

SOCIAL SUPPORT AS A MODERATOR TO FOSTER CARE DISPLACEMENT AND  
FOSTER PARENT OUTCOMES

by

Latasha Denise Watts

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

School of Behavioral Sciences

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APPROVED BY:

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## ABSTRACT

The recruitment and retention of licensed foster parents in the United States is a priority among child welfare professionals. There exist many factors impacting one's decision to foster or discontinue fostering, resulting in the child welfare system's constant struggle to recruit and retain foster parents and maintain placement stability for foster youth. Therefore, foster parent turnover and placement displacements negatively affect the wellbeing of foster youth, foster parent success outcomes, and the child welfare system. This quantitative study employed a nonexperimental correlational design using multiple regression to determine the type and quantity of foster care support services that moderates the relationship between foster care displacements, foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering among 102 nonrelative licensed foster carers licensed within five foster care agencies in North Carolina. This study utilized online survey instruments, the Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS), the Family Support Scale (FSS), and the Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ) to examine the perceptions of foster carer support services. SPSS was employed to aid in the analysis of the findings. Results were analyzed using multiple regression to determine the relationship between the variables. Results revealed a significant relationship between foster care support services, foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and foster care displacements. The findings of the relationship between foster care support services and foster parent success outcomes could promote practice and policy change within the child welfare system to better support foster parents.

*Keywords:* Social support, Foster parent satisfaction, Intent to continue fostering, Foster Care Displacement

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate my work, accomplishments, and my life's success to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, which in faith has given me the hope to press forward, the strength to endure challenges, and the support to overcome obstacles. When I asked for patience, He gave me opportunities to be patient. When I asked for wisdom, He provided me with the clarity to solve present problems. Therefore, I owe all my success to you, Lord.

I am thankful to my family, friends, and co-workers in the mental health field for motivating and supporting me throughout my journey of this dissertation process. Their kind words of encouragement and their shared ears allowed for my ventilation, while their shoulders supported me during my temporary moments of defeat. Thank you all for being my rock.

Thank you to my family, my foster children, and my significant other for allowing me the time and space to work on my dissertation, alone time to rest and regroup, and even excusing my absences from family time and events. Therefore, with my deepest gratitude, I thank you all.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

Aid to Dependent Children (ADC)

Compassion Fatigue (CF)

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

Department of Social Services (DSS)

Family Support Scale (FSS)

Foster Care Agency #1 (FCA1)

Foster Care Agency #2 (FCA2)

Foster Care Agency #3 (FCA3)

Foster Care Agency #4 (FCA4)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS)

Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS)

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS)

Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ)

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Overview

Foster parents are part of an exceptional population that requires a special skill set, lack of selfishness, and dedication to care for the needs and wellbeing of children, a vulnerable population (Szklański, 2019). The role of a foster parent can be a rewarding but challenging experience, as foster parents serve as a protective and nurturing role for many youth placed in the child welfare system (Ahn et al., 2017; Szklański, 2019). Children placed in the child welfare system continue to grow at an alarming rate, as approximately 418,917 children are currently in the foster care system in the United States (Kelly, 2019). Despite the alarming rate of youth placed in care, the desperate need for licensed foster parents continues to be a challenge for foster care agencies to acquire and retain, as approximately 30 to 50% of foster parents discontinue fostering after the first year (CHAMPS, 2019).

There exist many factors impacting one's decision to foster or discontinue fostering, resulting in the child welfare system's constant struggle to recruit and retain foster parents and maintain placement stability for foster youth (Buehler et al., 2003) as approximately 83.3% of foster care displacements occur at the request of the foster parent (Koh et al., 2014). Foster parent turnover rates and frequent foster care displacements negatively affect foster youth, foster parents, and the child welfare agency. Foster youth exposed to frequent displacements experience adverse outcomes such as poorer social-emotional functioning, increased mental health problems, display of externalizing and internalizing behavior, and impacts a child's ability to establish long-lasting relationships (Jacobsen et al., 2020). There is a need to explore social support as a positive factor in promoting foster parent success outcomes. Examining these key factors can assist child welfare agencies in increasing retention rates and recruitment efforts of



new foster parents, as agencies become aware of what factors promote retention (Ahn et al., 2017) and reduce foster care displacements. Child welfare agencies can identify families that may not be effective or appropriate foster parents, which will save time money, and lead to improved retention rates (Ahn et al., 2017).

This chapter presents background information on the current foster care system, including the rules and regulations generated by state and federal guidelines that are relevant to the structure of the child welfare system. This chapter includes statistics relative to the number of children in foster care in the United States and statistics relative to the foster parent shortage crisis that impact foster care displacements, foster carer satisfaction, and intent to continue fostering. The historical, social, and theoretical aspects of foster parent satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and foster care displacements are presented in this chapter's background section. This chapter discusses the problem statement and the purpose of this quantitative correlational study, and its significance to the child welfare system, foster parents, and foster youth. Finally, this chapter concludes with the research questions and hypothesis, definitions of key terms, and a summary. These aspects contribute to the challenge of foster parent satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and foster care displacements experienced within the child welfare system.

## **Background**

Under the federal government's direction, the department of social services and child protective agencies assume responsibility to promote the health, safety, and wellbeing of abused and neglected youth placed in foster care (North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, 2021b). Therefore, if the federal government assigned the safety and wellbeing of foster youth to the state level; the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

(NCDHHS), which transfers to the local county level; the Department of Social Services (DSS) to provide foster care resources under the direction of the department of child protective services (NCDHHS, 2021b), then the value of foster parent satisfaction and intent to continue fostering should be on the forefront as child welfare agencies continue to experience challenges with foster parent retention and recruitment (Festinger & Baker, 2013). Without adequate support for foster parents, youth in care will continue to experience multiple foster care displacements, which will affect their overall health and wellbeing (Stengard et al., 2016; Storer et al., 2014) as the rate of foster parent turnover occur at 30 to 50% after the first year (CHAMPS, 2019). The current problem is that it is unknown to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

### ***Historical***

The formal practice of foster care emerged in the Progressive Era (Rymph, 2017). A period from the 1890s to the 1920s, defined as an era of intense social and political reform aimed at making progress toward a better society. During the Progressive Era, female reformers created a new professional field around child placement that reshaped how the state addressed child welfare (Rymph, 2017). Challenges with foster parent retention and recruitment have always been a concern for the child welfare system, dating back to the rise of World War II (Rymph, 2017). The occurrence of World War II aggravated the chronic shortage of foster homes, as the increased stress on families combined with the housing shortages made it difficult for social workers to find homes for the growing rate of foster youth in care. In efforts to recruit foster homes, child welfare workers began describing foster children as temporary orphans of war and identified mothering (i.e., foster parenting) as a wartime service (Rymph, 2017). Despite the

efforts of child welfare workers to alter the perception of foster care, the difficulty of foster parent recruitment and retention persisted in the post-war period, as social workers became more demanding of foster parents and public opinion about foster care became less favorable (Rymph, 2017).

Later, in the early 1900s, the recruitment and retention of foster parents continued to face challenges as the child welfare system implemented foster home placement regulations such that social agencies began supervising and screening foster parents, inspecting homes, keeping records, and focusing on the needs of children prior to placements (Birk, 2015; Rymph, 2017). Also, by the 1900s, the United States government intervened in the practice of foster care and child welfare by validating authority to the state to remove children from homes who experienced abuse or neglect (Rymph, 2017). This active role of government led to the creation of several laws pertaining to foster care, such as allotting federal funds for child welfare services under the old Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) program and creating a governmental department strictly devoted to child welfare (Murray & Gesiriech, 2004). This implementation of policy and laws governing foster care practice directly impacted foster parent recruitment and retention as the rise of foster children placed in care became overwhelming compared to the available foster families to accommodate the growing rise of children.

Moreover, the 1960s changed the foster care structure when Congress authorized federal funding for foster care (Rymph, 2017), resulting in a dramatic rise in foster care populations between 1960 and 1977 (Murray & Gesiriech, 2004). The rise in the foster care population stemmed from the implementation of federal financial assistance available for children involuntarily placed in foster care (Murray & Gesiriech, 2004). An additional challenge with the retention and recruitment of foster parents rose in reaction to child welfare workers scrutinizing

foster mothers' motivations to foster and expressing skepticism about parents' potential motivation to foster by the influence of extrinsic monetary rewards to foster (Rymph, 2017). With the allocation of federal funding, child welfare professionals reframed the role, expectations, and responsibilities of foster parents, and the public perception of foster care changed for the worse (Rymph, 2017), consequently impacting one's satisfaction to foster and intent to continue fostering. The history of providing social support for foster parents has been scrutinized and viewed negatively by the public. Therefore, allocating federally funded assistance to foster care results in a continued shortage of foster families motivated to foster or continue to foster.

### ***Social***

Research confirms that the negative aspects of the foster care experience result in youth experiencing more destructive and long-term social outcomes than non-foster youth (Curry & Abrams, 2015; Lee & Berrick, 2014). Storer et al. (2014) reported that a youth's positive attachment bond with a foster parent is a protective factor in promoting foster youth success outcomes as youth experience feelings of safety, wellbeing, and bonding to caring and trusted adults. In addition, Stengard et al. (2016) confirmed that children thrive when they live in safe, stable, and nurturing families, which is not restricted to biological parents, because research shows that a child's relationship with a foster parent can promote positive attachments (Goossens & Van Ijzendoorn, 1990). The quality of the attachment influences the child's capability to regulate emotional distress such as anxiety, anger, depression and promote a child's cognitive development and psychological stability (Maaskant et al., 2016). The unwanted separation and loss of the attachment bond will elevate emotional distress (Goldberg, 2000) as the child struggles to establish trust with foster parents (Bowlby, 1982). Supporting foster parents to

enhance their capabilities and strengths enables the development of a secure attachment relationship with a foster child (Ironside, 2012).

Instrumental and emotional social support received from family, friends, neighbors, and community members can provide psychological, physical, and financial support to foster parents in their time of need (Ozbay et al., 2007; Powers et al., 2018). Social supports reduce the likelihood of adverse outcomes (Cullen, 1994; Kahle et al., 2019; Kort-Butler, 2017; MacGregor et al., 2006;) that promote foster parents' intention to continue fostering (MacGregor et al., 2006). The need for foster carer support to promote successful outcomes is significant to the current study as research suggests that receiving social support promotes stability and wellbeing (Curry & Abrams, 2015). It is not known to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering. Therefore, the current study fulfills this gap by examining the impact of informal and formal support for foster carers independently to better understand if specific sources or the quantity of support are more influential than other forms of support (Richardson et al., 2018) in promoting foster parent satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

### ***Theoretical***

The scholarly articles on foster parent success outcomes describe several theories that suggest the existence of social support produce higher foster parent satisfaction (Mihalo et al., 2016), reduce foster care displacements (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019), and increase intent to continue fostering (Mihalo et al., 2016). Seminal works by Cooley et al. (2019) introduced the concept of resilience as a factor associated with foster parent satisfaction and intent to continue fostering. Garmezy's (1991a, 1991b) resilience theory is appropriate for the current study, as

resilience theory is the ability for an individual to positively adapt and react when confronted with stress or life challenges (Storer et al., 2014), suggesting foster parents' who can adapt to the stressors of fostering will have higher foster parent satisfaction and intent to continue fostering (Cooley et al., 2019). Additionally, the theory of motivation suggests that internal motivation is derived from one's basic human needs (Maslow, 1943), and the existence of motivation can arouse and instigate behavior, promote the persistence of behavior, and lead to choosing a preferred behavior (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). It is vital to identify one's motivation, as motivation influences an individuals' behavioral decision (Dweck, 2017). Therefore, suggesting that motivation influences intent to continue fostering, ultimately reducing foster care displacements. This research independently identified how each theory promotes foster parent success outcomes, supported by previous research. Previous research has not collectively explored the identified theories and their shared contribution to foster carer success outcomes. This study advanced the identified theories by collectively identifying concepts from each theory that directly promote foster parent success outcomes, such as foster care displacements, foster carer satisfaction, and intent to continue fostering.

For this study, research confirms a relationship between social support and intent to continue fostering as MacGregor et al. (2006) revealed that providing emotional support was a predictor in foster parent intention to continue fostering. Additionally, Tonheim and Iversen (2019) suggested a relationship between social support and foster care displacements, in that foster parents, reported insufficient support from caseworkers as the most frequent cause for foster care displacements. Therefore, Drennon-Gala and Cullen's social support theory (Cullen, 1994; Drennon-Gala, 1994, 1995) is necessary for this study, which suggests that instrumental, informational, emotional, and appraisal support reduce the likelihood of adverse outcomes

(Cullen, 1994; Kahle et al., 2019; Kort-Butler, 2017; MacGregor et al., 2006;) and enhance resilience to stress (Ozbay et al., 2007) promoting foster parents' intent to continue fostering (MacGregor et al., 2006) and reduce foster care displacements (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019). Newquist et al. (2020) also confirmed a relationship between foster care displacements and intent to continue fostering, suggesting that the stress from foster care displacements impacted foster parents' intent to continue fostering. The need for the current study to explore foster care support services as foster parents suggested the need for emotional support to assist in coping and adjusting to the occurrence of foster care displacements (Newquist et al., 2020).

While there is much research on foster care, several recommendations need to be addressed. For example, Tonheim and Iversen (2019) asserted that research is limited regarding the characteristics of successful foster care placement, as data results focus solely on the characteristics impacting placement disruptions, making it impossible to compare the characteristics of foster carers who experienced placement disruptions with carers who experienced successful placements. Richardson et al. (2018) identified a need to examine the impact of informal and formal support for foster carers independently to better understand if specific sources of support are more valuable or more influential than others forms of support. Neagoe et al. (2019) also asserted that research is limited in recruiting a large sample of participants that include a male representation of foster carers as many previous studies have been exclusively female with a relatively small number of participants. This study fills the gap identified by Tonheim and Iversen (2019) and Richardson et al. (2018) by determining to what extent the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

## **Problem Statement**

The recruitment and retention of licensed foster parents within the United States has become a priority among child welfare professionals as many foster care agencies lose foster parents at a rate of approximately 30 to 50 % after the first year (CHAMPS, 2019).

According to findings from the 2019 Who Cares Project, it was estimated that of 45 states of licensed foster homes, 20 of the states saw some decline in licensed foster homes, while 11 states saw a decline of more than 10 percent of licensed foster homes (Kelly, 2019). In addition, Kelly's (2019) project identified states with a significant rate of foster parent decline, including Washington, D.C, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Mississippi, and Arkansas, who experienced declining rates ranging from 10% to 50%. Despite the decline and shortage of licensed foster parents, approximately 418,917 children are currently within the foster care system in the United States (Kelly, 2019). More specifically, to this research, the state of North Carolina estimated approximately 17,039 youth in foster care (Duncan et al., 2020).

There exists an abundance of research targeting the needs of foster youth through the existence of support and resources to promote their overall mental and physical wellbeing (Larsen et al., 2018; Storer et al., 2014). There is limited research that focuses on the specific needs of foster parents to promote foster parent success outcomes. Therefore, the impact of social support on foster parent satisfaction and intent to continue fostering must be explored as the rate of youth placement disruptions continue to rise at an alarming rate (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019). Dolan et al. (2013) statistical data reported that within 18 months of youth placed in foster care, 18.9% of foster youth experience two placements while 8.5% of youth experience three or more placements. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) (2018) reported that 64% of youth placed in care 24 months or longer would experience three or more



placements. Foster youth experience multiple placements for several reasons: child-related, caregiver-related, and CWS related factors (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019). Child-related factors are associated with behavioral concerns displayed by the child (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019) or the medical complexity of the child (Seltzer et al., 2017). Caregiver-related factors result in the foster parent feeling overwhelmed or stressed with behavioral challenges displayed by foster youth (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019). A final factor for placement disruption is CWS related as many foster parents experience a lack of support from CWS workers that may influence a foster parent's decision to end a placement or discontinue fostering (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019). This data highlights the need for continued emphasis on reducing placement disruptions within the child welfare system that includes ongoing support for foster carers (Dolan et al., 2013) as approximately 46% of foster youth are placed in nonrelative licensed foster homes in comparison to 32% placed in kinship homes (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2019). In terms of the current study, the general population included licensed nonrelative foster parents.

Currently, many qualitative research studies that focus on social support as a factor in foster parent success outcomes identify lack of generalizability (Samrai et al., 2011), small sample size (Cooley et al., 2015; Leathers et al., 2019; Murray et al., 2011; Richardson et al., 2018), and lack of representation of foster carers (Richardson et al., 2018) as limitations of qualitative research. Few quantitative studies explore how social support could be helpful to foster carers through the use of a large sample that will increase generalizability (Cooley et al., 2019). Also, a quantitative study can implement an alternative instrument such that participants are not overwhelmed by survey questions and open-ended responses, which may produce more satisfactory results (Geiger et al., 2017) in comparison to a qualitative extended interview

method. The current study utilized a quantitative design with a large sample size to support recommendations from Geiger et al. (2017) and Cooley et al. (2019).

Research suggests that the stability of foster care placement is a vital component of adequate care and wellbeing for children (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019) as these youth form bonding attachments to foster parents (Storer et al., 2014). The impact of this attachment bond between foster parent and child becomes a protective factor in promoting the overall success of the foster child as youth experience feelings of safety, wellbeing, and bonding to caring and trusted adults (Storer et al., 2014). However, if the relationship between foster parent and child is so valuable to overall youth development and success, then it is reasonable to assume there should exist an abundance of support, resources, guidance, assistance, and services specifically targeted to promote successful foster parents as foster parents have an exceptional role in fulfilling the lives of a vulnerable population. Research confirms that the lack of social support provided to foster parents result in youth placement disruptions and impact foster parent retention (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019). The current problem is that it is unknown to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this non-experimental, correlational quantitative study is to determine to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering among nonrelative foster carers licensed in North Carolina. The theory that guides the study is social support theory, which suggests that social support reduce the likelihood of adverse outcomes (Cullen, 1994; Kahle et al., 2019; Kort-Butler, 2017; MacGregor et al., 2006;) and

enhance resilience to stress (Ozbay et al., 2007) impacting foster parents' fostering decisions (MacGregor et al., 2006). Also, Maslow's theory of motivation suggests that intrinsic and extrinsic motivators such as child-centered, society-oriented, and self-oriented factors influence one's decision to foster, discontinue, or continue fostering (Baer & Diehl, 2019). MacGregor et al. (2006). A final theory that guides this study is resilience theory which suggests that resilience is a protective factor in promoting foster parent success outcomes (Bridger et al., 2020; Geiger et al., 2016).

