Adolescents at risk and their willingness to seek help from youth care workers

Zeev Kaim [a,1], Shlomo Romi [b,*]

[a] Orot Academic College, Rehovot and Hemdat Hadarom College, Netivot, Israel
[b] School of Education, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, Israel

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Youth care workers (YCWs) are educational-therapeutic workers in nonformal community educational settings for adolescents at risk. This study examines the way adolescents at risk perceive YCWs, and their willingness to seek help (WISH) from them as compared to parents, friends, and teachers, and the variables that explain their willingness. The participants ($N = 211$, age 14–18), in youth care units, answered self-report questionnaires about their personal characteristics and their WISH from each of the four sources. Findings showed that YCW was ranked lower than friends – and similar to parents – and well above teachers. The factors that explain why participants turn to YCW are similar to those explaining turning to the other three sources examined, with source identity and its nonformal attributes (e.g., proximity, reliability, and willingness to help) being most influential. Additionally, the higher one's willingness for self-exposure, the higher is their willingness to turn to the sources examined.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a period fraught with stress and crisis situations, and this is especially true for adolescents at risk (Hess & Copeland, 2001; Husky, McGuir, Flynn, Chroswski, & Olfson, 2009). Adolescents' success in going through this period is largely determined by the degree to which they use formal help resources, among them professional counseling services as well as mental-health and educational institution, and nonformal help resources such as the help seeker's parents and friends, as well as telephone hotlines and on-line counseling (Romi, 1998; Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1996; Sheffield, Fiorenza, & Sofronoff, 2004). In the present study we examined the help network provided for adolescents at risk, emphasizing the position and perception of YCW in this system. The article focuses on an examination of the factors that explain help seeking from Youth care workers (YCWs) as compared to three other sources of help — parents, friends, and teachers.

1.1. The source of help and its effect on adolescents' willingness to seek help

When seeking help, adolescents generally prefer nonformal sources (specifically natural ones) over formal ones. Parents and friends are the main natural sources (Gilat, Ezer, & Sagi, 2011; Gould, Munfakh, Lubell, Kleinmam, & Parker, 2002; Sheffield et al., 2004; Tishby et al., 2001), and turning to parents carries the least threat to self-worth (Nadler, 1991). Nonformal sources are normative, familiar, available, and can be rewarded by the adolescent (Newman, 2000; Zuckerman & Kaim, 2011).

About half of all adolescents with psychological symptoms that required professional help avoid formal sources (Husky et al., 2009; Wu, Katic, Liu, Fan, & Fuller, 2010), thus falling into *the service gap* (Stefl & Prosperi, 1985). Their reluctance to seek help is caused by difficulties in recognizing the existence and severity of a problem and its associated epidemiological symptoms (Molock et al., 2007). Society's emphasis on self-help is also a barrier to help seeking (Raviv, Sills, Raviv, & Wilanski, 2000), as are the considerable psychological cost of approaching formal sources and the difficulty in locating one.

1.2. Adolescents at risk: willingness to seek help

Adolescents are reluctant to seek help, adolescent at risk are more reluctant than others. They feel alienated from school, perceive teachers as being unfair and disinterested (Cohen-Navot, Elbogen-Frankowitz, & Reihfeld, 2001), and they cope by avoidance and escape (Hess & Copeland, 2001; Husky et al., 2009). As help seeking is related to one's perception of the source (Kaim & Romi, 2014, in press), the negative attitudes of adolescents at risk toward school would influence their willingness to seek help (henceforth WISH) from school-related sources (Kessler, 2004) and to create a meaningful relationship with their teachers (Kessler, 2004).

* Corresponding author at: School of Education, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan 52900, Israel. Tel: +972 3 5318710.
E-mail address: Shlomo.Romi@biu.ac.il (S. Romi).
URL:E-mail addresses:E-mail address: http://education.biu.ac.il/en (S. Romi).
[1] Tel.: +972 50 788 07777.

Adolescents at risk tend to have a negative, alienated relationship with their families, poor communication and high levels of conflict (Cohen-Navot et al., 2001; Hess & Copeland, 2001; Kahan-Strawczynski, Constantinov, Yoroviwz, & Efrati, 2005; Lagana, 2004). Some studies show that adolescents at risk report more support from their peers than do normative adolescents (Kahan-Strawczynski et al., 2005; Lagana, 2004); other studies found no differences (Cohen-Navot et al., 2001; Harel, Elbogen-Frankowitz, Molcho, & Haviv, 2002). It is possible that adolescent at risk "cope" with problems using social ties outside of school, whereas normative adolescent seek peer help within school (Hess & Copeland, 2001). However, adolescents at risk have a source of help that is not available to normative adolescents — the youth care worker (YCW), on whom this article will focus.

1.3. Youth care worker

Youth care workers (YCW), or educational-therapeutic workers, work in nonformal educational settings, which specialize in dealing with adolescents at risk. These settings include community work, youth organizations, youth centers, community centers, or residential schools (Resnick & Burt, 1996). YCW's work entails nonformal educational-therapeutic relations with adolescents at risk, employing a variety of methods and tools, all meant to assume total and holistic responsibility for the young person. YCWs deal with physical and emotional needs and are the liaison with schools and welfare agencies (Bar-On Cohen, 2007; Lahav & Shemesh, 2003), all the while building the young person's trust (Shemesh & Shemesh, 2010). Although the adolescent perceives this relationship as nonformal, the YCW is a highly trained professional (Grupper & Romi, 2011) who is attentive to the young person's feeling and values and uses them to enhance that person's cognitive functioning (Lang, 1998; Lang, Katz, & Menegen, 1998) and social integration (Grupper & Romi, 2011).

