

- **Name of the study:** Evaluation findings of the verbal violence workshop project
- **Year:** 2025
- **Type of research:** Assessment
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- **Authors:** 'Michlol' unit, Shalem Foundation.
- **Research Authority:** Shalem Foundation.

### **Abstract**

**This study was carried out by 'Michlol'- the Assessment and Measurement Unit of the Shalem Fund**

Verbal violence directed at individuals with intellectual disabilities is a phenomenon that is not widely discussed. However, unfortunately, individuals with intellectual disabilities encounter verbal violence in various situations in their daily lives. It is crucial to address this issue, educate them and their caregivers (parents, families, and professionals) on how to recognize incidents of verbal violence and how to respond to them.

The current initiative aims to expose the phenomenon of verbal violence experienced by individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and to provide them with effective coping strategies. To achieve this, a practical training kit was developed, including simulation videos, a presentation, and a professional guide in both Hebrew and Arabic. Additionally, four experiential workshops were conducted for individuals with IDD in various settings by the framework staff. The workshops aimed to raise awareness among service recipients and staff about verbal violence, provide opportunities for self-expression and reflection, encourage dialogue that amplifies the voices and needs of the service recipients, introduce coping strategies, and more.

### **Evaluation Objectives**

1. To assess the impact of the workshops on service recipients and staff, particularly in terms of knowledge acquisition, awareness-raising, fostering dialogue, exposure to coping strategies, and other relevant factors.
2. To evaluate the satisfaction levels (strengths and weaknesses) of the facilitators regarding the workshops, the written guide, the presentation, and the videos.

### **The research method**

This evaluation study employed both quantitative and qualitative research approaches to achieve its objectives. The study included five frameworks (vocational training centers), with the participation of nine workshop facilitators and 32 service recipients with mild to mild-moderate

intellectual disabilities, who completed questionnaires with the assistance of a reference person. One of the frameworks included Arabic speakers. The workshops took place between January and April 2024.

A total of 86% of the service recipients participated in all four workshops facilitated within the framework. Data collection was carried out using three tools developed by the 'Michlol' evaluation unit:

1. A **pre-workshop questionnaire** for facilitators.
2. A **post-workshop questionnaire** for service recipients.
3. An **interview guide** for facilitators at the end of the workshops.

Data analysis was conducted based on the nature of the information collected. Quantitative data were analyzed using distribution presentations and descriptive statistical measures, while qualitative data were analyzed through categorical content analysis to identify key themes.

## **main findings**

### **Service Recipients' Perspective on the Initiative**

Most participants stated that they voluntarily chose to participate in the workshops out of a desire to acquire coping skills, interest, curiosity about verbal violence, and enjoyment of the group activity.

When assessing their knowledge and awareness of the term "verbal violence," responses indicated a broad understanding that included the use of offensive words, insults, shouting, and distinguishing between verbal and physical violence. The majority of participants reported that they learned how to conduct respectful conversations, handle complex situations, and deepen their understanding of the concept.

Regarding coping strategies for verbal violence, most respondents mentioned turning to an authority figure, distancing themselves from the situation, or responding calmly and non-violently. Many emphasized the importance of seeking help from their instructors, who were perceived as a source of tools, solutions, and emotional support.

Most participants reported that they greatly enjoyed the workshops, with the videos and group discussions being their favorite components. However, some found it difficult to watch the violent content presented. Additionally, more than half of the participants shared their experiences from the workshops with their friends or family members.

### **Workshop Facilitators' Perspective on the Initiative**

Facilitators stated that the workshops expanded their understanding of verbal violence, increased their awareness of the impact of language and listening, and heightened their sensitivity and empathy towards service recipients. Furthermore, they reported acquiring optimal tools for dealing with verbal violence incidents and improving their professional communication patterns.

The facilitators were impressed by the participants' openness and high level of engagement and noted improvements in their ability to express themselves and their willingness to share personal stories. However, challenges were identified, including managing group dynamics, engaging participants with lower verbal abilities, and addressing cultural diversity among the groups.

All facilitators agreed that four sessions were insufficient for fully embedding the tools learned and recommended expanding the initiative, adding supplementary materials for daily practice, and tailoring content to different cognitive levels.

#### **Facilitators' Satisfaction with the Educational Package**

Facilitators expressed high satisfaction with the presentation, videos, and guide. The presentation effectively illustrated the topics; however, some facilitators noted the need to simplify the material, elaborate on key points, and incorporate more real-life examples. They suggested adding symbols to the presentation, especially for non-readers.

Another challenge was cultural adaptation. Most facilitators were highly satisfied with the videos, stating that they were clear, conveyed the messages effectively, and fostered meaningful discussions within the groups. However, some found the videos too complex and had to pause them for content mediation, accessibility adjustments, and ongoing questioning during the video rather than at the end.

The written guide was found to be useful, though some facilitators indicated that further adaptations were needed for different target groups.

#### **Summary, Insights, and Recommendations**

The evaluation findings indicate the success of the verbal violence prevention pilot workshops in five frameworks, including both ultra-Orthodox and Arab communities. However, for the Arab community, additional cultural adaptations—particularly regarding language and accessibility—were deemed necessary.

The workshops created a safe learning space, deepened participants' understanding of verbal violence, its consequences, and coping strategies, and influenced instructors' perceptions and practices, strengthening their awareness of the impact of language and the importance of fostering sensitive and inclusive communication.

Satisfaction with the educational materials (videos, presentation, and guide) was high, though the need for additional mediation from facilitators was highlighted, as service recipients struggled to fully grasp the content without supplementary explanations.

Among the challenges noted by facilitators were conflicts between participants, emotional overload, and dealing with sensitive topics. It was recommended that professional support, such as a social worker, be incorporated into the process to provide additional assistance.

Moreover, it was found that without continued practice, regular discussions, and the integration of workshop content into the daily framework, the impact would not be sustained over time. Therefore, it was suggested to develop tailored models for different cognitive levels, expand the training resources, integrate daily practice exercises, and establish an ongoing dialogue on the topic.

Additionally, Dr. Nirit Karni-Weisel suggested leveraging the pilot findings to write an academic article to extend the project's impact and contribute to the educational and therapeutic fields.

In conclusion, the continuation and expansion of this initiative into additional frameworks are highly recommended, preserving its strengths while focusing on further necessary adaptations.

### **Keywords**

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Shalem Foundation Research | Therapists and Staff | Self-Advocacy | Social Workers | Harm and Exploitation | Community Integration.

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