Literature examining foster parent success outcomes is limited regarding identifying the characteristics of successful foster parents, as data results have focused solely on the characteristics impacting placement disruptions, limiting the researcher's ability to compare the characteristics of foster carers who experienced placement disruptions with carers who experienced successful placements (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019). The study recruited foster carers who have experienced successful placements and placement disruptions to explore the characteristics that promote successful placements and disruptive placements. Literature has also explored the influence of social support as a protective factor that promotes foster parent retention and placement stability (Richardson et al., 2018). Previous research has not examined the impact of informal and formal support independently to better understand if specific sources or the quantity of support are more valuable or influential than other forms of support (Richardson et al., 2018). The study explored the type and quantity of informal and formal support independently to identify the influence on foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering to address this weakness. Moreover, qualitative research on foster parent success outcomes is abundant, resulting in smaller sample sizes with an over-representation of female foster carers, limiting the generalizability of results. The researcher used a quantitative design

with a larger sample size to include a male representation of foster caregivers (Neagoe et al., 2019).

The study's target population for this research were nonrelative foster parents licensed in North Carolina. The researcher obtained site permission from foster care agencies and the Department of Social Services in North Carolina to recruit study participants. Participants were recruited using convenience sampling to reach a larger sample of readily available participants (Baxter et al., 2015). The study used one predictor variable (foster care displacements), two criterion variables (intent to continue fostering and foster carer satisfaction), and three moderator variables (formal and informal support and quantity of foster care support). In addition, the study utilized the treatment foster parent satisfaction survey (TFP-SS), family support scale (FSS), and the turnover intention questionnaire (TIQ) to measure foster parent satisfaction, level of social support, and turnover intention of foster parents (Dunst et al., 1984; Keys et al., 2017; Mihalo et al., 2016). Additionally, the study captured foster carer displacements in the demographic questionnaire that asked participants to report the number of displacements.

### **Significance of the Study**

It is not known to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering. Therefore, the current study fills this gap by examining the impact of informal and formal support for foster carers independently to better understand if specific sources of support are more influential than other forms of support (Richardson et al., 2018) in promoting foster parent satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and placement disruption. The current study recruited a larger sample size representing male foster carers to fill the gap in the literature, which suggests that research is limited in recruiting a large sample that is

representative of male foster carers (Neagoe et al., 2019). Finally, the current study explored factors related to the characteristics of successful placements and disruptive placements for comparison. This approach filled the gap in the research reported by Tonheim and Iversen (2019). Their research targeted only the characteristics of successful foster parents, which resulted in the inability of the researchers to compare the characteristics of successful placements with foster parents who experienced placement disruptions.

In response to the recommendations in the literature, the results of this study may promote foster parent success outcomes by identifying factors that positively influence foster parent satisfaction and reduce foster care placement disruptions. If foster parent satisfaction and placement disruptions are promoted, the child welfare system may benefit from an alternative strategy to eliminate decades of a foster parent crisis shortage. Also, the results of this study may promote the recruitment efforts for foster care agencies, as results from this study may provide agencies with knowledge of specific characteristics and needs of foster parents that encourage motivation to foster. Alternatively, the results of this study may reduce foster agencies' need for continuous recruitment if the results of this study may promote foster parent satisfaction and intent to continue fostering. Finally, the results of this study may directly impact the wellbeing of foster youth by reducing placement displacements because research confirms that children thrive when they live in safe, stable, and nurturing families (Stengard et al., 2016). The significance of this research in identifying a relationship between social support, foster care displacements, foster carer satisfaction, and intent to continue fostering results in a more stable, safe, and nurturing foster home for children as the presence of foster parents promote the well-being of children in care (Stengard et al., 2016).

Finally, conclusions from this study may be relevant for the future recruitment of qualified foster parents. If foster care agencies can identify factors and develop practices such as social support for current foster parents (Szklański, 2019), it may influence a foster family's intent to continue fostering. As a result, foster care agencies could incorporate consistent positive social supports, such as intrinsic motivators and extrinsic rewards, to promote foster parent success. By understanding factors that promote foster parent success, foster care providers may be more prone to early detection of foster families at risk of discontinuing fostering. Therefore, it is possible that agencies could provide early intervention such as increasing social support to promote foster parent satisfaction to prevent foster care displacements for youth in care. The researcher also anticipates the results of this study may encourage or influence social workers to provide foster families with the support, education, and training skills necessary to foster for a prolonged duration of time and may motivate foster parents to maintain a placement, reducing placement disruptions of youth placed in the home.

The theoretical lens of this study is based on Don Drennon-Gala and Francis Cullen's social support theory, Maslow's psychological theory of motivation, and Dr. Norman Garnezy's theory of resilience. Social support theory is relevant to this study as it directly supports factors contributing to foster parents' intent to continue fostering as the existence of social supports reduces the likelihood of adverse outcomes (Cullen, 1994; Drennon-Gala, 1994, 1995; MacGregor et al., 2006). The concept of adverse outcomes for this study relates to one's decision to discontinue fostering or end a child's placement. The current study advanced the social support theory by examining the influence of informal and formal supports independently (Richardson et al., 2018) to identify a connection to foster parent success outcomes. In addition, the current study advanced Maslow's (1943) psychological theory of motivation by examining the influence

of internal and external motivating factors (MacGregor et al., 2006) that promote foster parents' intent to continue fostering. Finally, this study advanced the theory of resilience, as the current study identified factors that promote resilience among foster parents experiencing stress or difficulty, with the outcome of promoting one's intent to continue fostering (Afifi et al., 2016).

### **Research Questions**

Because it is not known to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering, the research questions and hypotheses presented are non-directional, with the intent to conduct a multiple linear regression to test the null hypothesis. To address the gap within the research, the research questions for this study determined to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between displacements and foster care satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

The researcher collected primary data via participants completing online self-administered surveys through Qualtrics®. The surveys administered to participants included the Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS), which measured foster parent satisfaction and intent to continue fostering (Mihalo et al., 2016), the Family Support Scale (FSS), which measures informal and formal support received by foster parents (Dunst et al., 1984), and the modified version of the Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ), which has been modified to measure foster parents' intention to continue fostering (Keys et al., 2017). To test the hypothesis and relationship between study variables, the researcher established three research questions that addressed the issues identified in the problem statement:

**RQ1:** If and to what extent does the quantity of foster care support services significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering?

**RQ2:** If and to what extent do formal foster care support services significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering?

**RQ3:** If and to what extent do informal foster care support services significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering?

## **Definitions**

The purpose of this section is to distinctly define key terms and concepts discussed in the current research study. Explanations of these terms are intended to provide the reader with an understanding of the fundamental components found at the core of the current study.

*Aid to Dependent Children (ADC)* – ADC was a U.S. federal assistance program, created by the Social Security Act and administered by the United States Department of Health and Human Services from 1935 to 1997, that provided financial assistance to children whose families had low or no income (Rymph, 2017).

*Burnout* – Burnout is defined as energy depletion or emotional exhaustion experienced by professionals who work with people (Schupp, 2015). Stressful home life and conflicting commitments can exacerbate burnout (Nunn & Isaacs, 2019) and influence an individual's motivation to continue fostering (Bîrneanu, 2014; Bridger et al., 2020).

*Child welfare agency* – The state, tribal, or local agency responsible for the placement



and care of children and youth in foster care (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2018). The child welfare agency is directly linked to the current study as this agency licenses foster parents, and the researcher gained site approval to conduct to study from each child welfare agency.

*Compassion Fatigue (CF)* – (Also known as secondary traumatic stress). Compassion fatigue occurs when professionals, families, friends, or caregivers are continuously exposed to the emotional circumstances of others, either directly or indirectly, in their attempts to care for and support traumatized individuals (Schupp, 2015). Compassion fatigue among foster carers can lead to placement disruption and turnover, as the state of exhaustion can restrict an individual's capacity to engage in caring relationships (Bridger et al., 2020; Nolte et al., 2017).

*Family Support Scale (FSS)* – FSS is a brief, self-administered instrument used among participants in the current study. FSS was developed to measure and assess the source of social support available to families raising children (Dunst et al., 1984; Hoang, 2018).

*Foster care* – (also known as out-of-home care) is a temporary service provided by States for children who cannot live with their families. Children in foster care may live with relatives, unrelated foster parents, or reside in placement settings such as group homes, residential care facilities, emergency shelters, and supervised independent living (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2021). Foster care is a key term to define as the current study's focus is foster care.

*Kinship care* – (also known as relative foster care) is a placement option in which children are removed from their family home and placed with adults related to the child through blood, marriage, or adoption (Font, 2014). Kinship care is a key term to define as the study excludes kinship parents.

*Motivation to foster* – Motivation is the drive and energy put forth toward accomplishing a goal, a task, or a behavior (Merriam & Bierema, 2013). The existence of motivation can arouse

and instigate behavior, give direction or purpose to behavior, promote the persistence of behavior, and lead to choosing a preferred behavior (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017).

*Nonrelative foster care* – The most common type of foster care and is a placement option in which children reside in a home setting with non-related parents who are licensed by a child welfare agency to provide care for foster youth (Font, 2014). Non-relative care is a key term as the researcher's inclusion criteria specifically target non-relative foster parents.

*North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS)* – provides guidance and technical assistance to agencies that provide direct services to vulnerable individuals, children, and their families to address poverty, family violence, and exploitation (NCDHHS, 2021b). Each state (NCDHHS) has the primary responsibility for oversight of county-level Department of Social Services (DSS) programs and services, but each county (DSS) manages and delivers programs and services to individuals and families (NCDHHS, 2021b).

*Placement disruption* – Placement disruption is defined as a placement that ends for reasons associated with the suitability of the existing placement, rather than placing the child in a policy-preferred or permanent setting (Sattler et al., 2018). The current study criterion variable is placement disruption.

*Retention* – Retention involves the effort of a company to minimize the unwanted leavings of its quality employees (Němečková, 2017). The current study criterion variable is placement disruption.

*Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)* – results from an individual's intense and caring involvement with a traumatized person (Schupp, 2015). STS can be a direct link to foster parent turnover, and placement disruption as foster parents are indirectly and directly exposed to the trauma of youth in care (Bîrneanu, 2014)

*Social Support* – Social support is a supportive network of family, friends, neighbors, and community members readily available to provide psychological, physical, and financial support in times of need (Ozbay et al., 2007; Powers et al., 2018). Social support is a predictor variable for the current study.

*Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS)* – SPSS is a software package widely used in social science to complete statistical analysis that will support this researcher in the data analysis process by computing a multiple regression test (Warner, 2013). The current study will utilize SPSS for data analysis of study results as the current study will use a multiple regression.

*Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS)* – SNS is part of the autonomic nervous system that speeds up the heartbeat and causes contraction of the blood vessels. In addition, SNS regulates the function of the sweat glands, stimulates the secretion of glucose in the liver, and is activated under conditions of stress (Goldstein, 2006).

*Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS)* – TFP-SS is a survey questionnaire that contains 28 ordinal level questions to measure treatment foster parent satisfaction among four domains (Professional Parenting Role, Treatment Parent Efficacy, Quality of Training, and Support from Staff) (Mihalo et al., 2016). TFP-SS is an instrument used in the current study.

*Turnover Intention* – Turnover intention is defined as a process of withdrawal cognitions in which individuals think of quitting and their intent to search for alternative employment begins (Tett & Meyer, 1993).

*Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ)* – Is a measuring instrument that produces an ordinal level of measurement to measure foster parents' intentions to continue fostering (Keys et al., 2017). The TIQ is an instrument used in the current study.

## Summary

The role of a foster parent can be both rewarding and stressful as foster parents are expected to care for the needs of vulnerable youth. Despite the rewarding experience of fostering, there exist challenges with the retention and recruitment of foster caregivers, despite researchers confirming that retention of foster parents is essential to reduce youth placement disruptions (MacGregor et al., 2006)). The recruitment and retention of licensed foster parents within the United States has become a priority among child welfare professionals as many foster care agencies lose foster parents at a rate of approximately 30 to 50 % after the first year (CHAMPS, 2019). Despite the decline and shortage of licensed foster parents, approximately 418,917 children are currently in the foster care system in the United States (Kelly, 2019). The history of research on foster parent retention has identified various factors leading to youth placement disruptions and foster parents' discounting fostering. Current research lacks quantitative studies that target the quantity of foster care support services in promoting foster parent success outcomes.

Therefore, the purpose of this non-experimental, correlational quantitative study is to determine to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering among nonrelative foster carers licensed in North Carolina. The expressed intention is for this study to add to the existing literature and encourage foster care agencies to incorporate consistent positive social supports to promote foster parent success outcomes such as foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and reduce youth placement disruptions.

Four more chapters follow. Chapter two provides a historical background of the challenges with foster parent recruitment and placement stability and how these presenting

challenges have developed historically. Then, a summary of foster care trends and key findings in literature and research identifies a research gap and what remains to be discovered. The chapter continues with a detailed section that identifies three theoretical frameworks that serve as the study's primary guide and explores how the current study adds to these theories. Finally, chapter two includes an extensive literature review highlighting key themes and topics related to the current study. Additionally, chapter two explores the variables under exploration in the current study, including a review of methodologies and instruments used in previous studies, and concludes with a chapter summary.

Next, chapter three states the research questions and hypothesis for the study describes the study population, identifies variables, and provides details about the sampling procedures, recruitment of participants, data collection methods, and the research instruments utilized in the study. A discussion about the study's procedures and statistical analysis concludes chapter three. The remaining chapters focus on the actual research conducted for the study. Chapter four identifies descriptive statistics and the research results for the study. While chapter five provides an interpretation and discussion of the research findings and includes study limitations and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Overview

Chapter two discusses the historical background of the challenges with foster parent recruitment and placement stability and how these presenting challenges have developed historically. Then, a summary of foster care trends and key findings in literature and research identifies a research gap and what remains to be discovered. The chapter continues with a detailed section that identifies three theoretical frameworks that include: Drennon-Gala and Cullen's social support theory (Cullen, 1994; Drennon-Gala, 1994, 1995), Maslow's psychological theory of motivation (MacGregor et al., 2006; Maslow, 1943), and Dr. Norman Garnezy's resilience theory (Garnezy's, 1991a), that serves as the primary guide for this study and explore how the current study adds to these theories. Following the theoretical foundations, the chapter includes an extensive literature review highlighting key themes and topics related to the current study, which distinguishes between kinship care and non-relative foster care and identifies the impact of social support in promoting foster parent recruitment, retention, placement disruption, and motivation behind foster parenting. Additionally, chapter two explores the variables under exploration in the current study and includes a review of methodologies and instruments used in previous studies.

The literature review consists of sources gathered from various online databases, including EBSCO Quick Search, Liberty University online library, ProQuest Central, and google scholar. Search terms included, but were not limited to, the following: *foster parents, social support, motivation to foster, placement disruptions, foster parent retention, and foster parent recruitment*. All the key terms used yield studies relevant to the problem and research questions. Most literature included in the study was published between 2013 and 2021 to ensure that the

latest findings are included in the literature review. Literature on the experiences of foster parents is limited. Therefore, older articles pertinent to the topic were included to expand the results. Chapter two ends with a summary of key points, an argument for the need for the current study, and a justification of the research design and methodology.

### **Background of the Problem**

The demand for foster parents has steadily increased since the early 20th century (Daly & Perry, 2011) as researchers began to study the challenges with foster parent retention, recruitment, and placement stability, which has shaped the current perception of foster care. Initially, foster care was targeted solely for abandoned children in 1853 when Charles Loring Brace began the movement to house children living in the streets of New York City (O'Connor, 2004). Brace advertised to find homes willing to take in abandoned/homeless children for free. As a result, children were put on trains and taken to their new families (O'Connor, 2004). In the early 1900s, the child welfare system began to implement regulations, policies, and procedures around housing children as agencies began inspecting foster homes and keeping records, which strained foster parents, and therefore negatively impacted foster parent retention and recruitment (Rymph, 2017).

The United States General Accounting Office (USGAO) 1989 report affirmed a foster parent shortage crisis and the difficulty with foster parent recruitment and retention. USGAO (1989) identified causes for the nationwide shortage of foster parents and explored professionals' views on how best to recruit and retain foster parents. The USGAO (1989) report identified the following as factors affecting foster parent recruitment and retention: lack of support for foster parents, the negative public image of foster care, societal changes, lack of recognition and respect received by foster parents, and insufficient foster parent training (USGAO, 1989).

At the end of the 20th century, Denby et al. (1999) identified foster parent retention as a system-related outcome that influenced overall satisfaction. As 84% of the 809 recruited participants reported a high level of satisfaction, 70% of the sample indicated they were very likely to continue fostering. Also, Denby et al. (1999) identified more frequent contact with social support and the number of boys in the foster home as factors influencing intent to continue fostering and placement stability. With the start of the 21st Century, Wilson et al. (2000) used data provided by 950 foster carers to document the proportion of foster parents who experienced one or more of six potentially stressful situations to determine the relationship between the occurrence of the stressful situation to foster parent satisfaction and intent to continue fostering. Wilson et al. (2000) revealed that 47% of participants experienced a placement disruption that resulted in a high strain on the foster parent (41%), which resulted in 17% of participants' intent to discontinue fostering. Over the past 20 years, many researchers explored the topic of foster parent retention and placement stability that furthered the work completed by Denby et al. (1999) and added to the work completed by Wilson et al. (2000) to include Eaton and Caltabiano, 2009; Gibbs & Wildfire, 2007; Rodger et al., 2006. However, there is limited retention data available, as retention is typically measured by the intent to discontinue fostering or measured by past ideation about discontinuing fostering (Denby et al., 1999; Eaton & Caltabiano, 2009).