1.4. Help-seeker's characteristics as related to help seeking

The attributes of the source of help influence help seeking, as do the help-seeker characteristics and background.

1.4.1. Gender
Findings are consistent that, at all ages, girls seek help more than boys (Mahalik, Good, & Englar-Carlson, 2003; Tishby et al., 2001; Zuckerman & Kaim, 2011). Their rates of turning to parents, relatives, friends, and professionals are higher than boys', but similar in online help seeking (Gilat, Sagi, Reuveni, Ezer, & Bar-Hamburger, 2011; Gould et al., 2002).

1.4.2. Age
Younger adolescents tend to seek help from their parents; older ones turn to their friends (Gilat, Ezer, & Sagi, 2011; Tishby et al., 2001) or try to work out their problems on their own (Ciarrochi, Wilson, Deane, & Rickwood, 2003). Later in adolescence they turn more to professionals (Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1996).

1.4.3. Religiosity
The social and familial networks of the religious community help coping with problems (Levin, 2006), as do their worldview and belief system (Ellison, 1991). Some studies (George, Larson, Koenig, & Mcculough, 2000; Loewenthal, Cinnirella, Evdoka, & Murphy, 2001) revealed that religious people have a greater tendency to seek help from nonformal sources and describe satisfaction with the help received. However, Zuckerman and Kaim (2011) found no significant differences between religious and secular adolescents' WISH from nonformal sources. Religious adolescents, more than their secular counterparts, tend to seek help from formal sources, perhaps because their social and communal cohesion helps deal with dilemmas and problems,

and can refer adolescents to formal sources outside the community (Loewenthal et al., 2001; Oliver, Reed, Katz, & Haugh, 1999).

1.4.4. Socioeconomic group
More adolescents in the high socioeconomic groups situation than those in the low one seek help and especially formal, professional help (Ben-Ari, 2004; Raviv et al., 2000; Tatar & Milgram, 2001), most likely because the latter are unaware of the various formal sources and their function (Owens et al., 2002) and lack financial means (Nadler, 1991). However, findings regarding seeking help from nonformal sources are not conclusive — some studies find no relationship between socioeconomic status and turning to nonformal sources (Tatar & Milgram, 2001; Tishby et al., 2001) while others have found that in the high socioeconomic group have a greater tendency to seek help from nonformal sources (Kaim & Romi, in press; Moskowitz, 2006).

1.4.5. Attachment style
Individuals whose attachment style is secure believe that people are accessible and available when they are needed, while those whose attachment style is not secure (anxious or avoidant) are skeptical about the help they can receive from their surroundings in times of distress. Research, revealing that those whose attachment style is secure tend to seek help in times of distress, has confirmed this claim (Moran, 2007), and these individuals reported that help was available (Florian, Mikulincer, & Bucholtz, 1995; Mikulincer & Florian, 1997; Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992). They also benefitted from it more than those with other styles (Florian et al., 1995).

1.4.6. Self-exposure
Research indicates a positive relationship between individuals' tendency toward self-exposure and their attitudes toward help seeking and actually receiving help (Cepeda-Benito & Short, 1998; Rickwood & Braithwaite, 1994; Tatar & Milgram, 2001). Most people perceive self-exposure of feelings or personal problems to be a risk behavior that demands courage, and that a tendency toward low self-exposure is a major barrier to seeking help from formal sources (Vogel & Wester, 2003).

The present study continues previous research (Kaim & Romi, in press) on variables that explain the willingness of adolescents at risk to seek help from parents, friends, and teachers, and compares them to normative adolescents. Here, we focused on the way adolescents at risk perceive one source of help — youth care workers (YCW), and their willingness to turn to them. This willingness was compared to willingness to turn to other sources (parents, friends, and teachers), and the personal and personality variables that explained turning to YCWs and to all other sources.

2. Method

2.1. Sample

The population study included 211 adolescents from youth care units for adolescents at risk. The participants were 14–18 years old ($M = 1.02, SD = 1.19$). Demographic details are listed in Table 1, and reveal that well over a third (39.8%) of the participants live in single-parent families. Most (72.5%) come from a medium-low socioeconomic background, just over half (52.7%) drink alcohol frequently, about a third (28.8%) have used drugs, and have a police record (35.8%).

2.2. Tools

2.2.1. Demographic questionnaire
The questionnaire referred to personal information about the participants (gender, age, socioeconomic status, parents' education, number of children in family, and level of religiosity.

Table 1
Distribution (N, %) of adolescents at risk by personal and behavioral attributes.

