



The time and community dimensions in socio-educational intervention strategies with adolescents in care during the transition to adult life

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ABSTRACT

The quality of protective action is related to the conditions in which the emancipation of adolescents in care occurs. The dimensions of timing and community are considered determinants for achieving the goals of the transition to adult life. The research aims to analyze which strategies professional teams use to adapt intervention times to individual needs and which scenarios of interaction with the community are facilitated during the emancipation itineraries. A qualitative investigation organized in three phases according to the grounded theory was designed. Two focus groups were carried out in which 11 professionals participated, 70 interviews in 22 longitudinal follow-ups for 12 months with young people in residential care, and eight interviews with already emancipated youth. The results indicate that professional teams use various strategies to try to minimize the impact of the deficits of the system, which provides insufficient accompaniment times. Institutional organizational design hinders the performance of community activities. It is concluded that the protection system needs to implement improvements that eliminate the deficits in the dimensions analyzed.

1. Introduction

Adolescents in residential care face the process of transition to adult life during a reduced period of time which is fraught with uncertainty. The conditions of access to independent living are an indicator of the quality of protective actions. Emancipation is an opportunity to overcome the situation of social vulnerability that gave rise to the administrative protection file but, at present, emancipations are uncertain and show significant support deficits (Fernández-Simo & Cid, 2018). The effectiveness of protective action is in question when young people continue to leave the protection system while presenting worse social indicators than those of their peers (Bryderup et al., 2010) in matters such as the academic area or access to the labor market (Arrollo et al., 2022; Casas et al., 2010). These adolescents' situation of exclusion in aspects such as schooling is not a consequence of the lack of personal initiative but of their circumstances of social vulnerability (Miguelena et al., 2022; Mitchell et al., 2015). Deficits in the conditions of emancipation produce life itineraries characterized by vulnerability and dependence on social services (Berzín et al., 2014). When adolescents in care become adults, they suffer especially from social and economic

crises (Serrano & Martín, 2017). In the current health alert caused by COVID-19, this group suffered worse consequences than the general population (Montserrat, García-Molsosa et al., 2021; Ruff & Linville, 2021). The deficits of the protection system have been pending challenges for decades in the design of the protective action of the administration (Miguelena et al., 2021).

In Spain, according to the Ministerio de Derechos Sociales y Agenda 2030 ([Ministry of Social Rights and Agenda 2030] 2021), a total of 49,171 administrative protection files were active in 2020. Of them, 23.8 % (11,750) were in residential care). The research was carried out in the autonomous community of Galicia where residential care accounts for 45.3 % (890) of all administrative protection measures (1,963). In the Spanish state, a total of 12,066 adolescents left residential resources. Of them, 32.5 % (3,929) left the center when reaching the age of majority. Reaching the age of 18 implies, in practice, the obligation to leave the residential resource (Fernández-Simo & Cid, 2018). The residential place must usually be vacant so it can be occupied by another minor and, although the basic conditions for access to an independent life are not met, only the option of a small extension of a few months is usually given, but the urgency of places conditions the

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possibility of prolonging the support (Fernández-Simo et al., 2021). In the Spanish welfare system, having professional accompaniment after the age of 18 years is considered a privilege that is earned with good conduct in the centers, not a right (Arnau-Sabatés et al., 2021). In the programs of transition to adult life, previous selections of the participants are usually made to give access to the resource to those adolescents who supposedly can make the most of the opportunities that are provided to them (Brisson et al., 2022). This is a widespread practice. These processes imply limitations in the access to emancipation supports for adolescents who present greater individual difficulties, such as mental health problems. These strategies mean that young people with the worst evolution in the protection system continue to be socially excluded during their adult lives. This recognizes the precarious situation prevailing in the system, which renounces giving all the possible opportunities to the adolescents who need them the most. It is known that the access of adolescents with mental health problems to transition support programs, which have specifically tailored strategies, has a positive impact on the emancipation process (Narendorf et al., 2021).