In recent years, the challenges with foster parent retention and placement stability continue to be difficult for the child welfare system to maintain licensed foster homes (Geiger et al., 2013; Nesmith, 2020; Tonheim & Iversen, 2019) as approximately 30 to 50 % of foster parents discontinue fostering after the first year (CHAMPS, 2019). However, researchers began to introduce new trends that alternatively labeled foster parent retention and placement stability, which explored participants' intent to continue fostering (Cooley et al., 2015).



Additionally, research incorporated foster parent satisfaction as a predictor variable in foster parent retention and placement stability (Mihalo et al., 2016). Mihalo et al. (2016) concluded that 91% of participants reported high satisfaction with fostering in conjunction with 78% of participants who reported their intent to continue fostering. Cooley et al. (2019) introduced the concept of resilience as a factor associated with foster parent satisfaction and intent to continue fostering. Cooley et al. (2019) were one of the first studies that examined adverse childhood experiences in foster parents (ACEs), which concluded that resilience was associated with parental stress, satisfaction, and intent to continue fostering (Cooley et al., 2019).

Considerable research has examined the variables of foster parent satisfaction, retention, and placement stability. Researchers have utilized the Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (FPSS) (Denby et al., 1999), the Family Support Scale (FSS) (Dunst et al., 1984; Hoang, 2018), and the Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ) (Keys et al., 2017) to study factors that affect placement disruption as social support influences foster parent satisfaction. Despite the significant results produced by research instruments, 16% of participants reported a low level of satisfaction, 8.9% of participants reported not at all likely to continue fostering (Denby et al., 1999), and 39 foster placement disruptions occurred among participants (Taylor & McQuillan, 2014). In addition, research regarding foster parent retention and placement stability has been conducted within and outside of the United States, among kinship, non-relative, and therapeutic foster parents. Despite this in-depth research, a gap remains in quantitative studies investigating the relationship between foster parent retention, placement stability, and the influence of informal and formal social supports and motivation to foster.

Previous researchers, including Tonheim and Iversen (2019), Richardson et al. (2018), and Neagoe et al. (2019), have recommended several steps to address these gaps.

Tonheim and Iversen (2019) asserted that research is limited regarding successful foster care placements, as data results focus solely on the characteristics impacting placement disruptions, making it impossible to compare the characteristics of foster carers who experienced placement disruptions with carers who experienced successful placements. Richardson et al. (2018) identified a need to examine the impact of informal and formal support for foster carers independently to better understand if specific sources of support are more valuable or more influential than other forms of support. Neagoe et al. (2019) asserted that research is limited in recruiting a large sample of participants, specifically the limited representation of male foster carers as previous studies have been exclusively female with a relatively small number of participants. This study fills the gap identified by Tonheim and Iversen (2019) and Richardson et al. (2018) by determining to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

For this study, the researcher chose to use the Drennon-Gala and Cullen's social support theory (Cullen, 1994; Drennon-Gala, 1994, 1995), Maslow's psychological theory of motivation (Maslow, 1943), and Garmezy's resilience theory (Garmezy, 1991a) as the study's theoretical foundations. While detailing the theoretical foundations, the researcher reviewed topics including foster parent support, motivation to foster, and the impact on foster parent retention and placement stability. The reviews included reviewing the history of the theories and related concepts. Given the nature of the study, the researcher discovered that variables within this study, while distinct in their own right, overlap throughout the literature. The inclusion of social support theory (Cullen, 1994; Drennon-Gala, 1994, 1995), theory of motivation (Maslow, 1943),

and resilience theory (Garmezy, 1991a) are crucial for a robust understanding of the author's choice of theoretical foundations to frame the current study.

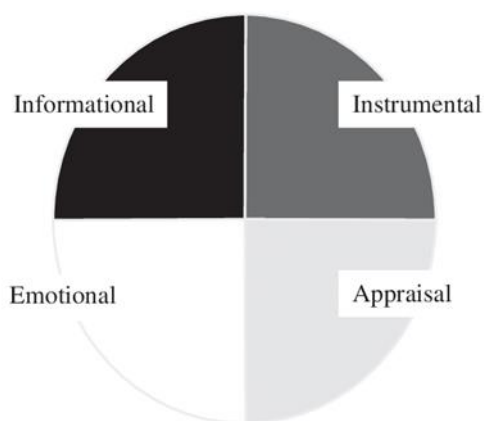
### ***Social Support Theory***

The initial development of social support theory emerged from Drennon-Gala (1994, 1995) and Cullen (1994). Since the development of social support theory, the theory has been structured into various definitions and interpretations, but the overall concept remains the same. Social support is a supportive network of family, friends, neighbors and community members who are readily available to provide psychological, physical, and financial support in times of need (Ozbay et al., 2007; Powers et al., 2018). In terms of foster care and applying the social support theory, the supportive role of family, friends, and neighbors serve as an informal type of social support, while the support received from an organization, more specifically, caseworkers and social workers, serve as a formal type of social support (Powers et al., 2018).

### **Figure 1**

*Social Support Theory House 1981*

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*Note.* Adapted from Satterfield et al., 2002, p. 170.

Social support theory (*figure 1*) suggests that instrumental, informational, emotional, and appraisal support reduce the likelihood of negative outcomes (Cullen, 1994; Kahle et al., 2019; Kort-Butler, 2017; MacGregor et al., 2006;) and enhance resilience to stress (Ozbay et al., 2007) impacting foster parents' fostering decisions (MacGregor et al., 2006). Instrumental supports include tangible supports and services, while informational support includes the provision of advice or guidance (Glanz et al., 2015; Kahle et al., 2019). Emotional support is the expression of empathy, trust, and love, and appraisal support is information that guides self-evaluation (Glanz et al., 2015; Kahle et al., 2019). Social support theory is the perception or actuality of being cared for and receiving assistance and support from a social network (Cullen, 1994; Graham et al., 2015). In support of this concept, previous research has identified a correlation between foster parents' lack of support and lack of follow-up from caseworkers to an increase in placement disruptions (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019). The importance of a supportive relationship and collaboration between caseworkers and foster parents promote foster parent success outcomes.

Social support theory specifies two dimensions of support: (1) a structural dimension, which includes supportive network size and frequency of social interactions occurring within the supportive network, and (2) a functional dimension with emotional support in the form of receiving love and empathy as an influential component, and financial assistance as an instrumental component (Glanz et al., 2015; Kahle et al., 2019; Ozbay et al., 2007). Moreover, previous research concluded that a functional dimension in the form of quality of supportive relationships is more predictive of good health and foster parent success in comparison to a structural dimension (Ozbay et al., 2007). To further clarify, a structural dimension of support refers to how individuals are integrated or connected into their existing social network (Glanz et

al., 2015), and the positive influence of the network impacts and affects one's successful outcomes. In contrast, a functional dimension focuses on the specific function served by the relationship, in the form of support, aid, or resources received by the support (Glanz et al., 2015). Hence, humans have a desire to positively benefit from a supportive network.

### ***Maslow's Theory of Motivation***

The concept of motivation is at the core of human psychology, and the ability to understand one's motivation is key to understanding human personality and development (Dweck, 2017). Motivation is the drive and energy put forth toward accomplishing a goal, a task, or a behavior (Merriam & Bierema, 2013). The existence of motivation can arouse and instigate behavior, give direction or purpose to behavior, promote the persistence of behavior, and lead to choosing a preferred behavior (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). Therefore, there is a connection between motivation and foster parent success outcomes, as research confirms that motivation influences and promotes behavioral decisions (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017). Motivation influences an individual's behavioral decision to foster, continue, or discontinue fostering.

As explained by Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, internal motivation is derived from one's basic human needs (Maslow, 1943). A basic human need promotes one's desire to fulfill that need by creating need-fulfilling goals (Dweck, 2017), as humans are motivated by the desire to achieve basic satisfactions (Maslow, 1943). As one strives to fulfill these goals, the development of mental representations of one's beliefs, emotions, and actions occurs and guides all future goals. It is vital to identify one's motivation to foster or continue fostering, as motivation stems from one's beliefs, emotions, and actions (Dweck, 2017).

Maslow's (1943) psychological theory of motivation (*figure 2*) identifies five innate needs. The basic deficiency, or D-needs such as physiological, safety and security, love and

belongingness, and esteem and being or B-needs such as self-actualization (Acevedo, 2018; Maslow, 1943; Taormina & Gao, 2013). More specifically, physiological needs can be considered conditions necessary for the body to survive, while examples of safety and security include shelter, a support system or person, or stability/structure in life (Taormina & Gao, 2013). Moreover, the need for love and belonging can be displayed within close, lasting, emotionally pleasant interactions with other people, while esteem needs arise from esteem for oneself and the respect one receives from other people (Taormina & Gao, 2013). Finally, the need for self-actualization or people's desire for self-fulfillment is one of the most difficult needs to define because it is at the highest level of hierarchy and becomes conscious awareness after all lower needs are satisfied (Acevedo, 2018; Taormina & Gao, 2013).

## Figure 2

### *Maslow's Theory of Motivation*



*Note.* Adapted from Maslow's (1943) psychological theory of motivation.

Maslow's theory of motivation directly relates to foster parents' decision to foster, continue fostering, and maintain placement stability as foster parents attempt to fulfill their basic hierarchy of needs simultaneously while caring for and promoting a highly vulnerable population's basic needs in foster care youth. This can be a challenging task as foster parents are

faced with the decision to prioritize the needs of foster youth before satisfying their own basic needs.

One's motivation to foster is measured by intrinsic and extrinsic motivators such as child-centered, society-oriented, and self-oriented factors such as financial benefits, which affects one's decision and behavior, suggesting that the existence of internal and external motivators influence one's decision to foster, discontinue fostering, or continue fostering (Baer & Diehl, 2019). MacGregor et al. (2006) confirmed the impact of motivation on foster parent retention and placement stability as foster parents were motivated to foster by intrinsic, altruistic values of wanting to make a difference in children's lives. Saiti and Papadopoulos' (2015) participants identified extrinsic motivators such as salary, financial reward, perks, and recognition as factors that promoted employees' motivation to stay.

Additionally, the concept of intention captures the motivational factors that influence behavior and decisions and are indications of one's willingness to try and the effort they are planning to exert, to perform or complete the behavioral task (Buehler et al., 2003). Therefore, if an individual intends to become a foster parent, motivational factors and indicators will influence the behavior and portray the person's commitment level to accomplish the identified task of fostering and maintaining placement stability. Also, according to Denby et al. (1999), foster parent satisfaction is a strong predictor of foster parent retention and placement stability, as one's intention to continue fostering is elevated by one's satisfaction with fostering.

### ***Resilience Theory***

In today's society, with work overload, family life and responsibilities, workplace and school violence, and the pandemic of Covid-19, everyone has experienced some form of stress, either chronic or acute (Afifi et al., 2016) that impacts daily life, mental stability, and

functioning. To highlight the impact of stress on one's mental, physical, and psychological wellbeing, Inagaki and Eisenberger (2016) found that providing support before a stressful experience can reduce the physiological stress response and, in particular, reduce stress-evoked sympathetic nervous system (SNS) activity. The sympathetic nervous system (SNS) responds to a stressful experience by increasing heart rate, constricting blood vessels, increasing blood pressure, and slowing digestion (Inagaki & Eisenberger, 2016). One's resilience coupled with social support may enable an individual to appropriately respond to stress-inducing experiences, preventing the SNS from overreacting (Ozbay et al., 2007).

To alleviate or allow one to cope with reoccurring stress, one must build resilience, as environments that provide needed support contribute to individual and system resilience (Ozbay et al., 2007). According to Garmezy's (1991b) theory, resilience is the ability for an individual to adapt positively and react when confronted with stress or life challenges. It serves as a positive function in the face of adversity to increase one's sociability, self-esteem, and ego-resilience (Storer et al., 2014). Alternatively, the concept of resilience is defined as a person's ability to bounce back or recover from a disappointment, obstacle, or setback (Hallas, 2002), which offers a foundation for understanding how foster parents persist in their roles amidst the presence of continuous stress (Sharda et al., 2019).

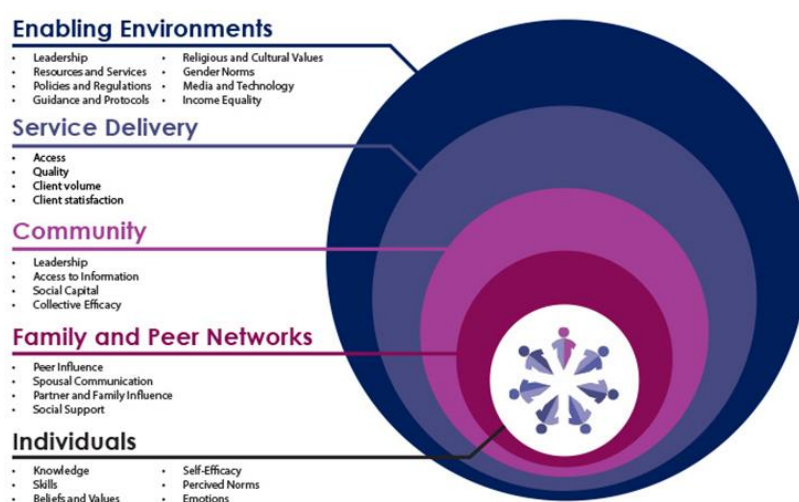
Garmezy (1991a, 1991b) identified three protective factors of resilience theory that enable individuals to circumvent life stressors. These protective factors include characteristics of the individual, a close-knit relationship with the family, and social support and structure outside the immediate family. The existence of these factors combined promotes one's level of resilience that alternatively influence and change behavior as summarized by the socio-ecological model (*Figure 3*) created by Bronfenbrenner (1977), which provides a holistic approach to human



development and behavior through the inclusive influence of all systems that an individual has direct involvement. Therefore, Bronfenbrenner (1977) identified protective factors of human development that occurred at various system levels that placed the individual in the center (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), which directly supports Garmezy's (1991a) protective factors of resilience as both theories identify protective factors that influence human behavior.

**Figure 3**

*Socio-Ecological Model*



*Note.* Adapted from Social and Behavior Change Communication.

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Garmezy (1991a, 1991b) explained that individual factors that promote resilience relate to an individual's cognitive and temperament level, reflectiveness in experiencing new situations, and responsiveness to others. Family resilience is how family units can sustain or improve family functioning despite the presenting risk factors (Geiger et al., 2016). Familial factors that promote resilience are marked by familial warmth, cohesion, care and concern provided towards the individual (Garmezy, 1991b). Moreover, family strengths and protective factors such as spirituality, appraisal, and emotional support positively enhance resilience in

families facing adversity (Geiger et al., 2016). The final protective factor is the existence of a positive, consistent, external supportive social network that can enhance one's level of resilience to stress (Ozbay et al., 2007) as the formation of strong attachment bonds with supportive adults (Storer et al., 2014) increase one's ability to adapt in the face of adversity (Ozbay et al., 2007). According to Garmezy (1991b), external support can include a strong maternal substitute, such as a teacher, an institutional structure, and a caring agency that fosters ties to the larger community.

Alternatively, employee resilience is shaped by four characteristics of the work environment—information sharing, job significance, an opportunity for learning, and availability of rewards for performance as factors promoting employee resilience and reason to stay (Ng & Butts, 2009). Also, resilience is displayed through empathy, as having empathy for foster children is demonstrated by foster parents' resilience, an ability inherent within an individual's personality and explains foster parent retention and placement stability (Geiger et al., 2016). Foster parents need to acquire the trait of resilience to overcome exposure to secondary trauma, chronic stress, and adversities (Bîrneanu, 2014) to continue fostering as successful foster parents. The theory of resilience is a protective factor for secondary traumatic stress (STS), compassion fatigue (CF), and burnout, as many foster parents, professionals, and carers have a greater rate of experiencing STS, CF, and burnout. The theory of resilience is the capacity to bounce back from life stressors and traumatic experiences either as a heritable personality trait or the product of experiencing positive emotions (Bridger et al., 2020). Resilience is a protective factor in preventing the occurrence and exposure of STS, CF, and burnout (Bridger et al., 2020).

## **Related Literature**

### ***Introduction***

The literature review examines recent studies regarding social support's impact and foster parents' success outcomes and relevant theoretical constructs. To establish an understanding of the literature to support this study, the researcher reviewed prior research and theories. In addition, the methodology and instruments utilized for the research problems to be addressed. The literature review provides the groundwork for this study by understanding the impact of social support in promoting foster parent success outcomes. The researcher has divided the literature review into several themes that distinguish kinship care and non-relative foster care, discuss foster parent recruitment, retention, placement stability, and motivation to foster, and finally, identify the quantity and perceived quality of foster caregivers support. In addition, the literature review identifies the methodologies and instruments previously utilized in the study of social support and foster parent success outcomes.

Tonheim and Iversen (2019) asserted that research is limited regarding successful foster care placement characteristics. Data results focus solely on the characteristics impacting placement disruptions, making it impossible to compare the characteristics of foster carers who experienced placement disruptions with carers who experienced successful placements. Richardson et al. (2018) identified a need to examine the impact of informal and formal support for foster carers independently to better understand if specific sources of support are more valuable or more influential than others forms of support. Neagoe et al. (2019) also asserted that research is limited in recruiting a large sample of participants that include a male representation of foster carers as many previous studies have been exclusively female with a relatively small number of participants. This study fills the gap identified by Tonheim and Iversen (2019) and

Richardson et al. (2018) by determining to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

### ***Kinship Care and Non-Relative Foster Care***

The purpose of the current research study is to determine to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering in the southeastern region in North Carolina. In identifying this relationship, this research study only recruited nonrelative foster care parents as participants, excluding kinship families. As a result of these exclusion criteria, it is essential to define and understand the dynamics of nonrelative foster care placements compared to kinship family placements to understand the researcher's purpose for this selection criteria.