Attributes		N	%
Living arrangements	W/both parents	110	52.4
	W/one parent	80	38.1
	Away from home	20	9.5
Parents	Married	114	54.0
	Divorced	84	39.8
	Widowed	13	6.2
Financial conditions	Poor	58	27.5
	Average	64	30.3
	Good	89	42.2
Alcohol Consumption	Do not use	54	26.1
	Not often	44	21.2
	Often	109	52.7
Drug use	Do not use	148	71.2
	Not often	29	13.9
	Often	31	14.9
Police record	No	131	64.2
	Yes	73	35.8

2.2.2. Help-seeking questionnaire

This three-part tool was developed specifically for the present study, and is based on previous research (Romi, 1998; Sheffield et al., 2004; Tatar & Milgram, 2001). (a) WISH from four major sources: parents, friends, YCW, and teachers. Responses were rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 — *Not at all*, 6 — *Very willing*). (b) Attributes of help provider: On a 6-point Likert-type scale (1 — *Not at all*, 6 — *Very willing*), participants were asked to rate the degree to which five attributes – proximity, willingness to help, reliability, expertise, and professional responsibility – would encourage them to seek help. The first four were defined as nonformal, the last two as formal, a distinction consistent with previous studies (Tatar & Milgram, 2001; Zuckerman & Kaim, 2011) and with the opinion of three experts consulted. (c) Perception of the problem's attributes: This part examined the severity of the problem and the normativity of seeking help for such a problem. Using a 6-point Likert-type scale, participants were asked to rate the severity of the problem (1 — *Not at all*, 6 — *Very* severe) and the degree to which they think their peers, faced with a similar problem, would seek help (0 — *Not likely at all*, 5 — *Very likely*). Higher scores indicate a higher perception of normativity.

2.2.3. Attachment style questionnaire

(Kaduri, 2005, based on ECR – Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). The 16-item questionnaire referred to the adolescents' feelings in close relationships, using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 — *Not at all*, 7 — *Very much*). The eight odd items examined avoidance, and the eight even ones — anxiety. The questionnaire has high structural validity, high predictability, and high discriminate validity (Crowell, Fraley, & Shaver, 1999). In the present study the questionnaire was found to have medium internal reliability ($\alpha = .72$) for avoidance and good internal reliability ($\alpha = .81$), for anxiety. A higher score represents higher avoidance or anxiety.

2.2.4. Self-exposure questionnaire

(Shulman, Laursen, Kalman, & Karpovsky, 1997). This 24-item tool addresses adolescents' degree of exposure to family, social ties, and body image (8 items for each). Using a 4-point Likert-type scale, participants were asked to rate the degree to which they share with parents, friends, and teachers (1 — *Not really*; 4 — *Usually share*). A high degree of inclusion represents high self-exposure and vice versa. In the present study the results for exposure were $\alpha = .95$ for exposure to family, $\alpha = .95$ for friends, and $\alpha = .97$. The questionnaire yielded three measures (one for each source), and the scoring was based on the average assessments for the various items, so that the range in 1–4.

2.3. Procedure

The researchers approached 20 heads of youth care units; 13 agreed to participate in the study. Participating adolescents received their questionnaires in the units, individually or in small groups, and completed them and returned them immediately. Staff members read out the questions to participants who have difficulties reading. Such reading was done privately to encourage objective exposure. The average time for filling in a questionnaire was 40 minutes.

The response rate was high — of the 351 questionnaires distributed, 274 (78%) were returned fully answered, and 63 had to be eliminated because the participants were younger or older than the age range determined for the study (14–18 years). The results are based on the 211 questionnaire filled in by adolescents at risk.

3. Results

3.1. Differences in willingness to seek help

We conducted a one-way ANOVA with repeat measure to examine the differences in the willingness of adolescents at risk to seek help from youth care workers or other sources (parents, friends, and teachers). The results indicated a significant difference between the various sources — $F_{3.630} = 48.45$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .19$.

Of all sources, adolescents were most willing to seek help from friends ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 4.44$), followed by parents ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 4.54$), youth care worker ($M = 3.17$, $SD = 4.54$), and last – and far behind – teachers ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 4.54$). A Newman Keuls pair comparison revealed a significant difference between WISH from a YCW and from friends and teachers, but not between WISH from a YCW and parents. In other words, the willingness of adolescents at risk to receive help from a YCW is more comparable to their willingness to turn to parents than to turn to friends or teachers.

3.2. Relationships between variables

To examine the relationships between the independent variables (attachment style, self-exposure, formal and nonformal attributes of the source, and attributes of perception of the problem) and WISH, we began by calculating Pearson correlations (Table 2).

As seen in Table 2, a negative correlation was found between the anxiety measure of adolescents at risk and their WISH from friends. In addition, significant positive correlations were found between the measures of self-exposure and each of the four sources of help and adolescents' WISH from them, so that the higher the willingness to expose oneself to a given source, the higher the WISH from it. It is clear that the ties with teachers are lower than those with the other three sources, but all are statistically significant.

Additionally, significant positive correlations were found between the nonformal and formal attributes of each of the four sources and the WISH from them. The correlations between the nonformal attributes for help seeking are higher for parents, friends, and YCWs than for the formal ones. However, in the case of teachers, no difference was found in the strength of the nonformal attributes of WISH and the

Table 2
Relationships between personality variables, attributes of the help-giving source and the problem, and willingness to seek help.

	Willingness to seek help			
	Parents	Friends	Teacher	YCW
Self-exposure	.38***	.34***	.23***	.33***
Avoidant	−.11	−.32***	−.09	−.13
Nonformal attributes	.59***	.64***	.55***	.64***
Formal attributes	.39***	.40***	.51***	.54***

*** $p < .001$

formal ones. At the same time, it should be noted that Fisher's Z tests yielded no significant differences between the correlations of the non-formal and formal attributes.