Previous research indicates the desirability of prolonging professional accompaniment to improve the conditions in which adolescents face emancipation from the protection system. The continuity of the intervention during the first years of independent life improves the effectiveness of the protective action and facilitates a social support network (Goemans et al., 2021; Scannapieco et al., 2016). Young women who leave residential resources before the age of 19 present a greater risk of continued social vulnerability, increasing the probability of experiencing pregnancies (Matta et al., 2013). The first months of independent life are a period of special vulnerability with increased risks such as the consumption of substances (Carter & Curtis, 2010). The professional teams consider it necessary to prolong the support for emancipation, but the system presents flexibility deficits when it comes to adjusting the intervention times to the needs of each itinerary (Fernández-Simo & Cid, 2018). The legal framework needs to be amended to provide support for young people in care up to the age of 23 (De-Juanas et al., 2020). The shortcomings with which adolescents emancipate translate into resistance to breaking ties with the resources. During their first stage of independent life, the young graduates from the care system continue to seek the support of adult referents whom they met when they lived in the centers (Collins et al., 2010). Young people in care consider the professionals of the residential resources as a fundamental part of the formal social support network during the first stage of emancipation (Marion et al., 2017). The possibilities of setting up other social support networks are limited by the few opportunities that adolescents in care have to coexist with the general population of their community (Fernández-Simo et al., 2021).

The above reveals a context in which regulations and bureaucratic processes do not correspond to the demands of the different actors involved in protective action. Both adolescents and professionals consider it necessary to implement improvements to overcome the present deficits. The socio-educational intervention is designed so that the people who are accompanied can manage their lives satisfactorily (Úcar, 2021), but institutional conditions hinder the application of professional strategies (Lindahl & Bruhn, 2017). Research on the transition to adult life has yet to analyze which strategies the professionals use to overcome institutional barriers and give an adequate response to the adolescents' needs. It is appropriate to study the vital experiences of the exit from the protection services and their relationship dynamics with the community in which they are emancipated (Palmer et al., 2021). In this study, we propose to investigate the scenarios and intervention times that the teams design to address the transition to adult life. Therefore, the objectives of the research are: 1) to analyze which strategies the professional teams use to adapt intervention times—conditioned by the administrative processes—to the needs of adolescents' personal itineraries; 2) to study the relationship scenarios with the community that are facilitated during the socio-educational intervention for emancipation.

2. Methodology

2.1. Study design and data analysis

The research, of a qualitative nature, was designed in three phases according to the postulates of the grounded theory. This methodological proposal is mainly indicated for the analysis of problems in the specific context where they occur, with the participation of the involved actors (Cohen & Manion, 1994). It has been used in previous works to study the reality of adolescence with an administrative protection measure in Galicia (Fernández-Simo et al., 2021; Melendro et al., 2016). The first phase was carried out through two discussion groups in which professionals working in residential protection centers participated (Table 1). The focus groups were held in June and July 2018. In this phase, the strategies used by intervention teams to overcome deficits and institutional barriers were analyzed. The second phase of the work was carried out through longitudinal follow-ups with young people who had reached the age of 18 in the protection system. Monitoring was carried out as of reaching the age of majority and during 12 months (Table 2). The follow-ups began in October 2018 and lasted until May 2021. Between March and September 2020, they were interrupted due to the state of alarm derived from the COVID-19 health alert. The follow-ups that began in December 2019 and were not completed in March 2020 were resumed in September 2020, based on the previously obtained information. The months during which they were interrupted were not computed. A follow-up interview was conducted every trimester (four in each case). Two follow-ups started in January and February 2020, and began again in September. In these two cases, the research team decided to start the investigation process from scratch. In each follow-up, there is a different reason for the time spent in a residential resource between reaching the age of majority and the time of the exit. Each itinerary presented a different evolution. In the follow-ups, we analyzed; (a) How the intervention aimed at facilitating experiences of coexistence in the community was configured; (b) How intervention times were organized in the residential resources; (c) How young people faced community life during the first moments of life outside the center. In the third phase, interviews were conducted with young people who had left the residential resources and had been emancipated for between two and five years. In this phase, we analyzed which strategies had been used with a group of emancipated youths who achieved the goals they had planned in their project of transition to adult life. These were young people who had remained in the system for at least six months since reaching the age of majority and who showed a positive attitude toward achieving personal goals. These young people would be placed in the so-called "Moving on" group (Stein, 2006).