The foster care system out-of-home placement options include kinship placements and nonrelative foster care placements. Kinship placement occurs when children are removed from their immediate home and placed in a family relative's home (Darwiche et al., 2019). On the other hand, nonrelative foster care occurs when children are removed from their immediate home setting and placed in the home of a nonrelative family (Darwiche et al., 2019). Over the last few decades, the child welfare system has relied upon kinship placements as an alternative method to prevent children from entering the foster care system (Daly & Perry, 2011) such that kinship care has become the fastest-growing form of child placement in several countries and is a preferred form of child placement in the United States (Ehrle & Geen, 2002).

This strategy presents challenges, as approximately 39% of children in kinship homes live in poverty, and another 31% live in voluntary kinship care (Ehrle & Geen, 2002).

Additionally, previous researchers have reported that kinship children reside in undesirable neighborhoods, receive little to no financial assistance or monitoring from child welfare, and receive less support and resources than nonrelative foster homes (Daly & Perry, 2011). As a result, Daly and Perry (2011) argued that nonrelative foster homes are more beneficial to children than kinship homes.

The finding by Daly and Perry (2011) echoes earlier findings from a study done 15 years earlier by Gebel (1996), who conducted an exploratory quantitative study to determine the level of support received from child welfare agencies. The study consisted of 140 randomly selected nonrelative foster parents and 140 randomly selected non-licensed kinship caregivers who completed mailed-in self-administered questionnaires, including three items regarding the level of caseworker contact. Researchers indicated significant differences in the frequency of caseworker contacts with nonrelative foster parents compared to contacts with kinship caregivers; nonrelative foster parents received a higher rate of monthly home visits at 53.2% than kinship caregivers' monthly home visits at a rate of 40.8%. Nonrelative foster parents were more likely to have monthly phone contact with caseworkers at 83.5% than kinship caregivers' phone contacts at 37.0% (Gebel, 1996). Even studies 25 years ago indicated a significant difference in the contact between kinship and non-kinship placements.

Limitations of the Gebel (1996) study concerned the study design and the inability to generalize results to a larger caregiver population as participants' response rates were low and demographic characteristics of participants might have differed in the geographic area in which the study was conducted. In addition, although anonymous, the surveys used in the study may have been influenced by socially desirable responses from participants, potentially affecting the accuracy of the results (Gebel, 1996). Therefore, future research should recruit a larger

population of kinship carers and consider a larger geographical area for participant recruitment and consider the reliability and validity of survey instruments to challenge the possibility of socially desirable participant responses (Gebel, 1996).

To support Gebel's (1996) study results regarding the need for social support, Fuentes-Peláez et al. (2016) conducted a qualitative study to determine how social support enhances family resilience and increases placement stability in kinship foster families. The study aimed to identify what type of social support, formal and informal that kinship foster families received before and after participating in a support program to increase parenting skills and family resilience. The study collected data through interviews and focus groups with 62 kinship foster families recruited by child protection social services in Spain. Methods used to collect data from participants included a pre-test and post-test approach with a qualitative orientation to explain the changes in the evolution of formal and informal support given to foster families who participated in the program. The study was based on 147 semi-structured interviews, 85 interviews were conducted before the families participated in the program, 62 interviews were conducted after the same families participated in the program, and the study held eight focus groups six months after the families participated in the program (Fuentes-Peláez et al., 2016, p. 583).

Fuentes-Peláez et al. (2016) suggested that an increase in a formal support network contributed to the development of family resilience. Participants' perception and reliance on formal supports improved significantly after program participation, resulting in a 17.99 % increase in the use of formal supports after program participation, rising from 34.55% to 52.54%. Participants showed a slight increase in the use and reliance of informal supports, rising from 28.07% to 29.27%, and valued better informal support after program participation (Fuentes-

Peláez et al., 2016). Fuentes-Peláez et al. (2016) did not identify the study's limitations and did not provide suggestions for future research.

Despite research related to kinship placements, the child welfare system relies heavily upon non-relative foster care as it is considered one of the best options in promoting a child's stability and wellbeing and enables foster youth to become part of a family environment where they can receive adequate care and attention needed to promote healthy development (Bernedo et al., 2016). Placement stability promotes a child's adequate development as secure attachment bonds are formed with the non-relative foster family (Bernedo et al., 2016). Additionally, non-relative foster care accommodates approximately 46% of youth in foster homes compared to 32% in kinship homes (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2021). In terms of placement stability, Bernedo et al. (2016) revealed that 68.3 % of youth in non-relative foster homes experienced long-term placement stability with the same foster family. Therefore, research related to non-relative foster care is vital for the current study, as the current study aims to explore placement stability among non-relative foster families.

Regarding non-relative placement, social support is a contributing protective factor to placement stability (Cooley et al., 2019). To support this concept, Picinich (2007) conducted a mixed-methods comparative study using quantitative and qualitative measurements to explore the benefits and limitations of relative foster care versus non-relative foster care. The study collected data from mailed surveys sent to 150 randomly selected relative providers and 150 randomly selected non-relative providers to explore the availability of resources, more specifically, emotional and financial support received by participants as beneficial to fostering a child (Picinich, 2007). In addition to participant survey questionnaires, Picinich (2007) utilized

two foster parent focus groups, in which participants were selected using purposive sampling. One focus group included relative caregivers, and the other included non-relative caregivers.

In terms of financial support, all study participants expressed that those financial resources provided by the state were not sufficient to care for a child in their home adequately. Participants also reported that additional financial support was needed as a factor contributing to successful foster parenting, more specifically, receiving a larger financial stipend and receiving more support, in the form of social workers returning phone calls, and having a support system from other foster parents (Picinich, 2007). The research has limitations. The first limitation concerns the low response rate of questionnaires; less than 3% of the 29 total foster parent population responded. Therefore, the results are not generalizable to the greater population. Also, the study did not use a relative focus group. Data collected from the non-relative focus group could not be compared to relative providers (Picinich, 2007). Future research should attempt to recruit a greater response rate from participants to increase the generalizability of results and conduct a relative focus group to compare study results to a non-relative focus group (Picinich, 2007).

In summary, out-of-home placement options for the foster care system include kinship and nonrelative foster care placements (Darwiche et al., 2019). This research study explored nonrelative foster care, defined as children placed in the home of a nonrelative family (Darwiche et al., 2019). Therefore, discussing kinship and nonrelative foster care is vital in response to the current study's exclusion of kinship foster parents as study participants. Previous research has identified concerns with kinship care despite the child welfare system's increased reliance on kinship placements (Daly & Perry, 2011), including placing children in poverty-stricken kinship homes (Ehrle & Geen, 2002) and undesirable neighborhoods (Daly & Perry, 2011). Additionally,



kinship homes receive little to no financial assistance, lack of monitoring from child welfare, and less support and resources than nonrelative foster homes (Daly & Perry, 2011; Gebel, 1996; Picinich, 2007).

History confirms challenges with foster parent recruitment, retention, and placement stability (Rymph, 2017; The United States General Accounting Office [USGAO], 1989). Moreover, these challenges have continued to exist over the past decade, regarding the expressed concerns of nonrelative foster parents reporting insufficient support and lack of resources received from social agencies that negatively influence foster parent satisfaction and motivation to continue fostering (Cooley et al., 2019; Geiger et al., 2013; Marcellus, 2010). Therefore, further research on nonrelative foster parents is needed to explore the recent experiences of foster parents in comparison with research conducted 14 years ago. Therefore, the current study explored the influence of informal and formal social support among nonrelative foster parents with social support as a protective factor in foster parent motivation, which influences retention, recruitment (Marcellus, 2010), and placement stability (Cooley et al., 2019).

### ***Foster Parent Recruitment***

Child welfare agencies rely heavily on foster parent recruitment efforts to acquire licensed foster homes that are adequately equipped to care for the needs of vulnerable youth. The recruitment of foster parents continues to be a challenge for the child welfare system as fewer families are willing to become foster parents resulting in a shortage of foster parents available to care for the growing rate of children placed in foster care (Rhodes et al., 2003). Communities and child welfare agencies are faced with challenges in response to the increased complexity of the population of children in foster care, continued loss of experienced foster families, low foster parent retention, and challenges with recruiting an adequate supply of new foster parents

(Marcellus, 2010). In response to the foster parent shortage crisis, child welfare agencies are forced to examine the following: factors that motivate individuals to foster, factors that influence foster parent recruitment and retention, and identify reasons foster parents discontinue fostering (Chipungu & Bent-Goodley, 2004). Hence, the current study explored what factors influence foster parent recruitment, specifically, what factors motivate individuals to foster, and what barriers prevent individuals from fostering. Therefore, this research's ability to identify factors that may influence recruitment could benefit child welfare agencies to resolve the foster parent shortage crisis.

### ***Barriers to Recruitment***

To provide clarity of foster parent recruitment challenges, Friedman (2019) suggested that understanding newly recruited foster parents' perspectives during the licensing process could aid in foster parent recruitment. Friedman (2019) conducted a qualitative exploratory study focusing on a constructivist grounded theory that consisted of in-depth participant interviews with 20 prospective foster parents to understand the experiences of these families during the early phases of the licensing process. Friedman (2019) identified factors affecting foster parent recruitment such as foster parents having different expectations of the parenting role, social and economic circumstances, systemic factors such as transportation requirements, discipline policies and childcare restrictions, confusion about agency procedures and regulations, the skill set of the foster parent, and lack of training. According to Friedman's (2019) study participants, these factors presented barriers to their decision to foster and influenced their decision to opt-out of the recruitment process.

Friedman's (2019) study does present limitations. First, the study was limited to one foster care agency in a northeastern U.S. city, restricting potential differences among different agencies

within the city or region within the United States. Another limitation in Friedman (2019) involved the issue in which the researcher struggled to set aside personal ideas for theory to emerge. This occurred due to the researcher integrating her professional experiences as a clinical social worker for foster youth, her personal experiences and perception as a former foster parent, and the researcher's observation of study participants influenced the data collection process as the researcher played a valuable role in collecting data (Friedman, 2019). Therefore, Friedman (2019) suggested that future researchers should recruit a larger sample size, expanding beyond one foster care agency to increase the generalizability of results. Also, future research should explore the use of a quantitative research design to prevent personal researcher biases (Friedman, 2019).

Despite innovative efforts utilized by child welfare agencies to recruit foster parents, a significant trend with the recruitment of licensed foster parents is declining for non-kinship foster homes (Riley-Behringer & Cage, 2014), even as the placement of children in foster care increases (Chipungu & Bent-Goodley, 2004). In response to the efforts to recruit foster parents, previous research has identified a variety of factors that serve as recruitment barriers, such as more women working outside of the home, the rise of housing costs, and the poor public image of foster parenting (Barth, 2001; Chipungu & Bent-Goodley, 2004; Dozier & Lindhiem, 2006; Martin, 2004). Additional factors related to the higher incidents of social, emotional, behavioral, and physical difficulties displayed by children in care, resulting in a negative portrayal of foster care, have increased potential foster parents' reluctance to foster (Martin, 2004).

To examine the existing barriers of foster parent recruitment, Riley-Behringer and Cage (2014) conducted a mixed-methods exploratory study using a cross-sectional convenience method to examine foster parent recruitment barriers. The study recruited a sample of 37

caregivers, more specifically, ten relative caregivers and 27 non-relative caregivers who completed survey questions via phone interviews. Survey questions asked participants whether they encountered recruitment barriers, measured by 0 = No; 1 = Yes, and if so, to describe the existing barriers in their own words (Riley-Behringer & Cage, 2014). As an outcome of the study, non-relative caregivers identified barriers that directly pertained to their reason not to foster, including financial stressors, unemployment, inability to afford childcare, housing issues, conflicting family obligations, and the lack of helpfulness from the child's caseworker (Riley-Behringer & Cage, 2014). Riley-Behringer and Cage (2014) reported study results directly related to the current study's research purpose about foster parent recruitment. The Riley-Behringer and Cage (2014) study had an oversampling of African American female applicants (83.3%), resulting in the study's inability to generalize results to other populations. Also, the study's small sample size of 37 participants limited the use of statistical analyses and generalizability (Riley-Behringer & Cage, 2014).

Research confirms foster parents' crucial role and responsibility in delivering services and care to foster children to support safety, well-being, and permanency. Despite the vital role of foster parents, child welfare agencies' primary concern is how to recruit an adequate supply of foster homes (Ahn et al., 2017) as prospective foster parents expressed difficulty in obtaining information about the foster parent licensing process and requirements in addition to fear of unknown challenges in becoming a licensed foster parent (Geiger et al., 2013).

Therefore, research exploring factors that attract foster parents is vital to increasing the population of licensed foster parents. The exploration of factors that attract foster parents for recruitment is identified in a quantitative exploratory study conducted by Randle et al. (2014), which sought to identify reasons individuals do not become foster parents. The study recruited a

sample of 756 Australian adults who were asked if they had considered becoming a foster carer; responses were recorded as 'yes' or 'no.' Individuals who answered 'no' were asked an additional question as to why they had not considered fostering and were presented with a list of 29 different reasons for not fostering (Randle et al., 2014).

Researchers identified four factors influencing one's decision not to foster. First, 26% of participants expressed they were too busy with their children to foster. Second, 22% of participants reported difficulty ending a child placement if the child was reunited with their biological family. Third, 24% of participants reported an inability to cope with the responsibility of fostering, and finally, 62% of participants reported they were never asked to foster (Randle et al., 2014). Randle et al. (2014) did not identify the study's limitations and did not provide suggestions for future research.

Children placed in the foster care system continue to grow at alarming rates (Eaton & Caltabiano, 2009; Rhodes et al., 2003). Therefore, the roles and responsibilities of foster parents to support a child's overall safety, well-being, and permanency are crucial (Ahn et al., 2017). Recruitment continues to be a challenge for the child welfare system (Randle et al., 2014) as many individuals identified barriers to fostering, resulting in a decline in available foster homes equipped to accommodate children in care (Riley-Behringer & Cage, 2014). Previous research regarding foster parent recruitment is vital as efforts to identify strategies to overcome barriers are explored. Identifying limitations and areas for future research regarding foster parent recruitment is important as the current study explores the influence of social support in promoting foster parent recruitment.

### ***Foster Parent Retention***

Foster parenting, although rewarding, is highly demanding as foster parents are expected to respond to the emotional and behavioral needs of children placed in their homes. As a result, child welfare agencies often experience difficulty retaining foster parents (Chipungu & Bent-Goodley, 2004) as approximately 30 to 50 % of foster parents discontinue fostering after the first year (CHAMPS, 2019). In fact, only 21% of foster parents continue fostering long-term, while the remaining foster parents maintain their foster care license for 8 to 14 months before deciding to discontinue fostering altogether (Cherry & Orme, 2013; Gibbs & Wildfire, 2007). Many factors influence an individual's decision to discontinue fostering, including dissatisfaction with agency relationships, poor communication with workers, concerns about children's behavior, agency red tape, low reimbursement rates, or the fostering role (Rhodes et al., 2003). Additional self-reported reasons for discontinuing fostering are related to foster parents' experience of stress in their interactions with birth families, problems between foster and birth children, and experiencing child abuse allegations (Rhodes et al., 2003). Foster parent retention continues to be a challenge for the child welfare system. The current study explores what factors motivate individuals to continue fostering and what barriers result in foster parents discontinuing fostering. Therefore, this researcher's ability to identify factors that influence retention may benefit child welfare agencies in their efforts to resolve the foster parent shortage crisis.

Retaining qualified foster parents could decrease the need for ongoing recruitment campaigns while also offering youth placement stability with experienced foster parents. To acknowledge the challenges with foster parent retention, Geiger et al. (2013) conducted a mixed-methods concurrent triangulation design that used a convenience cross-sectional sampling to recruit participants. A concurrent triangulation design refers to a study that involves the

concurrent collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2006). However, for the purpose of this research, quantitative measures were triangulated with open ended responses and a mixed-methods survey was created to measure variables with open-ended items that provided a greater explanation for the closed-ended responses (Geiger et al., 2013).

Geiger et al. (2013) utilized an online survey administered to 649 foster parent participants, representing approximately 17% of licensed foster parents in the state. The study aimed to examine the experiences and retention of foster care providers by identifying factors related to foster parents' decision to continue or discontinue fostering (Geiger et al., 2013). Foster parents were asked how likely they would discontinue fostering in the next 18 months. Study results revealed that 12% reported being very likely, 12.6% reported being somewhat likely, and 23.6% reported being unsure (Geiger et al., 2013). Foster parents were asked what influenced their decision to stay/leave fostering in the next 18 months. Participant responses were coded and categorized into six themes, including (a) intrinsic motivation and rewards, (b) self-efficacy, (c) social support, more specifically, lack of emotional and practical supports, (d) financial considerations, more specifically, a reduction in reimbursement rates, (e) issues with navigating the system, and (f) family-related factors such as individual-level family changes (Geiger et al., 2013).

Geiger et al. (2013) identified several study limitations. First, the study used a convenience sampling method to recruit study participants. A convenience sampling method omits random sampling of participants; therefore, the study findings are not generalizable to the general population of foster parents (Geiger et al., 2013). A second limitation is that the sample underrepresented racial and ethnic minority groups as 80% of the respondents were

White/Caucasian (Geiger et al., 2013). The study also used a cross-sectional method that only solicited foster parents' beliefs and intentions about discontinuing fostering at one point in time in comparison to the use of a longitudinal design that would have explored foster parents' future behavior (Geiger et al., 2013). Lastly, the survey was long in duration, which could have hindered the ability of some foster parents to complete the survey in its entirety and could have impacted participants' responses (Geiger et al., 2013).

