Bedouin Arab students in institutions of higher education, alongside the process of modernization in Arab Bedouin society, which gives high priority to high school graduates to join the circle of academia in Israel and abroad. This change is due to the cultural encounter with Jewish society and the transition to permanent communities, and the belief that women can be a significant factor in the socioeconomic development of Bedouin society in the Negev.

The data and encounters with Arab Bedouin students in higher education institutions should be treated uniquely because of the special considerations needed for the demographic, social and social characteristics of the society. Since 2001, there has been a significant increase in the achievements of high school students

in Arab Bedouin schools in the Negev. The rate of entitlement to matriculation examinations (Bagrut) that entitles admission to institutions of higher education (universities, colleges) has increased among the Bedouins from 12% in 2001 to 20% in 2014. However, despite the increase in the number of matriculation examinees among the Bedouins, the number is still lower than those in the Arab sector (34%) and the Jewish sector (50%). On the one side, there was an increase in entitlement to a matriculation certificate among Arab Bedouin girls, from 20% in 2000 to 40% in 2014. However, on the other side, there was a decline among boys entitled to a matriculation certificate<sup>1</sup>. Between 2001 and 2014, there was a significant drop in the dropout rate among Bedouin girls from high schools, from 42% in 2001 to 31% in 2014. The decrease in the dropout rate as well as the increase in the numbers of girls eligible for the matriculation exams, led to an increase in the number of girls joining the academic faculties in Israel. Between 2008 and 2014, the number of Bedouin Arab students increased from 1313 students, 710 female students (54%) and 603 male students (46%) to 2822 students in 2014, of which 1861 female students (66%). An increase of 12% among female Bedouin students compared with 961 male students (34%), a 10% drop in the number of male students from Bedouin society<sup>2</sup>.

The continuing increase in the number of Arab Bedouin students in institutions of higher education, especially in teacher training institutions, indicates a decrease in the dropout rate among Bedouin girls and an increase in the percentage of those entitled to matriculation certificates. Also, despite the obstacles and barriers that the institutions of higher education placed in the face of all Arab students, especially passing the Psychometric Test, there was an increase in the number of Arab Bedouin students in academia (Nawahid, 2013). However, in recent years there has been a significant improvement in the rate of Arab Bedouin girls who are accepted to studies in institutions of higher education, and especially to teacher training colleges in Israel. Mustafa (2007) notes that the reasons for the improvement in the number of Arab Bedouin students in institutions of higher education in different specialties stem from two principles: the social motive that sees the integration of Bedouin Arab girls in academia will lead to the socio-economic prosperity and personal motivation of the Bedouin students who wish to integrate and promote their status in the Arab Bedouin society in the Negev.

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<sup>1</sup> Central Bureau of Statistics, Localities and Population in Israel in 2014.

<sup>2</sup> The Bedouin in Israel – Facts and Figures, Myers Joint – Brookdale, February 2016.

For years, the Council for Higher Education has been involved in the integration and absorption of marginalized and weak populations in Israeli society in institutions of higher education in Israel, in view of the great influx of high school graduates from Western Israel to study in institutions of higher education abroad (Arar and Haj-Yehia, 2010). Numerous studies have been conducted on the absorption and integration of Arab students in academia (Yasser, 2008; Mustafa, 2007; Arar and Abu Asbah, 2007). Therefore, we have recently witnessed a change in the institutional and social perception of the absorption of Arab Bedouin students into institutions of higher education in Israel. In the eyes of many of the Arab female Bedouin students, academia represents a significant breakthrough in promoting the status of the Bedouin girl in Arab Bedouin society, especially in the labor market, and for full equality in opportunities.