2.2. Participants

Intentional sampling was used. Phase one involved 11 professionals, eight women and three men. Phases two and three involved 22 young people, 14 boys and eight girls (Table 2). In the selection of the sample of members of the intervention teams, they had to have at least 12 months of work experience. Thus, they should have a deep knowledge of the residential regime of the protection system. The average work experience was 58.4 months. The mean age was 32.1 years. Longitudinal follow-ups were carried out with young people who continued in residential care after reaching the age of majority. The follow-ups were carried out with 14 young people. The average total stay in residential care of the itineraries of the follow-up sample was 41.5 months. The follow-up of each case was carried out for 12 months. Concerning timing, 80.9 % of the follow-ups were carried out with young people in residential regime, whereas 19.1 % of the follow-ups corresponded to the time in which the participants were emancipated from the residential resource. Eight young people participated in the interviews of Phase three. The average age of the interviewed participants was 22.2 years. The average time in which the Phase three sample was in residential care

Table 1
Focus Group with professionals from residential resources.

PHASES	CODE	AGE	GENDER	Experience		Timing		
				Work in months		Month	Year	
1	Focus Group 1	1FGI1	32	Female	26		06	2018
		1FGI2	26	Female	15			
		1FGI3	24	Male	13			
		1FGI4	35	Female	34			
		1FGI5	40	Male	79			
		1FGI6	27	Female	37			
	Focus Group 2	2FGI1	28	Male	29		07	2018
		2FGI2	41	Female	162			
		2FGI3	39	Female	134			
		2FGI4	29	Female	41			
		2FGI5	32	Female	73			

Note: FGI = Focus group interview.

Table 2
Participants in the longitudinal follow-ups and interviews.

Phases	Code	Age	Gender	Months residing in the system	Temporal Duration			
					Month	Year	Month	Year
2	LF1	18	Female	23	10	2018	10	2019
	LF2	18	Male	19	11	2018	11	2019
	LF3	18	Male	63	12	2018	12	2019
	LF4	18	Male	45	12	2018	12	2019
	LF5	18	Male	21	01	2019	01	2020
	LF6	18	Female	33	02	2019	02	2020
	LF7	18	Male	84	03	2019	03	2020
	LF8	18	Male	36	03	2019	03	2020
	LF9	18	Male	18	10	2019	01	2021
	LF10	18	Male	39	12	2019	05	2021
	LF11	18	Male	47	01	2020	09	2021
	LF12	18	Male	83	02	2020	09	2021
	LF13	18	Female	52	09	2020	09	2021
	LF14	18	Female	19	09	2020	09	2021
3	I	1	Female	33	10	2021		
	I2	22	Male	39	10	2021		
	I3	24	Male	91	10	2021		
	I4	21	Female	14	10	2021		
	I5	23	Female	21	10	2021		
	I6	22	Male	25	10	2021		
	I7	21	Male	42	11	2021		
	I8	24	Female	38	11	2021		

Note: LF = Longitudinal follow-ups, I = Interviews.

during their protection itinerary was 37.8 months.

3. Data collection procedures

The first author is working in the protection system, performing socio-educational accompaniment. This situation minimized the impact of the presence of the research figure in a qualitative study, facilitating access to information and deep knowledge of the reality to be studied, highlighting the improvement of intervention processes with this collective as the team's primary intention. There was no other interest that could affect data treatment (Tong et al., 2007). All participants were informed of the purpose of the research, as well as the process of data collection and analysis. All participants signed informed consent. Discussion groups were held in an appropriate place. Before the start of the group, a snack was offered during which the participants were introduced. The first focus group lasted 78 min and the second one lasted 86 min. The information was recorded on a tape recorder. The data were analyzed and categorized. The categories were verified by two specialists foreign to the research team. The results of the focus groups provided the dimensions for the analysis of the follow-ups. The follow-ups began when the young people reached the age of majority. When the follow-up ended, a final interview was held to present the conclusions resulting from the information obtained with each youth. This was to

allow the participants to correct the data referring to their itinerary. During Phase 2, a total of 70 interviews were conducted. The categories resulting from Phases 1 and 2 were the basis for the preparation of the interviews. All interviews were recorded and the information was analyzed with the aid of two specialists in socio-educational intervention who were foreign to the research team. The study was endorsed by the ethical committee (anonymized) and approved with the code (anonymized).