Therefore, Geiger et al. (2013) suggested that future researchers incorporate foster parents' voices to determine what services are needed for children, the actual cost of fostering, and examine how best to foster positive relationships between foster families and caseworkers (Geiger et al., 2013). Incorporating the voice of foster parents is valuable as participants within this study identify lack of being heard as a critical factor affecting motivation and retention in fostering (Geiger et al., 2013). Therefore, if foster parents have a voice in the foster care system, this may increase retention and motivation to continue fostering. Moreover, more research is needed to determine ways for agencies and caseworkers to improve their communication and relationship with foster families, as many foster parents identified poor communication with workers as a factor contributing to turnover (Geiger et al., 2013).

Foster parents experience a high level of stress due to their involvement and responsibility to children within the foster care system. The level of stress experienced by foster parents is different compared to the general population of non-foster parents (Cooley et al., 2015) as the emotional toll and burnout on foster parents negatively impact foster parent retention (Geiger et al., 2013). To understand foster parents' experience of stress and foster parent retention, Nesmith (2020) conducted a qualitative phenomenological study to learn what seasoned foster parents viewed as their most troubling stressors and how support and resilience



influenced their decision to continue fostering. The study recruited 19 foster parents who were asked questions regarding their most significant challenges faced over time, how they reacted to and interpreted these stressful situations, and their sources of support (Nesmith, 2020). In-person qualitative interviews were conducted for the 19 participants using semi-structured interviews to address challenges experienced by foster parents impacting retention (Nesmith, 2020).

Study participants identified several stressors affecting foster parent retention, including child behaviors, strained interactions with child protection workers, not feeling valued, and investigations in response to allegations of maltreatment, abuse, or licensing violations (Nesmith, 2020). Foster parents expressed strained interactions with child protection workers as the most pervasive theme; every study participant provided multiple examples of tension and conflict with caseworkers that influenced their decision to discontinue fostering (Nesmith, 2020). The false allegations were deeply distressing and painful for foster parents as they reported feelings of betrayal, abandonment, feeling blindsided, and exacerbation of stress directly linked to consideration to discontinue fostering (Nesmith, 2020). Additionally, the study highlighted the critical value of social support, such as foster parent peers and licensing social workers as a protective factor influencing one's decision to continue fostering (Nesmith, 2020).

The study limited the sample to long-term foster parents, which only portrayed the perspectives of foster parents who did not quit fostering. Therefore, the study is limited in including the different experiences of foster parents who did discontinue fostering (Nesmith, 2020). A second limitation concerned the study's generalizability, as the study recruited 79% of Black participants who were all recruited through a single licensing agency, thus limiting the breadth of experiences represented (Nesmith, 2020). Therefore, Nesmith (2020) recommended

that future research delve into the role of race and ethnicity as possible relevant factors in the participants' phenomena (Nesmith, 2020).

More foster parents are needed within the child welfare system to accommodate the growing rate of youth placed in care. More effective methods and strategies are needed to promote foster parent retention. It is important to understand the perspective of foster parent experiences, as negative experiences may persuade foster parents to discontinue fostering. Foster parent retention could alleviate the pressures experienced by the child welfare system by eliminating multiple youth placement disruptions due to a foster parent discontinuing fostering (Diaz, 2017).

Ahn et al. (2017) conducted a longitudinal quantitative research study to examine factors associated with length of foster parenting from November 2008 to April 2010 with a sample of 385 foster parents who completed the survey; 175 were exited foster parents and 211 were continuing foster parents who were recruited quarterly via stratified random sampling of over 5000 continuing foster parents who were active in the state resource family system (Ahn et al., 2017). All participants completed surveys via a Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) system to obtain data (Ahn et al., 2017). Study results revealed that 58.37 % of participants reported they discontinued fostering because their situation changed, 23.27% had adopted foster child/children and stopped fostering, and 30.61% had moved, or their situation prevented them from fostering. Alternatively, 28.16% reported agency reasons for discontinuing fostering, including 16.7% who reported a lack of support from agency workers and 11.02 % who identified behavioral problems displayed by the child as the cause of discontinuing their foster parenting role (Ahn et al., 2017, p. 481). Ahn et al. (2017) identified three limitations that were not explored among study participants, including no exploration of the type of license held by the

foster parent, the omission of the child's reason for entering care and the level of care required, and the possible effect the economic recession had on participants' financial stability during the study. The authors suggested research is needed to examine these factors and how they might affect the long-term impact of foster parent demographics, length of fostering, and child welfare agencies' organizational factors (Ahn et al., 2017).

Although child welfare caseloads are declining (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS], 2019), the need for licensed foster parents remains as the child welfare system has struggled to maintain an adequate supply of foster homes. Child welfare agencies have explored various strategies to retain foster parents (Blackburn, 2016; Pasztor & Stallworth, 2019; Randle et al., 2017), and despite these efforts, the shortage of foster parents continues to exist (Pasztor et al., 2006). Previous research has identified a variety of factors influencing an individual's decision to continue and discontinue fostering from the perspective of active foster parents, exited foster parents, and potential foster parents who have all expressed common themes influencing foster parent retention (Ahn et al., 2017; Geiger et al., 2013; Nesmith, 2020). Previous research revealed the following factors influencing retention: lack of social support (Ahn et al., 2017; Geiger et al., 2013; Nesmith, 2020), financial considerations (Geiger et al., 2013), child behaviors (Ahn et al., 2017; Nesmith, 2020), strained interactions with child protection workers (Ahn et al., 2017; Nesmith, 2020), and reports of false allegations of either maltreatment, abuse, or licensing violations (Nesmith, 2020). In comparison to the current study, previous research exploring factors that influence foster parent retention is vital, as the current study's purpose is to explore the influence of social support and motivation on foster parent retention.

### ***Challenges Faced by Foster Parents that Affect Placement Disruption***

The stability of foster care placements is vital as the role of foster parents can be stressful, overwhelming (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019), and burdensome (Vanderfaeillie et al., 2020) as foster parents are responsible for the care and wellbeing of vulnerable youth who display psychological and behavioral challenges (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019). Many foster parents are unprepared to manage the challenges of fostering, resulting in placement disruptions as foster parents discontinue fostering (Rhodes et al., 2003). There exist many factors contributing to placement instability. As it pertains to this research study's purpose, to explore the impact of social support in promoting placement stability, it is important to understand what factors contribute to a foster parent's decision to end a placement and what barriers exist in promoting placement stability. Therefore, this research's ability to identify how foster parents' views on what influences placement stability could benefit child welfare agencies in their efforts to limit foster youth placement disruptions.

To further explore the challenges with placement stability, Tonheim and Iversen (2019) conducted a mixed-methods descriptive study in which 132 foster parent participants completed a semi-structured online survey to explore the reasons for unintended placement disruptions in foster care. Participants were asked two survey questions. The first question, quantitative in design, asked participants to identify the causes of prior placement disruptions from a list of potential causes related to the child, foster family, and the caseworker. The second question, qualitative in design and open-ended, asked foster parents to use their own words to identify the cause of placement disruptions (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019).

This study confirmed that placement disruptions are caused by several coexisting causes and risk factors related to the child welfare worker's insufficient support and follow-up and

youth challenging behaviors (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019). Despite interesting findings, Tonheim and Iversen (2019) study did not collect data from foster parents who had successful foster placements and only presented foster parents' perspectives on why placements were disrupted despite several parties involved in a foster care placement. Because of this, the researchers were unable to compare successful placements in comparison to placement disruptions and were unable to consider multiple party perceptions of placement disruptions, which could have presented biased perceptions of the causes of placement disruption within the foster care system (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019). Tonheim and Iversen (2019) suggested that future research examine the lack of resources, heavy workloads, and high turnover rates to develop solutions to enable CWS success and identify resources and strategies to better and more frequently support foster parents.

There are several reasons why foster families decide to disrupt a placement. Regardless of those reasons, placement disruptions and instability negatively affect children's safety, permanency, and well-being (CHAMPS, 2019). Placement stability for foster youth is crucial for positive development, behavioral well-being (Konijn et al., 2019), and developmental outcomes (Akin et al., 2015). Previous research has identified a connection between foster parent motivation, foster parent satisfaction, and placement disruption, as many foster parents experience high levels of stress, strain, and exhaustion during fostering (Cooley et al., 2015; Farmer et al., 2005). High levels of stress result in parents becoming less motivated, less committed, and less engaged in fostering, which may cause a placement disruption as foster parents' ability to cope with the challenges of fostering becomes overwhelming (Cooley et al., 2015; Farmer et al., 2005).

To explore factors affecting placement stability and disruptions, Crum (2010) conducted a quantitative exploratory study to identify foster parenting characteristics that increase placement stability or decrease the number of disruptions. The study recruited 151 currently fostering parents to complete the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory to measure parental characteristics and the Parenting Alliance Measure to determine perceived alliance between foster parents (Crum, 2010). Results indicated parenting support accounted for 15% of the total variance in placement stability (Crum, 2010), and almost 40% of foster parents reported a lack of satisfaction and pleasure from fostering, which is a predictive factor to placement disruption (Crum, 2010).

Because the study only included participants from Ohio, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia, with 81% of the foster parents residing in Ohio, generalizability was limited in the Crum (2010) study. A second limitation was the study's use of the Parent-Child Relationship Inventory (PCRI), which was not normed for use with foster parents and is a self-reported measuring tool that presents challenges as individuals have the opportunity to respond randomly and are subject to responder bias. A final limitation concerned the study's data collection came solely from foster parent perspectives, excluding the characteristics of the foster child or the interaction between child and parent variables, which may affect placement disruptions (Crum, 2010). Because of the limitations, the authors suggested future research concentrate on recruitment from a larger population, utilization of an instrument that is foster parent-specific, and exploration of characteristics of the foster child and the interaction between child and parent variables, which may produce significant results pertaining to placement instability (Crum, 2010).

Placement stability is a prerequisite for children to develop secure attachments with caregivers, as children are less likely to develop internalizing and externalizing problems, more specifically, behavioral and emotional problems (Newton et al., 2000) when their home remains stable. Therefore, research exploring factors that contribute to placement stability is important for foster parent success outcomes and foster youth overall development and growth (Newton et al., 2000).

To further discuss the importance of placement stability, Leathers et al. (2019) conducted a quantitative exploratory study to identify factors associated with difficult parenting experiences and placement disruption. Leathers et al. (2019) recruited 139 foster parents via random selection who currently cared for children aged 8–14 in long-term foster care who had a history of two or more placement disruptions or instability. Participants completed a 90-minute telephone interview to measure children's behavior, adequacy and sources of foster parent social support, foster parent perception of unmet service needs and agency support, and parenting experiences. Foster parents were asked two questions regarding their expectations at the onset of a child's placement regarding placement stability. First, if the foster parent is expected to provide a temporary or emergency placement. Second, how long the foster parent expected the child to be in their home (Leathers et al., 2019, p. 151). Participant responses regarding placement disruptions were coded as a dichotomous variable, as a response of "1" indicated a disruption and a response of "0" indicated stability or a move not categorized as a disruption (Leathers et al., 2019, p. 151).

Study results support that foster parents' parenting experiences are a critical precursor to placement success outcomes as negative parenting experiences are significantly associated with placement disruptions (Leathers et al., 2019). According to Leathers et al. (2019), foster

parenting experiences that significantly impact placement stability include foster parents who experience high levels of stress at .23%, a need for support at .18%, and lack of receiving adequate services at .26%. Additionally, results from this model support that child risk to others has a significant predictor of increased risk for placement disruption at .74% (Leathers et al., 2019).

Limitations of the study concern the study's sample size and its sole reliance on a single foster parent interview to track outcomes, as foster parents may be more likely to report positive experiences with parenting due to social desirability. Therefore, future research should recruit a larger sample size to provide adequate logistic regression and identify additional associations with disruptions. Also, future research should include perspectives from others involved in foster care placements, including the perspectives of children and caseworkers whose perspectives may provide different results than foster parents (Leathers et al., 2019).

Various factors lead to placement disruptions that are child-related, caregiver-related, and CWS related factors (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019). More specific to this research study, caregiver-related and CWS related factors are highlighted as factors contributing to placement disruption (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019). Some placement disruptions are caregiver-related as many foster parents cannot manage negative behaviors, feel overwhelmed, and stressed with behavioral challenges displayed by foster youth (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019). A final factor for placement disruption is CWS related factors as many foster parents experience a lack of support from CWS workers that may influence a foster parent's decision to end a placement or discontinue fostering, which results in a placement disruption when the child is relocated to another home setting (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019). There remains a need for the current research study to explore factors contributing to placement stability for foster youth.



## **Quantity and Perceived Quality of Foster Caregivers' Support**

Existing literature identifies foster parents' supportive environment and family connectedness at the micro-level (Lietz et al., 2016) and supportive relationships with child welfare professionals at the mezzo level (Geiger et al., 2017; Murray et al., 2011) as factors that contribute to resilience among foster parents. Social support provided within the foster care system consists of resources or assistance received from professionals who provide a type of formal support to foster parents, more specifically, caseworkers, social workers, and therapists (Cooley et al., 2019). Foster parents receive additional supportive resources and assistance from individuals not involved in the case, such as family and friends who provide informal support (Cooley et al., 2019). Social support has been identified as a protective factor in foster parent retention, recruitment (Marcellus, 2010), and placement stability (Cooley et al., 2019). The need for the current study to explore the impact of social support on foster parent success outcomes, more specifically, the type and quantity of social support as a contributing factor in promoting placement stability and foster parent retention. Therefore, this research's ability to explore the relationship between social support, placement stability, and foster parent retention will benefit child welfare agencies to promote foster parent success outcomes.

In measuring informal and formal social support on foster parent retention and placement stability, Cooley et al. (2019) conducted a quantitative cross-sectional research study to examine the influence of social support among foster parents. The study recruited 155 licensed foster caregivers across the United States who completed an online survey with standardized measures of satisfaction and challenges as a foster parent with the influence of social support. Study findings indicated that the influence of social support is linked to variables that directly influence

placement stability and is a protective factor regarding challenges associated with fostering that impact foster parent retention and satisfaction (Cooley et al., 2019).

Cooley et al. (2019) identified limitations concerning the study's small sample size, limiting the results' generalizability. Also, the study failed to include additional variables within the measuring instrument. Information about the child's length of placement, number of previous placements, and length of time in care were not collected as control variables that may have influenced foster parent retention and placement stability. Therefore, future research should incorporate a larger sampling size and explore alternative instruments to capture additional variables that may increase generalizability and influence study results (Cooley et al., 2019). Nevertheless, study results revealed by Cooley et al. (2019) are beneficial to the current study, as results confirmed the influence of social support in promoting foster parent retention and placement stability, which directly relate to the research questions of this study.

Social support greatly influences parental success outcomes by promoting changes in parental beliefs and practices as parents seek supportive resources, guidance, and direction from informal and formal supportive networks (Byrne et al., 2012). To further discuss, Byrne et al. (2012) conducted a between-subject design to examine how informal and formal social support and the time frame at which support was provided influenced parental outcomes. The study recruited 496 parents who participated in self-reported pre-test and post-test questionnaires to examine the variation in the pattern of changes. In addition, the scale of personal and social support was utilized to explore the sources of informal and formal support before and after participants' participation in a Personal and Family Support program from 2006 to 2009 (Byrne et al., 2012).

The study indicated that adequate social support effectively prevented child maltreatment and influenced parental outcomes by promoting changes in parental beliefs and practices (Byrne et al., 2012). The research revealed that parents were more satisfied with informal support and relied upon support more from informal networks (Byrne et al., 2012). Finally, Byrne et al. (2012) revealed that informal support always positively impacts parental success outcomes regardless of when the support was provided, whereas formal support only has a positive impact when applied at the onset.

Despite the influence of social support, Byrne et al. (2012) relied upon participants' self-reports to measure all constructs, increasing the risk of biased or objective results as participants may underreport, over-report, or withhold information. Additionally, the study lacked information concerning support content and participants' motivations for seeking support (Byrne et al., 2012). Byrne et al. (2012) suggested future research to clarify the meaning of support, categorize the type of support, and consider an alternative measuring instrument to clearly understand participants' perception of support received and reduce participant bias or objectiveness. Nevertheless, research by Byrne et al. (2012) is beneficial to the current study, as results confirmed the influence of informal and formal types of social support in promoting foster parent retention and placement stability, which directly relate to the research questions of this study.

Regarding measuring social support, the quantity of social support among foster parents is vital as foster parents experience difficulty navigating the challenging and stressful role of fostering (Cooley et al., 2019). Social support must be accessible, reliable, adequate, and available during times of high stress, crisis, or hardships to assist foster parents in effectively coping with the challenges of fostering (Ozbay et al., 2007). Adequate social support is an

essential protective factor for maintaining overall physical and psychological health (Ozbay et al., 2007) among foster carers and others in the caring role. To further explore the concept of the quantity of social support, Sidery (2019) conducted a qualitative research study that recruited 11 participants via purposive sampling who participated in semi-structured interviews that explored their views on the usefulness of social support and resources. The collective themes included the ongoing quantity of support received from support organizations, contacts in the local community, support from social workers, and carer to carer support emerged as crucial factors in meeting the needs of foster parents (Sidery, 2019).

Sidery (2019) did not directly reveal limitations or target areas for future research. The small sample size and the lack of racial diversity among participants limited the generalizability of the study to the population of foster parents. Therefore, the recruitment of a larger racially diverse sample of participants should be considered for future research to increase the generalizability of results. Sidery (2019) identified themes directly related to the importance of social support as a protective factor for foster parent retention and placement stability as meeting the needs of foster parents through social supports will influence foster parent success outcomes.