The different social and cultural background that the Arab Bedouin female students in the Negev derive from should be a source of support from the side of the institutions of higher education, especially the colleges of education. Cultural diversity and support is a significant starting point for these students who are exposed for the first time to a new cultural difference that affects the learning process (Hurtado & Gurin, 2002). The issue of absorption and integration of Bedouin female Arab students in academia has not yet received a sufficient research attention (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 2008) in terms of integration and the use of concepts and also in terms of entry, adjustment, persistence and dropping out, after the first year or change in specialization or subject of study. Many concerns and fears accompany the process of admission and entry of Bedouin Arab female students into the higher education system. Their main fear stems from failing academic due to not being psychologically prepared for academia. This is the result of the enormous pressure caused by schools and also due to the matriculation exams (Bagrut), which requires significant effort in order to attain eligibility.

## **Research Methodology**

### **The purpose of the study**

The present study aims to examine the degree of integration, social and academic absorption of Arab Bedouin female students in teacher training institutions in a unique and pioneering manner<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> The study focused on four teacher training institutions in Israel: Kaye College, Achva, Al-Qasbi and Sakhnin.

## Research hypotheses

1. There will be a statistically significant difference in the process of absorption and integration of Arab Bedouin female students in Arab teacher training colleges (Al-Qasemi, Sakhnin) and Jewish teachers' training colleges (Kay, Achva).
2. There will be a statistically significant difference in the assessment of Arab Bedouin female students in the academic and social climate in Arab teacher training colleges (Al-Qasemi, Sakhnin) and Jewish teacher training colleges (Kay, Achva).
3. There will be a statistically significant difference in the level of assistance and support of Arab teacher training institutions (Al-Qasemi, Sakhnin) and among the Jewish teacher training institutions (Kay, Achva).

## The study population

The study included 200 Bedouin Arab female students in four teacher training colleges, Kay, Achva, Sakhnin, and Al-Qasimi (N = 50). The average age in the sample is 21.7 and the age range varies from 18 to 25. 67% of the participants in the study live in recognized localities and 33% live in unrecognized villages, under tough socio-economic conditions. The distribution of marital status reflects to a large extent, the age of the subjects, with 72% of the participants reporting that they were single and the rest are married (28%) or divorced (1%). Among married women, 54% said they had at least one child and the rest (46%) had no children.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N = 20)

Gender (%)		N
women	100%	200
<b>Age</b>		
average	21.7	134
range	18–25	
<b>Marital status</b>		
single	72.00%	144
married	28.00%	54
divorcee	1.00%	2
<b>Number of children (%)</b>		
<b>Irrelevant</b>	72.00%	144
0	46.00%	25
1	54.00%	31

Residence		
a recognized locality	67.00%	134
unrecognized locality	33.00%	66

Table 2. The students studied, by college and year of study

College	Number of female students	First year	Second year	Third year	Fourth year
The Kaye Academic College of Education	45	23	10	12	0
Achva Academic College of Education	45	10	22	13	
Al-Qasemi College of Education	45	1	3	23	18
The Academic College of Education, Sakhnin	45	0	3	17	25

Table 3. The students studied, by majors

College	Infancy	Science	Math	Special education	Teaching certificate
The Kaye Academic College of Education	17	10	10	8	0
Achva Academic College of Education	22	23	0	0	0
Al-Qasemi College of Education	18	0	0	0	27
The Academic College of Education, Sakhnin	0	0	0	0	45

## Research Tools

The questionnaire was used in this study to examine various aspects: demographic data and background variables of the female students, the difficulties and dilemmas of the female students regarding their absorption and integration into teacher training institutions, different services used by female students to assist them in teacher training institutions.

- A. **Demographic Details Questionnaire:** Its purpose is to provide information about the personal background of the examined sample, including demographic data such as age, gender, socioeconomic status, education, place of birth, residence, and more.
- B. **Difficulties and Dilemmas:** A questionnaire was used, in which 18 subjects were asked to indicate challenges and dilemmas in the context of the absorption process and their social and scholastic integration into teacher

training institutions. In order to examine the absorption and integration of the examinee, they were asked to mark their opinions on the statements presented to them and the degree of their suitability to their life according to the 5-steps Likert scale. 1 = (not at all) and 5 = (to a very large extent). The coefficient of reliability is 0.50.