4. Results

The professionals combine strategies to prolong the continuity of the intervention during the itineraries, making the adolescents aware of the foreseeable limitation of the support times. "You get nervous when they tell you that you have to get by without help in a few months. You conceal this and pretend you're not nervous, but the tension does affect you" (I3), stated one participant. "We usually do reflective tutorials throughout the intervention so that they will assume that their reality is different from that of other young people who do have family support, and that they understand that they will have to manage alone in a very short time. They find it hard to believe that we will not be there" (2FG4), said a professional. "... (the name of a social educator) is telling me that probably in six months, I will have to leave the flat and that I have to

look for a solution now” (LF14), said one young woman. The awareness of the scarce time of support implies the need to work on self-sufficiency for the assumption of adult life. “I’m looking at possible rents and the expenses of electricity, water, and food to see how to organize the monthly money and be able to live alone” (LF2), said a young man. “They try to prepare you for life, but when you start living alone, you realize that the activities of the center help you to know basic things, but that you would need someone to ask how to solve the problems that emerge that you do not know how to face” (I7), said one participant. “I remember that every week, we imagined what life was going to be like when we left the center. We did group activities. When you are alone, some things you learned are worthwhile, but with other problems, you have to find out how to solve them” (I6), said a young man. Professionals acknowledge time deficits for individualized intervention that would allow these activities to be carried out in optimal conditions. “It would be ideal to be able to accompany every-one to shop at the supermarket and do other daily life activities. If this is not done, it is due to lack of time” (FGI5), said a professional.

The social intervention teams designed strategies to minimize the negative impact of the barriers of the system on the needs of each case. The administrative processes conditioned the intervention times. The professionals tried to justify the need for greater continuity of socio-educational accompaniment to prolong the duration of the intervention (Table 3). “In the observations of the diagnostic section of the socio-educational project, we always try to emphasize that young people need

to continue with the intervention. This is how those in charge of the administration know that, if they decide to reduce the times, it is under their responsibility, but it should be made clear that the youth need more time than they are being given” (1FGI3), said one professional. “I remember that my educator always told me that I would have to manage alone much sooner than I thought and that she would do her best to get me more extensions in the center, but the places were needed and I had to leave earlier than planned” (I8), said a young man. “I don’t know if I will be able to stay on longer, although I need it. The people in the center are going to have a meeting with the youth to see if I can stay for a few months” (LF9), said a participant during a follow-up.

The temporality of the intervention conditions the organization of the training and/or work goals. “It is difficult for the youth to adjust their predictions of joining the labor market to their personal situation. They want to reproduce the dynamics they see in the youth who live with their families. You have to show them that their situation is different and that they have to assume it” (1FGI4), said a social educator. “I want to study a middle cycle, but I don’t know if I can. I have to start working. In a short time, I will be out of the center, and I have to earn a living” (LF8), said a young man. Direct intervention times are conditioned by the human resource deficits to meet the needs of all residents. “We must recognize that we are addressing the urgent aspects. The everyday aspects are left for whenever we can address them, and we cannot always attend to everything that the youths need” (1FGI2), stated a professional. “When attending to eight youths all by yourself, you do not have time to talk to each one about what is affecting them. Sometimes you attend more to the one who attracts more attention, and another one goes unnoticed” (1GFI6), said an educator. The scarcity of time for individualized accompaniment causes the professional teams to opt for strategies such as small groups. “Starting in the gym meant waiting for the educator to have time or for others to come from the house, so two or three of us went together” (I5), affirmed one participant. “I need to buy clothes. I am waiting for X’s (name of another resident) classes to finish so we can go together because Y (names an educator) cannot go now, but when the course ends, he will take us” (LF3), said a young woman. The difficulties of the professional teams to carry out individualized accompaniments implied deficits in participation in community activities (Table 4). The results indicated that the professionals used various strategies in the face of the system’s difficulties to facilitate learning spaces in community contexts. Cases were detected in which an initial accompaniment to the community activity was carried out, but the follow-up was either not performed or was performed with difficulty. “There are many cases in which you can go to the activity on the first day so that the youth feels accompanied but later on, you cannot go all the times you should” (2FGI1), said a professional. “The educator came with me to football practice on the first day. Now I’m going to the games alone. He promised me that he would come to see me play before the end of the season” (LF14), stated a young woman. Cases were detected in which instead of individualized activity, subgroups were organized in order to facilitate the accompaniment. “Three of us from the center are going to Zumba. I wanted to go to dancing class, but they told me that it was better for us to go together to Zumba, so it was easier to take us” (LF13), reported one participant. “We know it’s important for them to do activities outside the centers. Sometimes it’s possible, other times, you have to organize groups so they can go” (2FGI5), said a professional. “I could always go to all the activities” (I2), said one young man. “I had an educator who always accompanied me to football on the weekends” (I7), said another participant. According to young people who had already exited, community activities were facilitated. There were diverse situations in the follow-ups, with a prevalence of cases in which the activities were attended thanks to the professional teams’ strategies. “Every working day, you have to do about two hours of documentation. When you have an afternoon shift, the only way for the youths to go to activities outside the center is for us to do the documentation when we finish the shift so we can accompany them frequently” (2FGI3), said an educator. “Only the youth who are