To summarize, social support is a significant predictor of confidence and satisfaction among foster parents (Cooley et al., 2019) as social support reduces caregiver burden (Shiba et al., 2016), promotes an individual's adaptability to cope with conflict, and increases hope for betterment (Bareket-Bojmel et al., 2021). These outcome benefits of social support positively impact parental success as satisfaction and confidence are related to foster parents' willingness and intent to continue fostering (Cooley et al., 2019), while adaptability and hope guide the path to positive outcomes (Bareket-Bojmel et al., 2021).

### *Informal and Formal Support*

In highlighting the impact of social support on promoting mental health and fostering psychological growth (Viseu et al., 2018), previous research contradicts reporting study results. Most research supports the concept that social support received from different informal and formal support sources is a personal resource crucial in stressful moments (Viseu et al., 2018). While other research revealed significantly different outcomes, suggesting that informal supports were associated with lower caregiver burden, such as stress, when formal social supports were not (Shiba et al., 2016).

To clarify this perspective, Shiba et al. (2016) conducted a quantitative exploratory study using cross-sectional data to examine the relationship and quantity of available social supports with caregiver's burden. Shiba et al. (2016) collected data from 2,998 caregivers of physically and cognitively impaired individuals who utilized in-home services. Informal social supports were identified as relatives, friends, neighbors, and other non-professionals, while formal social supports were identified as professionals, including family physicians and care managers (Shiba et al., 2016). In measuring social support, participants were asked to identify each support they can consult when they have trouble with caregiving. Participants revealed that having informal social support was associated with lower caregiver burden, while formal social support was not. Family physicians as formal support were significantly associated with lower caregiver burden (Shiba et al., 2016).

Shiba et al. (2016) used cross-sectional data that resulted in reverse causation, which increased the potential for caregivers to utilize social support only when burden increased. Also, the study did not specify the type of social support perceived by caregivers and limited the geographical recruitment of participants. Therefore, limiting generalizability and restricting

specification of social support resulted in the reduced understanding of the effect of social support in reducing caregiver burden (Shiba et al., 2016). Shiba et al. (2016) suggested future research to include a longitudinal research design, expand the geographical recruitment of participants, and specify the type of social support to increase the study's ability to identify causal inference, increase the generalizability of results, and expand understanding of caregiver's burden (Shiba et al., 2016). As it pertains to this research study's purpose, Shiba et al. (2016) study is beneficial to the current study, as a high caregiver burden directly links placement instability and motivation to continue fostering.

According to Shiba et al. (2016), social support in the form of informal support reduces caregiver burden, which is directly related to the current study, as informal support is a protective factor in foster parent retention and placement stability. If foster parents have access to informal social supports, caregiver burden is reduced, which potentially increase foster parent satisfaction, and if foster parent satisfaction increase, then the existence of placement stability and foster parent retention is positively promoted.

To contradict the positive impact of social support, Palant and Himmel (2019) identified adverse outcomes from social support: supports overreacting or displaying pity towards other's stressful situations. The adverse reaction of support resulted in participants who experienced feeling overwhelmed, annoyed, higher anxiety levels, unstable mental health, and an altered self-awareness. Palant and Himmel (2019) conducted a qualitative exploratory study to understand and describe the possible adverse effects of social support. The study conducted 90-minute narrative face-to-face interviews with 42 patients diagnosed with inflammatory bowel disease from September 2011 to June 2012. Participants were asked to openly discuss their medical experiences from the onset of observed health problems. Participants identified unwanted

confrontations and undesirable reactions from social supports as negative aspects of social support (Palant & Himmel, 2019).

Despite the significant results of the study, limitations concerning the use of a qualitative design are evident as qualitative research presents the possible influence of researcher bias, personality, and training on data collection and analysis. Also, qualitative research presents challenges with the generalizability of results as small samples sizes are insufficient to generalize results to a larger population. Therefore, future research should consider a quantitative design with a larger sample population to eliminate researcher bias and increase generalizability (Palant & Himmel, 2019).

Viseu et al. (2018) study confirmed the impact of social support in promoting successful outcomes. Viseu et al. (2018) conducted a quantitative study with a cross-sectional design that explored the association between stress, anxiety, and depression by testing the moderating effect of social support on the study variables. The study recruited 729 participants who completed the Informational, Practical, and Emotional Support (IPES) scale to measure social support. The IPES used a four-point Likert scale of 1–Not at all to 4–Very much in response to participants' perception and helpfulness of social supports. The research confirmed that social support reduced the magnitude of the relationship between stress, anxiety, and depression. More specifically, participants reported a positive impact of social support on the relationship between economic stress factors of financial threat and economic hardship.

Viseu et al. (2018) recruited a sample of solely Portuguese participants that was not representative of the population, and all collected data was non-random as participants utilized a snowball method to recruit additional participants. Also, a cross-sectional design did not allow for causality and aspects of physical disability and history of mental illness were not controlled.

Viseu et al. (2018) suggest future studies to employ longitudinal designs and incorporate mental health and physical disability aspects that will allow the inference of causality and explore data results across the different aspects of participant conditions.

An abundance of research identifies the impact of social support on predicting success outcomes related to retention and placement stability. For example, research spotlighting reasons employees stay at an organization supports the influence of social support in promoting retention by identifying a direct link between satisfaction and turnover rate. This concept of social support directly connects to social support and foster parent success outcomes. To explain, research has highlighted factors promoting motivation such as perceived supervisor support (Afzal et al., 2019), salary (Saiti & Papadopoulos, 2015), performance rewards (Ng & Butts, 2009), perks and recognition (Saiti & Papadopoulos, 2015), information sharing, and learning opportunity (Ng & Butts, 2009) which are similar factors promoting foster parent retention and placement stability.

### **Motivation to Foster**

Despite the presenting challenges and difficulties experienced by foster parents, fostering is a volunteer role in the United States. A person's decision to foster is not a decision that is decided likely as efforts to recruit and retain foster parents have been a challenge for the child welfare system since the rise of World War II (Rymph, 2017). Research indicates various motivating factors that may influence or support a person's decision to foster children, such as infertility issues, a desire to help children, a desire for companionship, wanting to help the community or wanting to increase their family size (Baum et al., 2001). Some foster parents are highly motivated to adopt children and may have religious motivation (Baum et al., 2001; Colton et al., 2002). While other foster parents foster as a responsibility to a relative or close family friend to prevent the child from entering the foster care system (Baum et al., 2001). Despite one's



decision to foster, the role of motivation is crucial in influencing decision-making (Pohankova, 2010). Hence, the need for the current study to explore what factors motivate individuals to foster, continue fostering, and discontinue fostering. Therefore, this research's ability to explore the relationships between motivation, foster parent retention, and placement stability will benefit child welfare agencies to resolve the foster parent shortage crisis.

To further explore factors contributing to foster parent motivation, Keys et al. (2017) conducted a quantitative exploratory study that examined the motivation of Christian foster parents through three personality characteristics; empathy, humor, and flexibility associated with participants' intentions to continue fostering. Keys et al. (2017) recruited 115 foster parents who completed self-administered surveys that asked participants to select a single motivating factor that most influenced their decision to foster. In response, 57% of participants identified the desire to help those in need, while 20% reported infertility as factors influencing the decision to foster.

Keys et al. (2017) presented challenges with generalizability as 85% of study participants were married, with no differentiation between individual or couple survey completion, and 95% of participants were Caucasian, which limited the racial diversity of the sample. Also, the instrumentation method presented challenges, as Keys et al. (2017) collected data from survey instruments, Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ), Coping Humor Scale (CHS), Cognitive Flexibility Scale (CFS), and the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ), which were not originally tested on foster parents, which could influence the validity of the instruments. Keys et al. (2017) suggested future research to expand recruitment efforts to obtain a sample representative of the population regarding diversity and marital status. Also, Keys et al. (2017) suggested that future research continues to understand how personality characteristics, the impact of coping skills, and self-esteem personalities promote foster parent retention. Therefore, Keys et

al. (2017) study contributes to the current research as it highlights specific motivating factors identified by foster parents, which guides the research questions of this study.

Historically, child welfare workers have scrutinized foster mothers' motivation to foster and expressed skepticism about their motivation for financial benefits (Rymph, 2017). Therefore, Frimpong-Manso et al. (2020) conducted an exploratory qualitative study to understand the motivation of foster parents. Frimpong-Manso et al. (2020) conducted and analyzed data through 15 semi-structured interviews using an inductive thematic approach. Participants reported the following motivating factors to foster: altruistic reasons such as the desire to fulfill the needs of children, their love for children, religious and social obligations, and personal satisfaction of gaining financial rewards or adopting a child.

Frimpong-Manso et al. (2020) expressed limitations with generalizability because the sample only included 15 participants recruited from one private fostering agency in Accra, Ghana, which is not sufficient for the general population as the sample omitted foster parents living in rural areas and from other agencies. Therefore, future research should include a larger sample size of participants and widely recruit foster parents from various settings and locations to increase the generalizability of study findings to the foster parent population (Frimpong-Manso et al., 2020). The results presented by Frimpong-Manso et al. (2020) are beneficial to the current research as it adds additional motivating factors in support of the research questions.

It is highly important to deeply explore the motivating factors influencing one's decision to foster, as motivation to foster is related to foster parent retention (Keys et al., 2017), recruitment (Friedman, 2019), and placement stability (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019). Researchers have found that foster parents have both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to foster, which

should be considered as foster parents can be motivated by both internal and external factors (MacGregor et al., 2006).

### ***Intrinsic Motivators***

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivators directly affect the motivation to perform (Law et al., 2017). Intrinsic motivators are altruistic (Rodger et al., 2006), have more influence on one's decision to foster (Baer & Diehl, 2019), and relate positively and significantly to positive work engagement (Froiland et al., 2012) in comparison to extrinsic motivators. Baer and Diehl (2019) conducted an exploratory qualitative study to identify factors that motivated people to foster teenagers to explore the influence of intrinsic motivators. Baer and Diehl (2019) collected data through 19 semi-structured interviews with 16 foster parents and six foster care agency staff using the constant comparative method to analyze data that allowed grounded theory to emerge. Participants reported they were motivated to foster teenagers by a combination of intrinsic overarching motivators that included: making a difference, having a family, and financial compensation, classified as a tangible extrinsic motivator. Additional intrinsic motivators to foster teenagers were teen-specific and parent-oriented, including ability, lifestyle, passion, preference, and satisfaction (Baer & Diehl, 2019).

The study presented limitations affecting the ability to draw comparisons between subgroups of participants because the study included a broad range of participants, foster parents, and agency staff. Also, fluidity in terminology and language presented limitations as the study did not differentiate between foster care and fostering teenagers, which impacted foster parents' accurate reporting of teen-specific motivators (Baer & Diehl, 2019). Baer and Diehl (2019) suggest future research to clarify the most common motivating factors and delve into how they are constructed. Also, Baer and Diehl (2019) suggested future research to incorporate other

methods for data collection such as observation or document review to address social desirability and language fluidity, to expand on study findings.

To challenge the influence of intrinsic motivators, Putra et al. (2017) found that extrinsic motivation was a better motivator to improve work performance, while intrinsic motivation only works best for complicated tasks and requires higher cognitive skills. Despite research contradictions, intrinsic motivators fulfill psychological needs for competency, autonomy, and relatedness (Kao, 2015; Law et al., 2017), which according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, when more basic needs are satisfied, the psychological health of the individual will improve (Lester, 2013). To clarify one's basic needs in connection with the needs of foster parents, the psychological need of competency refers to feeling effective and capable in one's actions (Kao, 2015). Foster parents who are competent display a skillful ability to care for the needs of foster youth. In addition, the psychological need for autonomy refers to feeling a sense of choice or choosing a behavior that is interesting and meaningful (Kao, 2015). Foster parents have the freedom to choose the youth placed in their home, which may result in a personal, meaningful fostering experience. Finally, the psychological need for relatedness refers to feeling reciprocally respected and cared for through supportive connections with others (Kao, 2015), which is displayed through respect and support foster parents receive from social and caseworkers.

Intrinsic motivators influence foster parent retention, as reported by De Maeyer et al. (2014), who conducted a quantitative study using a 24 item checklist inventory. The checklist included three scales to measure intrinsic motivators related to child-centered reasons, self-oriented reasons, and society-oriented reasons. The study recruited 192 non-kinship foster parents who were asked to identify their motivation to foster, measured on a 4-point Likert scale. The study explored motivating factors and foster parent retention with the goal of foster care

services to recruit more foster parents De Maeyer et al. (2014). Participants identified child-centered reasons to foster as providing a good home (99.5%) and love for the child (97.9%). Self-oriented reasons to foster included wishing to have children (23.9%) and society-oriented reasons to foster were endorsed for three-quarters of foster parents that included participants wanting to do something for the community/society (71.4%) and fulfill a religious belief by caring for a child (73.5%) (De Maeyer et al., 2014).

De Maeyer et al. (2014) study was limited to active female foster parents as the study omitted non-active foster parents and recruited 78.1% of foster mothers. Therefore, limiting the perspective of foster fathers and non-active or discontinued foster parents. De Maeyer et al. (2014) suggested future research to explore foster parent motivation and the relationship with successful fostering to assist foster care agencies in identifying a direct link between foster parents' motivation to foster and successful outcomes.

Fostering provides inherent rewards, defined as intrinsic motivators. Intrinsic motivators include child-oriented factors (Baer & Diehl, 2019; (De Maeyer et al., 2014), self-oriented factors (Baer & Diehl, 2019) such as foster parents' need for companionship (De Maeyer et al., 2014), and society-oriented factors (Baer & Diehl, 2019) including religious beliefs and community fulfillment (De Maeyer et al., 2014) that motivate one's decision to foster (Baer & Diehl, 2019; De Maeyer et al., 2014). Intrinsic motivators such as improving self-esteem, gaining self-confidence or a sense of accomplishment, and garnering recognition are components that lead to a better quality of life (Holyoke & Larson, 2009). If foster parents acquire these internal motivators to foster, the outcome promotes foster parent retention and placement stability.

### *Extrinsic Motivators/Rewards*

In contrast to intrinsic motivators, extrinsic motivators often are monetary (Rodger et al., 2006). Therefore, it is not uncommon to conclude that external motivators like money influence human behavior (Kao, 2015), and if monetary rewards are viewed as a supportive measure, an individual can be motivated to work harder (Hua et al., 2020). Previous research exploring factors that influence turnover identified extrinsic rewards as a contributing factor to one's decision to quit or continue at a job (Cooley et al., 2019; Hausknecht et al., 2009; MacGregor et al., 2006). Extrinsic rewards have positive success outcomes, as revealed by Hausknecht et al. (2009), in which 41% of participants identified extrinsic rewards as their reason for continuing at a job. In comparison, Froiland et al. (2012) revealed a direct link between individuals who received monetary incentives and increased motivation. Moreover, Law et al. (2017) also identified positive work engagement outcomes when perceived benefits outweighed the perceived cons. Extrinsic rewards such as adequate training (MacGregor et al., 2006) and adequate financial compensation (Baer & Diehl, 2019; MacGregor et al., 2006) for foster parents promote foster parents' reason to stay as they are more tangible in comparison to intrinsic motivators (MacGregor et al., 2006).

Hudson and Levasseur (2002) conducted a quantitative study to explore the support needed to maintain the foster parent role. The study recruited 66 participants who completed survey questions to explore the support foster parents required to successfully maintain their foster homes. Researchers found that 70% of participants identified extrinsic motivators as factors needed to maintain their homes (Hudson & Levasseur, 2002). Almost 50% of study participants reported they needed approximately 100 additional dollars per month per child to maintain their placement (Hudson & Levasseur, 2002).

Hudson and Levasseur (2002) did not report limitations of the study or areas for future research. The study lacked diversity and presented an uneven distribution of foster families as 88% of participants were foster mothers, and 66 families fostered a total of 112 children. Future research should recruit a more diverse sample of participants that represent male foster parents and expand the distribution of foster families to include a variety of foster family child capacities. Therefore, Hudson and Levasseur's (2002) study contributes to the current research as it highlights specific extrinsic motivating factors identified by foster parents, which guides the research questions of this study.

Previous research has highlighted the positive outcomes of extrinsic motivators that promote retention (Baer & Diehl, 2019; MacGregor et al., 2006). In research, contradictions identify extrinsic motivation as an exhausting long-term outcome (Putra et al., 2017) secondary to intrinsic motivators (Knowles et al., 2011). Therefore, long-term foster parent satisfaction will not be achieved if extrinsic motivators such as pay, benefits, or rewards are the only motivation for a task. Extrinsic motivators implemented independently are short-term motivators because individuals expect to benefit from their actions, and the depletion of the benefit may produce poor performance outcomes (Putra et al., 2017). In addition, foster parents rely on multiple systems for intrinsic and extrinsic support. Therefore, if there exists a deficit in a system, the foster parents' risk of discontinuing fostering is elevated as the parent has not established a level of satisfaction with fostering (Cooley et al., 2019).

## **Summary**

Chapter two presented a literature review covering a wide range of studies related to nonrelative foster care and the influence of social support and motivation to foster in promoting foster parent recruitment, retention, and placement stability. The child welfare system has faced

challenges with the recruitment and retention of foster parents for decades resulting in a shortage of foster parents available to care for the growing rate of children placed in care (Pasztor et al., 2006; Rhodes et al., 2003). As a result, researchers have explored many factors to influence foster parent recruitment, retention, and placement stability, such as the influence of social supports (Byrne et al., 2012; Cooley et al., 2019; MacGregor et al., 2006; Sidery, 2019), intrinsic motivators (Baer & Diehl, 2019; De Maeyer et al., 2014), extrinsic motivators (Hudson & Levasseur, 2002; MacGregor et al., 2006), and motivation to foster (Baum et al., 2001) as protective factors contributing to foster parent success outcomes. Despite previous studies, foster parent retention and placement stability challenges continue to exist (Pasztor et al., 2006; Rhodes et al., 2003).