For YCWs only a positive correlation was found between the severity of the problem and the willingness of adolescents at risk to seek help from YCWs ($r = .21$, $p < .05$). The higher the adolescent's perception of the severity, the more he or she is willing to turn to a YCW.

In addition, Pearson correlations were calculated for age, religiosity, parents' education, economic situation, and number of children in the family. Age yielded a low but significant positive correlation only for WISH from friends ($r = .15$, $p < .05$), religiosity was found to have a positive correlation only for WISH from teachers ($r = .18$, $p < .01$), and parents' education was positively correlated only with WISH from parents ($r = .21$, $p < .01$). In addition, a significant negative correlation was found between economic situation and adolescents' WISH from a YCW only, so that a better economic situation means less WISH from the YCW ($r = .23$, $p < .001$). Finally, negative correlations were also found between number of siblings and willingness to turn to parents and friends, with a larger number of children being correlated to less willingness to turn to parents ($r = .26$, $p < .001$) or friends ($r = .27$, $p < .001$). A one-way MANOVA conducted to examine gender difference yielded no significant differences between boys' and girls' WISH.

3.3. Regression analyses to explain the variance of willingness to seek help

Regression analyses were conducted to examine the contribution of each variable to the variance for turning to sources of help. The dependent variables were the measures of seeking help (from parents, friends, teachers, and YCW); predictors were entered in five steps: (1) Personal characteristics (economic situation, number of siblings, and religiosity): These characteristics were found to be related to at least one of these help sources. Age and parents' education were found to have low yet significant correlations in the help-seeking measures; however, a primary regression analysis revealed that they do not significantly contribute to the explained variance, and were therefore removed from the regression analysis. (2) Attachment style (anxious), which was found to be related to at least one source of help. (3) Self-exposure. (4) Formal and nonformal attributes of the source of help. Several variables — gender, and attributes of perception of the problem were not entered as they were not found to be significantly related to the help-seeking measure. It should be noted that measures of willingness to be exposed and attributes of the source of help which has been entered into the regression were consistent with the source examined. (5) The interactions of personal characteristics with the personality variables and attributes of sources of help were entered in the fifth step, enabling us to examine whether the contribution of the various predictors to explain the variance of WISH depends on these characteristics. The regression analyses revealed that 46% of WISH from a YCW, 45% of WISH from friends, 44% from parents, and 36% of WISH from teachers can be explained. Table 3 presents the hierarchical regression coefficients to explain the variance of WISH from the various sources.

Only four steps are listed in Table 3, as regression analyses did no show a significant contribution of any of the interactions examined. As seen in Table 3, Step 1, which addressed personality characteristics, revealed a significant contribution of economic situation only for variance of WISH from a YCW — the better the participants' economic situation, the less likely they are to turn to a YCW. Number of siblings was a significant contributor to WISH from parents and friends, with a larger number of siblings related to lower tendency to turn to parents and friends. Level of religiosity is related only to WISH from teachers, and a higher level of religiosity is related to greater WISH from teachers.

In Step 2, we added attachment measures (avoidance and anxiety) to the regression analysis. Avoidance contributed only to the variance in WISH from friends — the more avoidant the participants, the less willing they are to turn to friends.

The contribution of self-exposure to the variance of WISH was examined in Step 3. Self-exposure had a similar contribution (7%–11%) to all four measures of WISH, so that higher self-exposure indicated higher willingness to turn to each of the four sources.

The formal and nonformal attributes were entered in Step 4. Here, the nonformal attributes (proximity, willingness to help, and reliability) were prominent contributors to all four measures of WISH. The more participants perceive the source of help as having more nonformal attributes, the more willing they are to turn to it. The formal attributes (expertise and professional responsibility) contributed only to WISH from teachers, so that the more teachers are perceived as having formal attributes, the greater their willingness to turn to them.

It is noteworthy that entering the formal and nonformal attributes in Step 4 yielded a decrease in self-exposure β coefficients, indicating the possibility of mediation. A Sobel analysis to examine the significant of mediation revealed that the nonformal attributes mediate between adolescents' self-exposure and their WISH from each of the four sources — parents ($Z = 3.55$, $p < .001$), friends ($Z = 3.44$, $p < .001$), teachers ($Z = 3.83$, $p < .001$), and YCW ($Z = 3.29$, $p < .001$). In other words, higher self-exposure means a greater perception of the source of help as having nonformal attributes, increasing the participants' willingness to turn to it for help.

4. Discussion

The study was aimed at examining the way adolescents at risk perceive youth care workers as help sources, and their WISH from a YCW as compared with their WISH from parents, friends, and teachers, when facing personal problems.

4.1. The place of youth care workers in settings for assisting adolescents at risk

The findings revealed that adolescents at risk are as willing to seek help from YCWs as they are from parents, but to a lesser degree than their WISH from friends and considerably more than their WISH from a teacher. The prominent position of YCWs as sources of help indicates that the relationship between adolescent and YCW is a meaningful

Table 3
Hierarchical regression coefficients explaining the variance of willingness to seek help from different sources.