- C. **The degree of Assistance and Services:** The purpose of this questionnaire is to examine the amount of assistance and services provided to the subjects in teacher training colleges. The questionnaire has 11 items. The subjects are asked to indicate their opinion on the statements presented to them and the degree of suitability to their life using the Likert scale Where 1 = (not at all) and 5 = (to a very large extent). The reliability coefficient is 0.92.

## The research results

The present study presents preliminary and unique findings that include authentic testimonies, from which we can learn about the absorption and integration of Arab Bedouin female students in teacher training colleges in Israel, especially among the following Arab teacher training institutions (Al-Qasemi and Sakhnin) and the Jewish training institutions (Kay, Achva).

## The testing of research hypotheses

**The first hypothesis:** is that there will be a statistically significant difference in the process of absorption and integration of Bedouin Arab female students in Arab teacher training colleges (Al-Qasemi, Sakhnin) and Jewish teachers' colleges (Kay, Achva).

The results of the study revealed that there was a significant difference in the degree of absorption and integration of Arab Bedouin female students in Arab teacher training colleges (Al-Qasemi, Sakhnin) compared to the Jewish ones (Kay, Achva). The t-test shows significant differences between Arab training institutions and Jewish training institutions ( $t = 4.761$   $p < 0.001$ ). In other words, the absorption and integration of Arab Bedouin female students in Arab teacher training institutions is much easier and more convenient than that of Jewish teacher training institutions ( $m = 1.440$ ,  $sd = 0.624$   $sd = 0.638$ ,  $m = 1.698$ ). According to the students' assessment, the differences between the Arab academic institutions and the Jewish ones is in the context of language, dealing with the framework, relations with officials, as well as dealing with the reading materials and articles, understanding the lecturers, self-expression and writing in Hebrew. In addition to



coping with a load of work and exams and the availability of extra learning days in Arab teacher training institutions that take place on Fridays and Saturdays which does not mainly exist on the Jewish side. Therefore, the first research hypothesis was confirmed.

**The second hypothesis:** is that there will be a statistically significant difference in the assessment of Arab Bedouin female students of the academic and social climate in Arab teacher training colleges (Al-Qasemi, Sakhnin) and Jewish teachers' training colleges (Kay, Achva).

Table 4. Assessment of the social and educational climate

Statements	An Arab training institution	Standard deviation	Jewish training institution	Standard deviation
Acclimatization	4.45	0.77	3.67	0.62
Social and educational absorption	4.95	0.73	3.57	0.63
Index of difficulties	2.56	0.89	3.27	0.71
General contact index with students	3.67	0.94	4.15	0.90
Index of personal contact with students	4.32	1.06	3.13	0.91
Index of equal treatment to Arab students	4.67	1.03	2.94	0.76
Participation and college activity index	4.45	0.91	1.23	0.04

As can be seen in Table 4, the mentioned statements characterize the educational and social climate in teacher training colleges. The results showed that there was a statistically significant difference in the degree of Arab Bedouin students' assessment of the educational and social climate in Arab teacher training colleges (Al-Qasemi, Sakhnin) versus Jewish teachers' colleges (Kay, Achva). This is expressed in the social and educational acclimatization statements, introducing and nurturing a relationship between all the students in the learning environment, mutual relations in submitting papers, a sense of ethnic belonging, and receiving a different attitude, facilitations of examinations and papers that are held mostly in the mother tongue. The significant difference, as shown in Table 4, was found in the degree of participation of female students in the college activities in Arab teacher training colleges ( $P < .445$ ), which is more significant than the involvement of Bedouin Arab students in the college activities in Jewish teacher training colleges. It was also found that there was a significant difference in the educational and social aspects between Arab and Jewish teachers' training institutions. Therefore, the second research hypothesis was confirmed.