The literature has established the gap via the suggestions made by Neagoe et al. (2019), Richardson et al. (2018), and Tonheim and Iversen (2019). These researchers saw the need to further explore social support in increasing foster parent motivation (Neagoe et al., 2019), retention (Richardson et al., 2018), and placement stability (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019). In addition, Richardson et al. (2018) identified the need for future research to examine the impact of informal and formal support for foster carers independently to better understand if specific sources of support are more valuable and more influential than other forms of support. This quantitative correlational study addressed the recommendations by Neagoe et al. (2019) by recruiting a large sample size inclusive of male foster parents; Richardson et al. (2018), and Tonheim and Iversen (2019) by including data reported by successful foster parents. This research identified the influence of informal and formal social support in promoting foster parent satisfaction and intent to continue fostering in the southeastern region of North Carolina. Therefore, from the analysis of the background to the research problem, the problem statement



emerges as: it is not known to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering. In this study, the general population was licensed non-relative foster parents in the United States.

Next, the Theoretical Foundations section reviewed the theories and theoretical models concerning social support, motivation, and resilience. Social support theory is widely used as a theoretical foundation in foster care research focusing on the influence of social support on the effects of foster parent retention, recruitment, and placement stability (Cullen, 1994; Drennon-Gala, 1994, 1995; Powers et al., 2018). Maslow's theory of motivation states that internal motivation is derived from one's basic human needs, and the existence of basic human needs promotes one's desire to fulfill that need by creating need-fulfilling goals (Dweck, 2017; Maslow, 1943). Finally, Garmezy's (1991a) theory of resilience is the ability for an individual to positively adapt and react when confronted with stress or life challenges and serves as a positive function in the face of adversity (Garmezy, 1991a; Storer et al., 2014). The social support theory, Maslow's theory of motivation, and Garmezy's theory of resilience provide the foundation of this study. All research questions are aligned with the theoretical foundation.

The review of the literature section began with the historical background of the challenges with foster parent retention, recruitment, and placement stability as the demands of foster parents increased in the early 20th century (Daly & Perry, 2011). Therefore, the USGAO 1989 affirmed a foster parent shortage crisis and identified factors with the outcome of influencing foster parent recruitment and retention. These factors included: lack of support for foster parents, a poor public image of foster care, societal changes, lack of respect, inaccessible social workers, and insufficient training (USGAO, 1989). Despite these factors, the child welfare system continues to

experience challenges with foster parent retention and placement stability (Geiger et al., 2013; Nesmith, 2020; Tonheim & Iversen, 2019). As a result, researchers began introducing new trends that alternatively labeled foster parent retention and placement stability. Alternatively, labels included intent to continue fostering (Cooley et al., 2015) with the inclusion of foster parent satisfaction as a predictor variable to promote foster parent retention and placement stability (Mihalo et al., 2016). Additionally, current research began to explore the influence of resilience as a factor associated with reduced parental stress, higher satisfaction, and intent to continue fostering (Cooley et al., 2019).

The literature review discussed methodologies used in foster parent retention and placement stability. The quantitative methodology supports correlational inquiries to discover if a relationship exists between research variables as reported by study participants' perceptions (Terrell, 2016). In quantitative studies, researchers often rely upon self-administered surveys or questionnaires completed by participants to answer research questions (Terrell, 2016). This review led to the quantitative methodology with a correlational design for this research. Also, the literature review discussed data sources for measuring foster parent success outcomes; hence using self-administered questionnaires is most beneficial to answer the researcher's questions (Terrell, 2016).

The researcher developed the problem statement and research questions upon analyzing research gaps within the literature review. Foster parent turnover and placement disruptions are prevalent due to several factors impacting foster parent retention, recruitment, and placement stability, such as social and economic circumstances, lack of training (Friedman, 2019), financial stressors (Riley-Behringer & Cage, 2014), and insufficient support from child welfare workers (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019). To combat the challenges with foster parent retention and placement

stability, interventions identifying factors to promote foster parent success outcomes such as the influence of informal and formal support (Cooley et al., 2019) and intrinsic and extrinsic motivators (Law et al., 2017) should be utilized. Implementing social support and motivators can also increase foster parents' motivation to foster and continue fostering (Dweck, 2017; Keys et al. (2017) as approximately 30 to 50 % of foster parents discontinue fostering after the first year (CHAMPS, 2019). There is a need to address a gap in the literature by understanding the impact of formal and informal social supports in promoting foster parent success outcomes.

Next, chapter three states the research questions and hypothesis for the study describes the population of the study, identifies the dependent and independent variables, and provides details about the sampling procedures, recruitment of participants, data collection methods, and the research instruments utilized in the study. Chapter three discusses the study's procedures and statistical analysis and concludes with a chapter summary.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

It is not known to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering. Chapter three, the methods chapter, provides an overview of the details of the study, including the research design and methodology. Chapter three states the research questions and hypotheses for the study, including identifying the independent and dependent variables of the study. Additionally, this chapter describes the population of the study, including recruitment and sampling procedures. Data collection methods, instruments administered within the study, and the quantitative software used are discussed. This chapter also includes a brief discussion of ethical considerations for participants, including participant consents, and discusses the data analysis procedures. The chapter concludes with a summary of the discussion.

### **Design**

The research study employed a non-experimental quantitative methodology employing correlational using a cross-sectional, single group design that implements self-administered surveys to study participants. Surveys were administered to participants with no treatment received or introduced by the researcher (Jackson, 2016). Survey research is the most frequently used research method with a rapid turnaround in data collection (Heppner et al., 2016). Survey research is an effective, fast, and cost-effective method of collecting data to answer qualitative and quantitative research questions (Heppner et al., 2016; Jackson, 2016). A correlational method is preferred for this research as a correlational design is often used with survey research (Privitera, 2020), is less time consuming and less expensive than experimental research and is

more effective in the analysis of existing relationships between two or more variables to determine the extent to which two variables are related (Gall et al., 2010; Privitera, 2020).

Other designs were considered for this study but not utilized. For example, a causal-comparative design was not appropriate because this study intended not to define differences in variables across groups but to analyze relationships between the independent predictor variables and the dependent criterion variables (Heppner et al., 2016; Terrell, 2016). Also, an experimental design was not appropriate because the purpose of an experiment is to make causal inferences about the effect of a manipulated treatment variable on a measured outcome variable (Terrell, 2016; Warner, 2013). In contrast, the pre-experimental design aims to conduct exploratory research to determine if a full-scale experimental study was warranted, which is inappropriate for the current study's purpose (Terrell, 2016; Warner, 2013). A descriptive correlational design is appropriate as this study is concerned with the relationship between variables and can answer the research questions (Heppner et al., 2016; Warner, 2013). Additionally, the researcher used a nonprobability convenience sample for the study. A convenience sample represents the entire population of the study, is a technique in which participants do not have an equal or known likelihood of being selected, and participants are obtained based on convenience (Jackson, 2016), availability (Gideon, 2012), and accessibility (Terrell, 2016).

A quantitative research methodology was used to allow the researcher to explore many sample participants in North Carolina and increase the generalization of results. This design uses scientific data collection and analysis methods versus a smaller participant sample with a qualitative design (Daniel, 2016). Also, a quantitative methodology is more appropriate for this study as quantitative research evaluates how predictor variables, such as foster care displacements, moderate the criterion variables, such as intent to continue fostering and foster

carer satisfaction. Hence, the study examined how a moderator variable affects the direction or strength of the relationship between the predictor variable and the criterion variable (Heppner et al., 2016).

In this study, the correlational design uses the independent predictor variable: foster care displacements and the dependent criterion variables: intent to continue fostering and foster carer satisfaction (Heppner et al., 2016; Terrell, 2016). The study is also cross-sectional because the data is assessed at a point in time and not over a longitudinal period (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2018). Maximo and Carranza (2016) used a quantitative correlational design to describe how the variable of resilience varies in relation to the variables of parent-child attachment and parental love languages. Maximo and Carranza (2016) used quantitative measures to gather and analyze data, employed correlational methods and tests of differences to analyze the quantitative relations of the study variables, and used a cross-sectional design to compare existing differences among the target groups. Maximo and Carranza's (2016) quantitative correlational design to explore resilience among variables supports the researcher's decision to use a quantitative correlation design to examine the relationship between variables.

A qualitative research methodology would be more appropriate if the researcher intended to understand foster parents' non-numerical opinions and personal experiences (Daniel, 2016) that influenced success outcomes. Also, if the researcher were interested in collecting emerging themes from participant narratives, a qualitative methodology with a small sample size would be appropriate (Knight & Tetrault, 2017). The researcher for the current study is not interested in exploring a phenomenon but is interested in recruiting a larger participant sample to obtain numeric data results from a quantitative methodology (Knight & Tetrault, 2017). Finally, a quantitative methodology eliminates researcher bias during data collection, and data analysis as

the researcher has no direct contact with participants versus a qualitative methodology where researcher bias, interpretation, and personality are a concern (Daniel, 2016).

While using a quantitative methodology is most appropriate, a limitation of using a quantitative research methodology is the inability of the researcher to explore other possible factors impacting foster parent success outcomes (Heppner et al., 2016). For instance, the researcher in this study was unable to determine whether additional factors contribute to intent to continue fostering and foster carer satisfaction, to include child-related factors, such as a child's reason for entering care and required level of care (Ahn et al., 2017), the child's length of placement and number of previous placements (Cooley et al., 2019) was not explored within this study. Therefore, only the factors of social support and motivation in the form of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in moderating foster parent success outcomes of intent to continue fostering and foster carer satisfaction were studied. A second limitation concerns participant self-reported surveys as the return rate of a first survey mailing is only 30%, raising questions regarding the external validity of results (Heppner et al., 2016). A final limitation concerns using a convenience sampling method that omits random sampling of participants; therefore, the study findings are not statistically generalizable to the population of foster parents (Geiger et al., 2013; Terrell, 2016) and introduce the risk of bias sampling because conveniently chosen participants may differ from participants who are not identified for recruitment (Blakeslee et al., 2013). Additionally, participants who voluntarily participate in the study may differ from participants who declined participation. This may result in a sample population that does not represent the entire population (Blakeslee et al., 2013).

## Research Questions

Because it is not known to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering, the research questions and hypotheses presented are non-directional, with the intent to conduct a multiple linear regression to test the null hypothesis. To address the gap within the research, the research questions for this study determined to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between displacements and foster care satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

The researcher collected primary data via participants completing online self-administered surveys through Qualtrics®. The surveys administered to participants included the Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS), which measured foster parent satisfaction and intent to continue fostering (Mihalo et al., 2016), the Family Support Scale (FSS), which measured informal and formal support received by foster parents (Dunst et al., 1984), and the modified version of the Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ), which has been modified to measure foster parents' intention to continue fostering (Keys et al., 2017).

To test the hypothesis and relationship between variables the moderator variables (informal and formal support and quantity of foster care support), criterion variables (intent to continue fostering and foster carer satisfaction), and the predictor variable (foster care displacements), the researcher established three research questions and corresponding hypothesis, which addressed the issues identified in the problem statement:

**RQ1:** If and to what extent does the quantity of foster care support services significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering?



**RQ2:** If and to what extent do formal foster care support services significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering?

**RQ3:** If and to what extent do informal foster care support services significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering?

### Hypotheses

The corresponding hypotheses for the research questions are listed below. Each set of hypotheses is testable and addresses each research question's expected relationship. It should be noted that the researcher may experience the risk of Type I error if the null hypothesis is not rejected but should have been rejected. To clarify, the researcher of this study will reject the null hypothesis, meaning accepting the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, if the null hypothesis is correct, meaning the researcher is wrong, a Type I error will occur (Warner, 2013).

**H01:** The quantity of foster care support services does not significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

**H1a:** The quantity of foster care support services does significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

**H02:** Formal foster care support services does not significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

**H2a:** Formal foster care support services does significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

**H03:** Informal foster care support services does not significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

**H3a:** Informal foster care support services does significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

### Participants and Setting

For this study, the researcher recruited participants in North Carolina. Possible participants included those in the role of licensed non-relative foster parents. The general population includes all licensed non-relative foster parents in the United States. The target population for the study is non-relative foster parents licensed within at least one of five agencies in southeastern North Carolina, with a minimum of two years experience as an active foster care parent with a minimum of two foster care placements. The sampling frame represents the target population, and for this study, the total sample needed is 102 participants. This section detailed the study's recruitment process, information about the research site, inclusion and exclusion criteria for participants, and ethical considerations.

### Population and Sample

The general population for this study included licensed foster parents, non-relative foster parents, kinship parents, and licensed therapeutic foster parents with a minimum state-required age of 21. The study targeted licensed male and female non-relative foster parents in North Carolina. The targeted population included foster parents with a minimum age of 25, who have been fostering for a minimum of two consecutive years and have had a minimum of two foster youth placements. The sample population for this study included a sample size of 85 participants recruited from the target population. The researcher recruited 102 participants, an additional 20%

of participants required to account for missing data, attrition, and mortality (Shadish et al., 2002; Suresh & Chandrashekhara, 2012). In quantitative studies, a sample size of 85 participants is required for a medium effect size of .30 with a statistical power of .80 at a .05 alpha level (Brydges, 2019). A sample size of 85 participants is sufficient for this research (See Appendix E). A statistical power of .80 implies that a study will correctly reject the null hypothesis 80% of the time and report a false negative committing a Type II error at 20% (Brydges, 2019). The researcher collected more than 85 completed participant data sets and included all the additional data sets in the data analysis phase, as increasing sample size will increase the power of the study (Serdar et al., 2021).

The researcher anticipates a variety of racial backgrounds among participants. The study attempted to include an equal representation of female to male participants and a sufficient representation of participants' racial backgrounds. If there is no equal representation of participants regarding race, gender, or ethnicity, external validity may suffer as findings from the sample will not be as generalizable to the larger population of foster parents (Ocumpaugh et al., 2014).

Study participants were not compensated for their individual responses to the survey questions. However, the researcher entered all participants who completed the entire survey into a drawing for monetary compensation of one of four \$25.00 visa gift cards. Participants were asked to provide their email on the informed consent to participate in the gift card drawing. After the gift cards were disseminated, the researcher removed or redacted the email information on participant consent forms to maintain confidentiality. If participants did not provide a complete dataset due to dropping out or failure to complete the study (i.e., attrition and or mortality), this resulted in a reduced sample size causing a significant threat to internal validity (Shadish et al.,

2002). The researcher may need to enroll more subjects to compensate for potential attrition or mortality (Gupta et al., 2016).

### **Recruitment**

The researcher used convenience sampling to recruit the expected number of foster parents via referrals from the department of social services (DSS) and four foster care agencies licensed in North Carolina. The researcher directly contacted the Department of Social Services (DSS) and four licensed foster care agencies in North Carolina to request site approval to recruit foster parents to participate in the research study. The researcher began participant recruitment after gaining approval from Liberty University's IRB. The researcher requested that the identified foster care agencies send a recruitment flyer or email to all licensed non-relative foster parents, inviting them to participate in the research study.

### **Study Site**

Participants were recruited from the department of social services and four foster care agencies in North Carolina after the researcher gained approval from Liberty University's IRB. The following pseudonyms were assigned for the confidentiality of participants and connecting foster care agencies: department of social services (DSS), foster care agency one (1) referred to as FCA1; foster care agency two (2) referred to as FCA2; foster care agency three (3) referred to as FCA3, and foster care agency four (4) referred as FCA4.

To recruit study participants for this study, the researcher initially contacted each study site's director by email to obtain site approval. The researcher sent an email to the director of each foster care agency and the department of social services, director of the foster care division. If the researcher did not receive a response within one week, the researcher then contacted each site via phone to speak with the site director to request site approval. After the researcher

received the site approval letter from each sites' director giving the researcher permission to utilize their site for the study and has obtained IRB approval, then the researcher sent each site director an email containing a study invitation flyer to distribute to foster parents within their agency who meet the inclusion criteria. The invitation flyer included an online link directing participants to the research study's informed consent letter, demographic questionnaire, and study instruments to complete.

### **Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

Inclusion criteria for the study included those participants, who were nonrelative foster parents that lived in North Carolina, had been fostering for a minimum of two consecutive years and had a minimum of two foster youth placements. There were no exclusion criteria for placement home family dynamics, which means that participants could be a single-parent home or a two-parent home. Conversely, exclusion criteria eliminated potential participants aged 21-24, as the minimum age to foster is 21 in the state of North Carolina (NCDHHS, 2021a). As a result of the minimum age to foster, participants who fell in this age category did not meet the study's inclusion criterion of a minimum of two consecutive years of fostering. There was no exclusion criterion for a participant's socioeconomic status, such as employment, level of education, race, ethnicity, marital status, and income.

### **Ethical Considerations**

There exist three basic principles that are particularly relevant to the ethics of research involving human subjects: the principles of respect of persons, beneficence, and justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978). Respecting persons employs two ethical convictions: individuals should be treated as autonomous agents, and persons with diminished autonomy are entitled to protection (National

Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978). Respect of person includes two separate moral requirements: to acknowledge autonomy and protect those with diminished autonomy (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978).

This research study honored the principle of respect of persons and value self-determination. The researcher respected participants' autonomy and provided adequate information about the study (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978). The researcher respected autonomy as study participation were voluntary, providing participants with the right to voluntarily participate or decline to participate in a research study without the exercise of pressure, coercion, and undue influence (Heppner et al., 2016; National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978). Also, this research ensured the protection and anonymity of all study participants in which participants were assigned a number to mask their identity and the name of the foster care agencies. Numerical identifiers were used for all completed datasets and each foster care agency to maintain confidentiality, avoid disclosure of information that may be harmful to participants and prevent possible harmful exposure of the involved foster care agencies (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The principle of beneficence is often understood as do not harm and maximizing possible benefits while minimizing possible harms (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978). A researcher should not injure, harm, or present risk of harm to study subjects regardless of the benefits that might come to others, the researcher, or society (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978). The principle of justice refers to fairness in distribution, treating

equals equally, and individuals obtaining what they deserved (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978).