Table 3
Professional adaptability strategies during the intervention times.

		Frequencies		
		Focus Group	Longitudinal follow-ups	Interviews
Duration of accompaniment during the itinerary	Justification in the educational documents of the need to continue the intervention to reduce the pressure of rotation in the residential places	7	10	5
	Prioritization of reflective tutorials with adolescents to assess the support times available for each itinerary	8	9	7
	Priority intervention in addressing skills for daily life activities	5	11	6
	Planning of training and/or work itineraries conditioned by the protection system’s prevision of support times	8	10	7
Direct intervention times	Selective organization of individualized attention times according to the situation (prioritizing demands considered more urgent)	5	10	3
	Grouping of direct interventions with subgroups of adolescents to optimize time	5	9	2

Table 4

Scenarios of the relationship with the community facilitated during the socio-educational intervention for emancipation.

		Frequencies		
		Focus Group	Longitudinal follow-ups	Interviews
Accompaniment	Foregoing the performance of community activities due to difficulties in organizing the accompaniment	6	6	1
	Initial accompaniment to the community activity, but with deficient follow-up due to the team's volume of work and lack of resources	5	8	3
	Using subgroups punctually to perform community activities instead of individual ones (sports, leisure...)	5	8	3
Relationship Opportunities	Carrying out an accompaniment from the beginning, with follow-up of the community activity	6	3	4
	With peers	8	11	1
	Priority is given to activities with residential peers		8	6
	Activities are carried out with young people without a record in the protection system	3		
	Participation in activities with already emancipated peer referents	8	12	5
Adults	Adult Referent Programs	6	6	5
	Intergenerational Activities	3	4	3

autonomous can do things outside. For the rest, it is impossible. We do not have enough staff, and the volume of work is too large" (1FGI6), said a professional. The results suggested that there is a constant selection of possibilities of accompaniment, according to the situation of the residential resources on those days. Participants reported different strategies even in the same case. Thus, young people and professionals stated that they have undergone experiences of different community accompaniment according to the moment and circumstances. The possibilities of carrying out activities in the community, with professional supervision, were conditioned by the teams' ability to overcome the obstacles due to the precariousness of the intervention at that time.