Steps	Predictors	Parents		Friends		Teacher		YCW	
		β	R^2	β	R^2	β	R^2	β	R^2
I	Economic situation	.10	.09**	.06	.10**	−.06	.04	−.27***	.08**
	Number of siblings	−.22**		−.34***		−.13		.05	
	Religiosity	.12		.01		.18*		−.03	
II	Avoidant	−.09	.10**	−.25***	.16***	−.06	.05	−.13	.11**
	Anxious	.08		.06		.08		.13	
III	Self-exposure	.33***	.21***	.30***	.24***	.24**	.11*	.27***	.18***
IV	Nonformal Attributes	.49***	.44***	.51***	.45***	.38***	.36***	.57***	46***
	Formal attributes	.11		.05		.20*		.01	

$**p < .01$, $***p < .001$

nonformal therapeutic relationship (Bar-On Cohen, 2007; Lahav & Shemesh, 2003), and touches upon emotional and social aspects (Grupper & Romi, 2011). This prominent position is accompanied by the perception – which will be described below – of adolescents at risk of YCW as having more informal attributes than the other sources. Thus, for adolescents at risk, a YCW could act as a complementary source of help to the nonformal sources available, and act as a semi-formal alternative at times when they would find it difficult to turn to the nonformal sources, especially when these adolescent encounter problems that they perceive as serious.

These findings are consistent with previous studies (Cohen-Navot et al., 2001; Harel et al., 2002) which indicated that differences in social support by parents are related to adolescents' different WISH from non-formal sources. One possible explanation for these differences can be that adolescents at risk grow up in families where they experience a negative, alienated relationship with their parents, and therefore have more trouble talking to them than do adolescents who grow up in a normative home (Cohen-Navot et al., 2001; Harel et al., 2002). Because of their complex relation with their parents, adolescents at risk tend to seek help from friends as their first course of action.

Their tendency to relate to people similar to themselves drives adolescents at risk to turn to their friends, as do the difficulties they may have experienced in the familial and school system (Cohen-Navot et al., 2001; Downing-Orr, 1996). Preferring friends as a source of help could be sees as positive, as the peer group accords basic needs such as intimacy, closeness, and belonging (Newman, 2000; Zuckerman & Kaim, 2011) and is a place where they have a listening ear. However, turning in this direction may also increase their risk, as their peers are a role model and intensity exiting behavioral tendencies (Efrati-Munitz, 2003).

Even when friends are the first source of help seeking, parents are still a meaningful source for adolescents at risk, especially for adolescents at risk from families of high socioeconomic situation. The low placement of teachers as a source of help reflects the alienation adolescents at risk feel toward school (Cohen-Navot et al., 2001; Hess & Copeland, 2001; Husky et al., 2009).

The study also reveals differences within adolescents at risk regarding their perception of the attributes of the various sources, with emphasis in the nonformal attributes of parents, friends, and YCWs, and on teachers' formal and nonformal attributes. Thus, in choosing their sources, these adolescents are aware of the special attributes of each and choose accordingly.

4.2. Predictors of help seeking from youth care workers as compared to other sources

The study also aimed to examine what makes adolescents at risk turn to the YCW and how these reasons compare to reasons for choosing other sources of help. The nonformal attributes are major contributors for explaining the variance in seeking the help of a YCW, as they are for turning to other sources. In the literature, these attributes – among them honesty, warmth, allowing choice, being attentive, and giving the adolescents responsibility for their personal plan – have been identified as enhancing successful therapy with adolescents (Soroka, 2008). It is possible that adolescents at risk perceive parents and friends as overall sources of help, whereas the YCW is an nonformal source yet has a specific role.

The nonformal attributes of the YCWs' work (Lahav & Shemesh, 2003; Shemesh & Shemesh, 2010), alongside their professional training for working with adolescents at risk (Grupper & Romi, 2011), enable them to support adolescents in youth care settings when help from nonformal sources is lacking or insufficient. YCWs provide balance between educational services and therapeutic interventions, thus preventing or lessening distress and risk behaviors (Shemesh & Shemesh, 2010). These benefits make YCWs a complementary addition to parents and

friends, and when turning to these two nonformal sources is difficult — present an available alternative.

Another explanation for the variance came forth when personality variables were added. Self-exposure was found to have a relatively high contribution for all four sources, with a higher degree of willingness to expose oneself being related to a greater WISH, a finding consistent with previous studies (Cepeda-Benito & Short, 1998; Tatar & Milgram, 2001). This finding related to another part of the present study, which reveals that the nonformal attributes of the source mediate between adolescents' at risk self-exposure and their WISH from all sources — the higher their degree of self-exposure, the more they perceive the source as nonformal and create a trusting relationship with it, increasing their willingness to use it. Thus, adolescents' higher willingness to expose themselves to a source increases their willingness to use it. In doing so, they will emphasize its nonformal and formal attributes as factors contributing to their WISH.

Another personality variable examined was attachment style. Here we found that avoidance contributes to explain WISH from friends, but anxiety has no effect. Less avoidant adolescents tend to turn to friends to a greater degree. These findings contradict those of previous studies that found attachment style to be a major contributor to help seeking (Florian et al., 1995; Mikulincer & Florian, 1997; Moran, 2007). However, attachment style only explained the WISH from friends, perhaps because attachment in the foundation for relationships formed during adolescence. Adolescents at risk find support in people like themselves who bond over their common destiny (Efrati-Munitz, 2003), so that attachment style would be mostly related to turning to friends.