**Third hypothesis:** there is a statistically significant difference in the level of assistance and support of the Arab teacher training institutions (Qasemi, Sakhnin) compared to the Jewish teacher training institutions (Kaye, Achva).

Table 5. Level of assistance and support of teacher training institutions: comparison between Arab and Jewish Institutions (t-test)

Statements	An Arab training institution	Standard deviation	Jewish training institution	Standard deviation
Student Administration	3.69	1.06	2.95	0.97
Dean of Students	4.30	0.87	4.25	0.92
Information and service center	4.13	0.86	3.45	0.56
Student Association	4.21	0.73	3.74	0.94
The library	2.95	0.95	2.85	1.29
Treasury and tuition fees	3.97	0.93	3.32	0.76
Main Programs and Specializations	3.89	0.59	3.23	0.67

As can be seen on Table 5, the mentioned statements indicate the level of assistance and support that Arab Bedouin students receive in teacher training colleges. The results revealed that there was a significant difference among the majority of statements between Arab teacher training institutions (Al-Qasami and Sakhnin) and Jewish teachers' colleges (Kay, Achva). Therefore, the third research hypothesis was confirmed.

## Discussion and summary

The study findings indicate a significant difference in the level of absorption and integration and the degree of assistance and support for Arab Bedouin students in Arab teacher training institutions about the degree of uptake and integration into Jewish teacher training institutions. Recently, The Bedouin Arab female students, despite their young age, their numbers are increasing in the teacher training institutions. Despite the broad family support they receive, they encounter difficulties and problems in Jewish teachers' training colleges, making it difficult for them to adjust to academia, socially and educationally. Such problems exist in every academic institution, not only in colleges for the Jewish teachers training, but also in universities. The socio-cultural encounter in Jewish teacher-training institutions

in the south makes it difficult for traditional conservative students to adjust socially and academically. It should be noted that few students succeed to adapt to academic life in teacher training colleges after the first year and continue their academic life away from integration with all students from the various cultural levels. Also, most of them continue to deal with their difficulties independently without the involvement of any academic body in the college, thus succeeding in developing alienation and bitterness toward the training institutions (Tutari, 2009).

The poor performance of Arab female students in Jewish teacher training colleges, as opposed to Arab teacher training institutions, stems from the problem of language and cultural encounter (Reingold, 2008). In the present study, difficulties arose in the context of the Hebrew language, which makes it difficult to adapt Bedouin students in Jewish teacher training institutions, which is reflected in the process of writing academic papers, and the ability to express themselves in discussions during the various courses. According to my personal experience as a lecturer and pedagogic instructor in Jewish teacher training colleges, the Hebrew level of Arab Bedouin students is deplorable in terms of writing and speaking. Sever (2004) argues that students whose mother tongue is not Hebrew can communicate and speak well, but the difficulty is in acquiring literacy as their academic writing is of a very poor and weak level, accompanied by many mistakes of writing and formulation that affect the scholarly output of the Arab student. The findings of the present study indicate a slight acclimatization of Arab Bedouin female students in Arab teacher training institutions (Al-Qasemi, Sakhnin) with regard to the many difficulties encountered by other Arab Bedouin students who choose to study in Jewish teacher training colleges. The only difficulty that the students mentioned was the distance between their place of residence in the south and the Arab institutions in the center and north, which made them spend much time on the roads and spend a lot of money on travel and school supplies. Nevertheless, they also expressed satisfaction with regard to being able to study during weekends, which gives them the opportunity to work and earn a living during the week.

In comparison to the present study and other studies conducted on students from the Arab sector (Taotari, 2009) and Ethiopian students (Lev Ari and Ron, 2012). It can be noted that the Arab students in general and the Bedouin in particular and the Ethiopian students have a different ethnic identity. However, both of the minority groups suffer from institutional oppression and injustice in the Israeli society but differ in levels. The state equally supervises them regarding the development of educational systems and in the integration of the weaker populations in the Israeli society (Smootha, 2001; Pasternak, 2003).

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