The diversity of situations also affected access to opportunities to interact with other adolescents without a protection record and with adult referents. Cases were detected in which the teams admitted that, habitually, the activities were exclusively for young residents in the center. "The activities are performed with the youth who live in the center. It is difficult for the activities to be open to other young people, and it is also difficult to organize things so the youth will attend activities in institutions outside the system" (1FGI4), argued a professional. In other centers, activities were carried out with young people outside the institution. These activities were punctual. "Sometimes, I went to a building where we played games with boys from the neighborhood" (I4), said one girl. "We tried to do things with associations outside the system, from the city, but these dynamics are not consolidated. They are done rather at specific times of the year" (1FGI6), said a professional. Activities in the centers attended by emancipated young people were frequent. "This week, X (names a young man) came, who lived in the flat years ago, and he told us what things were like when he went to live alone" (LF9), said one participant. "Now they organize meals and those of us girls who are already independent come and we tell them how they can plan better" (I1), stated a young woman. Cases were detected in which contacts were facilitated with adults who were part of a referent program. "Yesterday I went to see a movie with X (name of adult referent), whom I have been meeting for a few months" (LF6), said a girl. There were few intergenerational activities. "We try to do activities with older people whenever we can. We know it's not usual, but it contributes a lot to the youths" (1FGI6), said a professional.

5. Discussion

The intervention timing designed in the bureaucratic processes does not correspond to the young people's needs. The institutional bureaucracy is organized to attend to linear itineraries, but the itineraries of emancipation are reversible and uncertain (Melendro et al., 2016; Rome & Raskin, 2019). The timing of professional accompaniment is insufficient to effectively meet the young people's needs. The professional teams try to pressure the administration to extend the periods of accompaniment, underlining the appropriateness of prolonging the

interventions in the documentation they prepare. Adolescents in care must be accompanied in their life itinerary for the necessary time to be able to learn from their mistakes (Arnau-Sabatés et al., 2021; Kelly et al., 2021). Professional efforts fail to curb institutional dynamics aimed at reducing the time spent on the resources, especially when the adolescents reach the age of majority. The administrative process identifies emancipation with the suppression of all supports from the system as soon as possible (Harder et al., 2020; Hedenstrom, 2021; Hokanson et al., 2019).

The temporal dimension conditions the professional intervention and the design of the individual itineraries. Socio-educational accompaniment projects are organized with adolescents under pressure to be independent in a short period of time (Paulsen & Berg, 2016). The results indicate that there is little time available for accompaniment during the stay in the resources. The intensity of direct intervention in each case is reduced by the workload and the precariousness of the means. The teams devote several hours of each working day to documentary processes and resource management, leaving insufficient daily time to devote to individualized intervention with the adolescents (Fernández-Simo et al., 2021). The situation leads to prioritizing activities aimed at the acquisition of functional autonomy, for a limited period of time (Longas & Riera, 2016). The teams are forced to orient the intervention to a pragmatism resulting from precarious working conditions but they are aware that the work done is far from effective. Emergencies are prioritized, and the work of other aspects of social and educational interest is minimized. These deficits have a negative impact on young people's view of the protective action in their personal situation. Adolescents in residential regimes rate the material aspects of the centers positively but regret the deficits in sociability and individuality (Montserrat, Delgado et al., 2021).

The scarcity of intervention time indicates deficits in the quality of the protective action. The consequences of the prevailing precariousness in the institutions are reduced thanks to the work teams' involvement. Despite professional efforts, contextual conditions affect determining factors in the intervention, which exceed the professionals' capacity for action (Smith et al., 2017). The available time is incompatible with the time needed for the learning processes. The teams prioritize activities aimed at acquiring autonomy. Despite the teams' efforts, it is difficult for young people to internalize the intended competence if it is not developed throughout an educational process with sufficient time for them to regulate their evolution from dependence to autonomy (Alhadeff-Jones, 2019).

The deficits exceed the temporal dimension and affect the possibilities of facilitating learning spaces in the community. The results indicate that professional teams have to design diverse strategies to overcome institutional obstacles so that young people can have community learning experiences. Participation in community activities is not currently guaranteed in all cases. The findings indicate the

coexistence of diverse situations in a struggle between the performance of the professionals, who are aware of the importance of interaction in community and everyday spaces (Díaz-Esterri et al., 2021; Emond, 2016), and the institutional barriers, which prioritize interventions enclosed within the system. Interaction with the community is a predictor of youth empowerment (Wagaman, 2016), and the community is essential in the promotion of such empowerment (Prowell, 2019). Community social activities provide an opportunity to increase inter-generational social capital (Almqvist & Lassinantti, 2018; Webb et al., 2017).