Variance in WISH was related to participants' background. Economic situation was a prominent contributor to turning to a YCW, number of siblings to seeking help from parents and friends, and level of religiosity — to teachers.

The lower the economic situation, the higher the chances that an adolescent would seek help form YCWs. It is possible that adolescents from more established families make use of formal sources (Ben-Ari, 2004; Raviv et al., 2000; Tatar & Milgram, 2001). Fewer siblings are related to WISH from parents and friends. One explanation could be that adolescents with many siblings feel they can seek help from a sibling and do not have the need to turn to their parents or to people who are not in their family. However, previous studies (Ben-Ari, 2004; Raviv et al., 2000; Tatar & Milgram, 2001) revealed that the socioeconomic situation of adolescents at risk affected their WISH from teachers, a finding that contradicts those of the present study, perhaps because adolescents at risk feel alienated from school and everything around it (Osterman, 2000). The present study examined personal problems that are not directly related to school, so that the teacher's influence is limited (Gilat, Ezer, & Sagi, 2011; Newman, 2000), and therefore students showed very little willingness to turn to teachers.

At the same time, the present study revealed that a higher level of religiosity is related to a greater tendency to seek help from teachers, which is consistent with previous findings (Loewenthal et al., 2001; Oliver et al., 1999), possibly indicating that – as with normative adolescents – religious adolescents at risk turn to teachers more than do non-religious ones. In religious society teachers play an important and influential role, and religious adolescents perceive them as more valuable and a more important source of help than their non-religious counterparts (Bar-Lev & Kedem, 1997; Gripple, Izkowitz, Fishman, & Greenstein, 1997). However, the present study yielded no differences between religious and non-religious participants in seeking help from parents and friends, in contrast to other studies (George et al., 2000; Loewenthal et al., 2001) which revealed that religious people, more than non-religious ones, turn to nonformal sources of help. The difference could be that some of the adolescents at risk have a more complex and problematic relationship with their parents then normative adolescents, and they are forced to seek peer support.

Our findings revealed that the severity of the problem is a predictor for turning only to the YCW, and the higher the perception of severity, the greater the tendency to approach the YCW, a finding revealed in other studies as well (Gilat, Ezer, & Sagi, 2011; Raviv et al., 2000; Tishby et al., 2001). It is possible that adolescents at risk view the YCW as a special address for problems they consider very serious, and they turn to parents, and especially to friends, for less serious ones. Indeed, YCWs are defined as "educational-therapeutic personnel," a definition which emphasizes their interdisciplinary role (Grupper & Romi, 2011) which enables them to offer a multifaceted intervention (Lahav & Shemesh, 2003).

The study examined only those formal and nonformal sources that adolescents at risk encounter directly. As we found self-exposure to be a major predictor of help seeking, future studies should examine the willingness of this group to seek help over the internet and other anonymous sources where exposure is minimal. This could open the way to understanding whether anonymous sources could become an alternative to seeking personal help for adolescents at risk with low self-exposure.

In addition, in this study we examined which attributes encourage adolescents at risk to seek help. Future research should focus on the obstacles to help seeking, bearing in mind their turning to YCWs, and find ways to remove these obstacles.

To conclude, this study was an examination of the help system of adolescents at risk, especially the position of YCWs in this system. The results indicated that, among external sources, those outside of the adolescents' social network, adolescents at risk prefer YCWs largely because of their nonformal attributes. Furthermore, the factors that explain these adolescents' turning to YCW are similar to those explaining their turning to the other three sources examined in this study. For all four, the contribution of the nonformal attributes of the sources and the self-exposure involved explain the variance in WISH.

Because, in many cases, adolescents at risk are detached from important support system such as family and school, their help-seeking abilities are dangerously narrowed. Furthermore, their friends often share their background and developmental attributes, and thus, possibly, their perspective on the problem. The availability of youth care workers, their intermediate position between the formal and nonformal, the educational and the therapeutic, and their close attention to the needs of the adolescents in their care provide a positive source of help for adolescents at risk.

References

Bar-Lev, M., & Kedem, P. (1997). The educational, psychological, and religious dimension of disadvantaged and advantaged students in religious residential institutions. In M. Bar-Lev, & M. Dagan (Eds.), State-religious residential education in Israel (pp. 93–160). Jerusalem: Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports (Hebrew).

Bar-On Cohen, E. (2007). Professional educators in non-formal education. In S. Romi, & M. Schmida (Eds.), Jerusalem: Magnes (Hebrew).

Ben-Ari, R. (2004). Coping with the Jewish–Arab conflict: A comparison among three models. Journal of Social Issues, 60(2), 307–322.

Brennan, K. A., Clark, C. L., & Shaver, P. R. (1998). Self-report measurement of adult attachment. In J. A. Simpson, & W. S. Rholes (Eds.), Attachment theory and close relationship (pp. 46–76). New York: Guilford Press.

Cepeda-Benito, A., & Short, P. (1998). Self-concealment, avoidance of psychological services, and perceived likelihood of seeking professional help. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 45(1), 58–64.

Ciarrochi, J., Wilson, C. J., Deane, F. P., & Rickwood, D. (2003). Emotional competence and age as predictors of willingness to seek help from formal and informal sources. Counselling Psychology Quarterly, 16, 103–120.

Cohen-Navot, M., Elbogen-Frankowitz, S., & Reihfeld, T. (2001). Adolescents' visible and invisible dropping out: Research report. Jerusalem: Joint-Brookdale Institute, the Center for Children and Adolescents, the Knesset – Research and Information Center (Hebrew).

Crowell, J. A., Fraley, R. C., & Shaver, P. R. (1999). Measurement of individual differences in adolescent and adult attachment. In J. Cassidy, & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications (pp. 434–456). New York: Guilford Press.

Downing-Orr, K. (1996). Alienation and social support. Avebury: Aldershot.

Efrati-Munitz, K. (2003). Living on the outskirts of Haredi society: The experiences of adolescent boys who left a Haredi yeshiva (Unpublished master's thesis). Jerusalem (Hebrew): Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Ellison, C. G. (1991). Religious involvement and subjective well-being. Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 32, 80–99.

Florian, V., Mikulincer, M., & Bucholtz, I. (1995). Effects of adult attachment style on the perception and search for social support. Journal of Psychology: Interdisciplinary and Applied, 129(6), 665–676.

George, L. K., Larson, D. B., Koenig, H. G., & Mccullough, M. E. (2000). Spirituality and health: What we know, what we need to know. Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 1, 102–116.

Gilat, Y., Ezer, H., & Sagi, R. (2011). Adolescents' help seeking: Attitudes toward turning to online and traditional sources. Megamot (Trends), 47, 405–414 (Hebrew).

Gilat, Y., Sagi, R., Reuveni, T., Ezer, H., & Bar-Hamburger, R. (2011). Help seeking related to psychoactive substances (drugs and alcohol): Comparison of the perceptions of students, teachers, and educational counselors. In H. Ezer, Y. Gilat, & R. Sagi (Eds.), "I feel totally on my own in this story": Distress of young people in Israel and ways of coping (pp. 111–134). Tel Aviv: MOFET (Hebrew).

Gould, M. S., Munfakh, J. L. H., Lubell, K., Kleinman, M., & Parker, S. (2002). Seeking help from the internet during adolescence. Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescence Psychiatry, 41(10), 1182–1189.

Gripple, A., Izkowitz, Z., Fishman, G., & Greenstein, M. (1997). Attitudes of adolescents in Israel: Students' satisfaction with the functioning of state settings. Minerva Center Report. Haifa: University of Haifa (Hebrew).

Grupper, E., & Romi, S. (2011). Training to become an educational-therapeutic worker in educational and social work. In H. Aharoni (Ed.), Educational-social work in Israel (pp. 312–340). Jerusalem and Rehovot, Israel: Efshar Association and Advance Publishing (Hebrew).

Harel, I., Elbogen-Frankowitz, S., Molcho, M., & Haviv, G. (2002). Youth in Israel: An international view of social welfare, health, and risk behaviors. Second research findings. Jerusalem: Joint-Brookdale Institute and Bar-Ilan University (Hebrew).

Hess, R., & Copeland, E. (2001). Students' stress, coping strategies, and school completion: A longitudinal perspective. School Psychology Quarterly, 16(4), 389–405.

Husky, M. M., McGuir, L., Flynn, L., Chroswski, C., & Olfson, M. (2009). Correlates of help-seeking behavior among at-risk adolescents. Child Psychiatry Human Development, 40, 15–24.

Kaduri, T. (2005). Examining the validity of a self-report questionnaire for attachment patterns of youth at risk: The relationship between these patterns and interpersonal narratives and adjustment (Unpublished master's thesis). Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, Israel (Hebrew).

Kahan-Strawczynski, P., Constantinov, V., Yoroviwz, L., & Efrati, R. (2005). Characteristics and needs of adolescent girls in the care of the Young Girls and Young Women Services – Ministry of Welfare. Research report. Jerusalem: Joint-Brookdale Institute, The Center for Children and Adolescents, Ashalim, The Association for Planning and Developing Services for Children and Adolescents At-risk and Their Families, Ministry of Welfare, Young Girls and Young Women Services (Hebrew).

Kaim, Z., & Romi, S. (2014). Help seeking for personal problems: The resource choices of adolescents at risk and normative adolescents, 34. (pp. 385–409). Hebrew: Hevra Urevaha (Society and Welfare).

Kaim, Z., & Romi, S. (2015). Help seeking in accordance with the Threat to Self-esteem Model: Comparing adolescents at risk with normative adolescents. Megamot (Trends) (in press, Hebrew).

Kessler, A. (2004). Students' perception of significant teachers: Effect of the quality of the relationship with the parents and feelings of alienation from school (Unpublished master's thesis). Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem (Hebrew).

Lagana, M. T. (2004). Protective factors for inner-city adolescents at risk of school dropout: Family factors and social support. Journal of Children & Schools, 26(4), 211–220.

Lahav, H., & Shemesh, A. (2003). Youth-care workers in Israel, 2003. Mifgash leavodah hinukhit-sozialit (Encounter for educational-social work), 18, 25–40 (Hebrew).

Lang, P. L. F. (1998). Conceptual and practical issues of affective education from a European perspective. In B. Smith, D. Johnson, & M. Crossley (Eds.), Learning and teaching in an international context: Research, theory and practice (pp. 15–22). Bristol, England: Centre for International Studies in Education.

Lang, P. L. F., Katz, Y., & Menegen, I. (Eds.). (1998). Affective education: A comparative perspective. London: Cassell.