The professional teams agree that strategies aimed at the acquisition of skills for autonomous life should prevail, developed within the framework of community experiences, in socio-educational scenarios with professional follow-up (Bernal et al., 2020). The protection system continues to orient the intervention to individuality, leaving community work pending (Trull-Oliva et al., 2022). Timing and everyday life are also particularly relevant for resilience. Resilience is a process that takes some time to develop. It will be developed if the acting agents have enough time so the adolescents can grant meaning to adversity in their community and define strategies to cope with it (Ruiz-Román et al., 2020). Community is the stage where people shape resilience (Soler et al., 2017).

The shortcomings detected in the community intervention have a negative impact on aspects such as the social support network (Blakeslee, 2015). During emancipation, youth need the support of adults who facilitate the orientation of personal goals (Paulsen & Berg, 2016). Young people who are emancipated from the protection system with the support of adult referents are more likely to make a positive transition to adult life (Hedenstrom, 2021). The results indicate that the young people who participated in the interviews, all with satisfactory experiences of emancipation, had previously had opportunities for relationships in the community. Social interventions aimed at strengthening the social network of adolescents in care must begin before emancipation and should extend into adulthood (Zinn et al., 2017). Referent programs with young people who exited the protection system are shown to be an effective strategy that favors the achievement of emancipation goals (Hedenstrom, 2021).

Intervention timing and scenarios are complex dimensions. The complexity of the realities of socio-educational action requires the professionals' high specialization (Powers et al., 2018). The results point to how teams bear the arduous burden of mitigating institutional obstacles. Socio-educational strategies aimed at the effective management of timing and community spaces are proof of professionals' involvement in facilitating transition itineraries to adult life. The teams make a large effort to improve the conditions of emancipation. They acknowledge the precariousness of the means with which they work and assume that, in the case of Spain, the resources available for the care of these young people when they leave the protection system are even more precarious. They realize that a well-endowed social welfare state would reduce the impact of a deficient protective action, as is the case in other countries (Boddy et al., 2020). The professionals try to work on individuality, sharing the meaning of each life experience in different socio-educational accompaniments for each case. The administration blurs the individual condition of each adolescent, turning the youth in care into some kind of category, generalizing the formal and distant intervention processes of each personal reality (Lindahl, 2021). Professionals are forced to resist the tendency of the very system for which they work.

6. Conclusions

The professional teams deploy strategies to mitigate the conditions in which young people in care transit to adult life. Thanks to the efforts of the intervention teams, young people have learning opportunities in community contexts. The activities carried out in the community should be valued, as they are the exclusive result of professional involvement. The teams assume the importance of adolescents' relating outside of

residential resources. The institutional organization of the protection system is not allied with the actors involved in achieving the goals of emancipation. The design of the different bureaucratic processes continues to be an obstacle that hinders the young people's itineraries and the professionals' actions. An example of the above is the linear intervention times that the institutional organization contemplates for accompaniments. There is still a discrepancy between the time necessary to achieve the goals of emancipation and the insufficient time for accompaniment offered by the system. The administration's claims should be adjusted to the needs of the participants. At present, the bureaucratic organization intends young people and professionals to adapt to institutional designs that do not consider their demands. The Spanish protection system has yet to undertake the necessary improvements to overcome the precariousness presented herein.

6.1. Limitations

The results of this study are not intended to be generalizable to young people who have resided in residential centers in other contexts or countries. The protection system of Galicia has its own defined processes, which are differentiated from other territories of Spain or Europe. The specific context influences the perspective and understanding of the people participating in the research about the protective action (O'Brien et al., 2014).

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Deibe Fernández-Simo: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **María Victoria Carrera-Fernández:** Resources, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Xosé Manuel Cid-Fernández:** Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Edgar Correia Campos:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Project administration, Writing – review & editing.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data availability

The data that has been used is confidential.

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Author contributions.

All authors contributed to the study conception and design. Material preparation, data collection and analysis were performed by Deibe Fernández-Simo, Xosé Manuel Cid Fernández and María Victoria Fernández Carrera. The first draft of the manuscript was written by Deibe Fernández-Simo and Edgar Correia Campos. All authors commented on previous versions of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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