Levin, A. (2006). Religious and secular adolescents and their willingness to turn to online counseling (Unpublished master's thesis). Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem (Hebrew).

Loewenthal, K. M., Cinnirella, M., Evdoka, G., & Murphy, P. (2001). Faith conquers all? Beliefs about the role of religious factors in coping with depression among different cultural-religious groups in the UK. British Journal of Medical Psychology, 74(3), 293–303.

Mahalik, J. R., Good, G. E., & Englar-Carlson, M. (2003). Masculinity scripts, presenting concerns and help-seeking: Implications for practice and training. Professional Psychology: Research & Practice, 34, 123–131.

Mikulincer, M., & Florian, V. (1997). Are emotional and instrumental supportive interactions beneficial in times of stress? The impact of attachment style. Anxiety, Stress, and Coping, 10, 109–127.

Molock, S. D., Barksdale, C., Matlin, S., Puri, R., Cammack, N., & Spann, M. (2007). Qualitative study of suicidality and help-seeking behaviors in African American Adolescents. American Journal of Community Psychology, 40, 52–63.

Moran, P. (2007). Attachment style, ethnicity and help-seeking attitudes among adolescent pupils. British Journal of Guidance and Counseling, 35(2), 205–218.

Moskowitz, R. (2006). Similarities and differences between the problems and patterns of help seeking of adolescents from distressed and non-distressed background (Unpublished master's thesis). Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem (Hebrew).

Nadler, A. (1991). Help-seeking behavior: Psychological costs and instrumental benefits. In M. S. Clark (Ed.), *Prosocial behavior: Review of personality and social psychology* (pp. 290–311). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Newman, S. R. (2000). Social influences on the development of children's adaptive help seeking: The role of parents, teachers and peers. *Developmental Review, 20*, 350–404.

Oliver, J. M., Reed, C. K. S., Katz, B. M., & Haugh, J. A. (1999). Students' self-reports of help-seeking: The impact of psychological problems, stress, and demographic variables on utilization of formal and informal support. *Social Behavior and Personality, 27*(2), 109–128.

Osterman, K. F. (2000). Students' need for belonging in the school community. *Review of Educational Research, 70*, 323–367.

Owens, P. L., Hoagwood, K., Horwitz, S. M., Leaf, P. J., Poduska, J. M., & Kellam, S. G. (2002). Barriers to children's mental health services. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescence Psychiatry, 41*(6), 731–738.

Raviv, A., Sills, R., Raviv, A., & Wilanski, P. (2000). Adolescents' help-seeking behavior: The difference between self-and other-referral. *Journal of Adolescence, 23*, 721–740.

Resnick, G., & Burt, M. R. (1996). Youth at risk: Definitions and implications service delivery. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 66*(2), 172–188.

Rickwood, D. J., & Braithwaite, V. A. (1994). Social psychological factors affecting help seeking for emotional problems. *Social Science and Medicine, 39*(4), 563–572.

Romi, S. (1998). Psychological counseling in non-formal frameworks: A new glance at the existing systems. In R. Lazovsky, & S. Feldman (Eds.), *Space and territory in educational counseling* (pp. 357–379). Kadima, Israel: Reches (Hebrew).

Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Muller, J. R. (1996). Correlates of help seeking in adolescence. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 25*(6), 705–731.

Sheffield, J., Fiorenza, E., & Sofronoff, K. (2004). Adolescents' willingness to seek psychological help: Promoting and preventing factors. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 33*(6), 495–507.

Shemesh, A., & Shemesh, R. (2010). Enhancing mental resilience in educational-therapeutic work with adolescents at risk. *Menituk Leshilov (Detachment to Inclusion), 16*, 128–143 (Hebrew).

Shulman, S. H., Laursen, B., Kalman, Z., & Karpovsky, S. (1997). Adolescent intimacy revisited. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 26*(5), 597–617.

Simpson, J. A., Rholes, W. S., & Nelligan, J. S. (1992). Support seeking and support giving within couples in an anxiety-provoking situation: The role of attachment styles. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 62*, 434–446.

Soroka, I. (2008). The power of external therapeutic factors in educational-therapeutic processes. *Menituk Leshilov (Detachment to Inclusion), 15*, 131–142 (Hebrew).

Stefl, M. E., & Prosperi, D. C. (1985). Barriers to mental health service utilization. *Community Mental Health Journal, 21*, 167–178.

Tatar, M., & Milgram, A. (2001). Adolescents' turning for help. *Hayeuz Hahinuhi (Educational Counseling), 10*, 91–115 (Hebrew).

Tishby, O., Turel, M., Gumpel, O., Pinus, U., Ben-Lavy, S., Winokour, M., et al. (2001). Help-seeking attitudes among Israeli adolescents. *Adolescence, 36*(142), 249–264.

Vogel, D. L., & Wester, S. R. (2003). To Seek or not to seek help: The risks of self-disclosure. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 50*(3), 351–361.

Wu, P., Katic, B. J., Liu, X., Fan, B., & Fuller, C. (2010). Mental health service use among suicidal adolescents: Findings from a U.S. national community survey. *Journal of Psychiatric services, 61*(1), 17–24.

Zuckerman, D., & Kaim, Z. (2011). Adolescents' attitudes toward seeking psychological help from formal and informal sources. *Hevra Urevaha (Society and Welfare), 31*, 411–436 (Hebrew).