This research implemented an informed consent in which participants consented via an online signed consent form, allowing participants to complete a demographic questionnaire to apply the general principles of respect of persons, beneficence, and justice. After participants signed the consent form and completed the demographic questionnaire, participants then completed the self-reported surveys via online access through Qualtrics®. The informed consent contained three elements: information, comprehension, and voluntariness (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978) and described in detail the study's purpose, participants' obligations, potential risks, and expectations related to the completion of the three survey questionnaires (Heppner et al., 2016). Additionally, the informed consent provided consent for study results to be released and shared publicly and provided participants with the option to opt-out or withdraw from the study at any time, in which their results were not be shared publicly (Heppner et al., 2016).

Finally, precise care was taken to protect all written and electronic documents, including participant consents, prescreening documents, and survey questionnaires, by utilizing computer passwords and a locked storage file cabinet located within the researcher's residence. After the completion and publication of the study, all research-related data, including paper and electronic data, will be stored securely in locked storage for three years, after which time all data will be destroyed via the method of shredding, and the surveys will be deleted in Qualtrics® as well as any SPSS files. During the research study and after the conclusion of the study, the researcher will have sole access to all participant data and study results for the three-year duration, therefore, eliminating external access or tampering with research data.

## **Instrumentation**

Data was collected using the English version of the Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS; Denby et al., 1999; Mihalo et al., 2016), the Family Support Scale (FSS; Dunst et al., 1984; Hoang, 2018) and the Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ; Keys et al., 2017; Roodt, 2004, see Appendix D). Additionally, while not a data source, the researcher also collected demographic information. Participants' demographic data included gender, ethnicity, age, marital status, length of fostering, number of foster placements, and number of placement disruptions. The level of measurement for all demographic information provided by study participants is nominal and ordinal. The identified criterion variables for this study are foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering. The predictor variable for this study is foster care displacements conceptualized as a breakdown in parenting leading to the foster parent's inability to provide in-home care for a child (Leathers et al., 2019). The current study's purpose is to determine to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering. Foster care support services are the moderator variable, including the type and quantity of foster care support services as predictor variables. Additionally, participants completed survey questionnaires independently and submitted results through an online survey via Qualtrics®. Results were recorded on the online platform and downloaded for analysis to the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 27.0.

## **Data Collection Instruments**

The Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS), the Family Support Scale (FSS), and the Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ) were administered during the research phase of the study to participants via an online survey through Qualtrics®. Participants



completed the 28-item Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFPSS; Mihalo et al., 2016), the 21-item FSS (Dunst et al., 1984) to determine foster parents' perception of the role of social supports, and the 3-item Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ) (Keys et al., 2017) to determine foster parents' intention to continue fostering.

Study participants completed online self-administered surveys through Qualtrics® completed in their chosen location, more preferably, a private home setting. In order to conduct a research study with a wider geographical range and demographics of participants, it is more feasible to conduct a computer-based research design by having participants complete self-reported survey questionnaires via a computer-assisted method (Wilson, 2015). Participants had the option to choose the location of the computer-based survey, usually, a home setting, which provides convenience, time flexibility, and increases the rate of participation as respondents are not committed to cost and time of travel to a physical research location and or site (Wilson, 2015).

#### ***Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS; see Appendix D)***

The Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS) created by Mihalo et al. (2016) was based on Denby et al. (1999) Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (FPSS), which was shortened and adapted to create the TFP-SS. The TFP-SS was created to measure treatment parent satisfaction based on information collected from a sample of 777 treatment foster families (Mihalo et al., 2016). The survey contains 28 ordinal level questions that measure four domains, including Professional Parenting Role, Treatment Parent Efficacy, Quality of Training, and Support from Staff, and explains 58.7% of the variance (Mihalo et al., 2016). Each domain score is reported as a separate average score ranging from 1.0 to 7.0 for three domains and 1.0 to 4.0 for the fourth domain (Mihalo et al., 2016).

The domains of Professional Parenting Role, Treatment Parent Efficacy, and Quality of Training are scored on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree. The fourth domain, Support from Staff, is scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Never to 5 = Very Often. Three additional questions, including overall parent satisfaction, range from Not At All Satisfied to Very Satisfied, intent to continue fostering with the organization, and intent to refer others to become treatment parents with the organization. Both questions range from Not at All Likely to Very Likely. Also, there is a space where parents can include additional comments or suggestions (Mihalo et al., 2016). The researcher's justification for using the TFP-SS compared to previous versions of the FPSS concerns the modified instrument's usage of 28-items compared to the Denby et al. (1999) original version of 64-items measure parent satisfaction. According to Heppner et al. (2016), a shorter survey is more effective for participants to complete as longer surveys affect participants' survey return rate.

The original version of the FPSS has been used in previous studies, including Martin (2004), Rodger et al. (2006), and Cooley et al. (2019), who altered the survey to meet the specific characteristics of the target population for the study. Martin (2004) utilized an 89-item questionnaire to identify foster parent success outcomes factors. Rodger et al. (2006) utilized a 139-item questionnaire, while Cooley et al. (2019) utilized a four-item subscale of the foster parent satisfaction survey. Reliability and Validity of the FPSS. Using high reliability and validity instruments to measure variables is essential in a quantitative study (Heppner et al., 2016). The original FPSS was initially developed by Denby et al. (1999) and is a widely used survey measuring foster parent satisfaction, retention, and intent to continue fostering. The FPSS has been altered and reduced in size to highlight items pertinent to a specific study. Specifically, Rodger et al. (2006) altered the version of the FPSS and measured five statistically and

conceptually different factors compared to Denby et al. (1999), which measured reliability ranging from .89 to .95. Cooley et al. (2019) version of the FPSS demonstrated an appropriate level of internal consistency at  $\alpha=.75$ . For this study, the researcher used the TFP-SS modified version of the FPSS created by Mihalo et al. (2016), which determined reliability high for all four domains with Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.78 to 0.91.

***Family Support Scale (FSS; see Appendix D)***

A scale is a collection of items combined to create a composite score to reveal the levels of theoretical variables that are not observed directly (Heppner et al., 2016). The Family Support Scale (FSS) is a brief, self-administered instrument developed to measure and assess the source of social support available to families raising children, producing an ordinal measurement level (Dunst et al., 1984; Hoang, 2018). The identified sources of social support measured by the FSS include family, friends, social groups, professional agencies, service providers, religious groups (Hoang, 2018; Littlewood et al., 2012; Peshawaria et al., 2000). The scale consists of five areas for support: kinship, spouse/partner, informal, programs/organizations, and professional services (Dunst et al., 1984) and includes 18-scale items listed for both formal and informal sources of support that requires participants to rate the level of perceived support and or helpfulness on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Not At All Helpful to Extremely Helpful. Two additional items of the scale (items 19 and 20) are narrative responses that provided another option for identified forms of support (Dunst et al., 1984; Hoang, 2018; Littlewood et al., 2012; Peshawaria et al., 2000) and were included for this study. Study participants had the option to select Not Available (NA) if the source of support addressed by the scale item was unavailable to participants (Hoang, 2018; Littlewood et al., 2012; Peshawaria et al., 2000).

The FSS is divided into four subscale scores: sources of support, adjusted sources of support, informal support, and formal support as individuals scores. Then the FSS obtains a total family support scale score of all 19 responded items (Dunst et al., 1984). For this study, the researcher analyzed the subscale scores separately to independently examine the impact of informal and formal support, which fills the research gap identified by Richardson et al. (2018). Higher scores on the FSS indicate greater amounts of social support, while lower scores on the FSS indicate limited social support (Hoang, 2018; Littlewood et al., 2012; Peshawaria et al., 2000). The researcher's justification for using the FSS to measure and assess sources of social support compared to using an alternative instrument relates to the broad and in-depth implementation of the FSS among various parent-child family characteristics (Dunst et al., 1984). The FSS has been used in multiple studies examining the effect of social support on parent health, wellbeing, family integrity, parenting perceptions of child functioning, and styles of parent-child interactions, which confirms the familiarity, the consistency, and the in-depth implementation of the instrument in various research studies (Celik & Ayna, 2014; Dunst et al., 1984; Hanley et al., 1998; Hoang, 2018; Kondrat et al., 2014; Littlewood et al., 2012; Peshawaria et al., 2000). Using a widely supported instrument provides the current research with validity and reliability results that are supported by previous research.

Reliability and Validity of the FSS. The Family Support Scale (FSS) employed in this study is one of the most valid and reliable tools to measure sources of social support among parents with children (Dunst et al., 1984; Hoang, 2018; Peshawaria et al., 2000). In subjecting the FSS to reliability, Hoang's (2018) corrected item-total correlation showed that all 18 items of the scale loaded strongly over .40 with a mean of 0.54 (range = .41-.74). The Cronbach's alpha for the total scale was .89, and instrument subscale alphas were: extended family,  $\alpha = .83$ ;

nuclear family,  $\alpha = .62$ ; community,  $\alpha = .91$ ; professional support,  $\alpha = .87$  (Hoang, 2018). The rule-of-thumb for alpha is above .70, representing slightly better reliability (Hoang, 2018; Warner, 2013). The test-retest reliability of the FSS was moderate (Hoang, 2018). Additionally, Peshawaria et al. (2000) established inter-rater reliability by having two raters from the research staff independently assess the same five parents using the FSS and found the inter-reliability for the FSS to be  $r=0.9776$ ;  $p<0.001$ .

The study relied upon the FSS implemented by Dunst et al. (1984), which also included 18-items (plus two respondent-initiated items) rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from not at all helpful (1) to extremely helpful (5). The Coefficient alpha computed from the average among the 18-items was .79, and the split-half reliability was .77. The study implemented test-retest reliability and analysis, which yielded an average  $r = .42$  ( $SD = .15$ ) for the 18 separate items and  $r = .50$  for the total scale score (Dunst et al., 1984). The scale item professional helpers test-retest correlation was marginally significant ( $p < .05$ ) while all other stability coefficients were significantly beyond the  $p < .001$  level (one-tailed test) (Dunst et al., 1984).

### ***Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ; see Appendix D)***

The Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ) is a widely used measuring instrument that produces an ordinal level of measurement (Nashwan et al., 2021). It is a brief, self-administered scale initially designed to measure intention to leave an organization developed by Roodt (2004) in an unpublished document, and Jacobs and Roodt (2008) later published the instrument in their study. The original version of the Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ), developed by Roodt (2004), consisted of 14-items measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Jacobs and Roodt's (2008) study of turnover intentions of professional nurses updated the original version to include 15

items measured on a 5-point Likert scale. Later, Bothma and Roodt (2013) published a shortened version of the scale, known as TIS-6, which included six items from the 15-item scale.

For this study, the researcher used a modified version of the TIQ developed by Keys et al. (2017) that measured foster parents' intentions to continue fostering. The TIQ modified version uses a 7-point Likert scale with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree (Keys et al., 2017). In this modified version of the TIQ, the original phrase, my job was placed with my role as a foster parent. Also, the modified version of the TIQ altered three original questions to include (1) "In the last year, I have thought seriously about leaving my role as a foster parent," (2) "I often think about leaving my role as a foster parent," and (3) "I will probably look for a new agency to become a foster parent in the next year (Keys et al., 2017, p. 74)."

The TIQ modified version is a three-item questionnaire that combines the score of each item to one total scale score of all three responded items (Keys et al., 2017). Lower scores on the TIQ indicate a desire to remain in the role as a foster parent, while higher scores on the TIQ indicate a desire to leave the role as a foster parent (Keys et al., 2017; Roodt, 2004). The researcher's justification for using the TIQ to measure foster parent intention versus an alternative instrument is based on Jacobs and Roodt's (2008) motivation to develop the TIQ. Most instruments that measure turnover intentions utilized a small number of measured items. The TIQ incorporates multiple measuring items, which is essential because using single-item indicators to measure turnover cognitions is criticized because construct validity is unknown (Jacobs & Roodt, 2008). Therefore, the researcher for this study used the TIQ as there exist limited studies that include at least three items per instrument (Jacobs & Roodt, 2008). Also, this modified three-item version of the TIQ specifically targets foster parents' intention to remain fostering (Keys et al., 2017), which is directly linked to the purpose of this research study.

Reliability and Validity of the TIQ. Roodt's (2004) original 14-items version of the TIQ reported a Cronbach alpha of 0.913, which indicated acceptable reliability. Jacobs and Roodt (2008) reported a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.90 for a 13-item version of the TIQ. Bothma and Roodt (2013) altered version of the TIQ, and the TIS-6 also confirmed reliability and validity, which predicted turnover intention and behavior at  $\alpha = 0.80$ . For this study, Keys et al. (2017) modified version of the TIQ has also been found to have high levels of internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha exceeding .83, which is the version to be used for this study.

#### Data Collection Procedures

##### ***Data Collection***

Data collection for the current study included gaining written permission from the developers of the instruments used for the surveys (Appendix D), the auditing entities at the university, and the study sites' directors. The researcher acquired permission to use each of the survey instruments: The Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS), The Family Support Scale (FSS), and the Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ). The researcher gained approval from the university's Institutional Review Board before collecting data. After obtaining site authorization, the researcher sent each site director an email containing a study recruitment invitation flyer to distribute to foster parents within their agency via email, in-person distribution or post the flyer inside their agency, whichever method is appropriate for the site. The recruitment invitation flyer included an online link directing participants to complete the research study's informed consent letter, demographic questionnaire, and survey instruments. The link started with a consent form that each foster parent agreed to before participating in the study.

The consent form informed the participant of the following: information, comprehension, and voluntariness (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical

and Behavioral Research, 1978) and described in detail the study's purpose, participants' obligations, potential risks, and expectations related to the completion of three survey questionnaires (Heppner et al., 2016). The informed consent form discussed how the researcher would utilize the data, the data collection processes, the analysis process, ethical considerations, and implications of participation and researchers as outlined by the consent form (Appendix C). For cost-effectiveness, fast distribution, and time-saving benefits, the researcher used an internet-based survey collection company called Qualtrics® for the confidentiality of data collection. Qualtrics® allowed the researcher to create survey questions via an online portal, allowing participants to submit completed surveys anonymously. The use of Qualtrics® eliminated the use of postal mail-in surveys, potential loss or misplacement of participant data, and assisted the researcher in obtaining data at a faster rate and lower cost than mail-in surveys (Gao et al., 2016).

Participants answered the questions from all three instruments in one inclusive survey: The Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS; Mihalo et al., 2016), The Family Support Scale (FSS; Dunst et al., 1984), and the Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ; Keys et al., 2017). In addition to the three research instruments, the researcher included demographic questions developed by the author to capture participants' gender, ethnicity, age, marital status, length of fostering, number of foster placements, and number of placement disruptions. The level of measurement for all demographic information provided by study participants is nominal and ordinal. The researcher combined these instruments with the demographic questions into one survey for foster parents who meet the inclusion criteria to complete online. By combining the research informed consent, demographic questionnaire, and survey instruments into one survey, the researcher eliminated the challenges and tasks of data matching during the data analysis phase. In using multiple research instruments, matching data requires five major steps for the



researcher: data pre-processing, indexing, record pair comparison, record pair classification, and evaluation of matching individual responses from each instrument to each participant (Christen, 2012).

Participants completed the surveys online at a location and time that was convenient to the participant. The researcher used a nonprobability convenience sample for this study. A convenience sample represents the entire population of the study and is a technique in which participants do not have an equal or known likelihood of being selected. Participants will be obtained based on convenience (Jackson, 2016), availability (Gideon, 2012), and accessibility (Terrell, 2016). The survey opened after IRB approval, and the sites were notified that they could send out the invitations. The last survey was accepted until the minimum number of responses was obtained. The researcher anticipated 102 survey responses.

The target population for the study included non-relative foster parents licensed within at least one of five agencies in North Carolina, with a minimum of two years experience as an active foster care parent with a minimum of two foster care placements. Data collected using convenience sampling from participants currently fostering in North Carolina examined the relationships between the identified variables to investigate the hypotheses. G\*Power software used to extract the minimum number for the population when power = 0.80 and  $\alpha = 0.05$  produced a minimum sample of 85 with an 80% confidence level (Brydges, 2019, Appendix E). A statistical power of .80 implies that a study will correctly reject the null hypothesis 80% of the time and report a false negative committing a Type II error at 20% (Brydges, 2019).

The researcher anticipated a minimum 15% response rate for the current survey. The researcher implemented factors to promote an increase in participant response rate by offering an incentive for survey completion, minimizing the length of the surveys, and assuring participants

of privacy and confidentiality (Saleh & Bista, 2017). Each participant was provided a link to the survey that contained the informed consent, the researchers' contact information, a reiteration of anonymity of the survey, an explanation of how the researcher plans to utilize the data, and ethical considerations for participants to consider before participating in the current study. In addition, the researcher offered four \$25 visa gift cards drawn randomly from those who participated in the study, completed surveys in their entirety, and shared their email address. The researcher hoped that the gift cards would increase the study's response rate.

To protect the identity of the participants, the researcher had each participant complete the survey anonymously. Qualtrics® utilizes Transport Layer Security (TLS) encryption (also known as HTTPS) for all transmitted data to ensure secure and confidential user data (Qualtrics®, 2021). After receiving participant data, the researcher uploaded the data collected from the survey into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software and checked for missing data (Warner, 2013). SPSS is a software package widely used in social science to complete statistical analysis (Warner, 2013). SPSS supported this researcher in the data analysis process by computing a multiple regression test (Warner, 2013)

As reported in the Belmont Report, the researcher adhered to the three basic principles of ethical research: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978). According to the Belmont Report, it is understood that research involving human subjects will do no harm and maximize possible benefits while minimizing possible harms (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978). Therefore, study information will be safely stored at the researcher's home until the three-year retention period. During the three-year retention period, the researcher will maintain data backup of all saved data,

including SPSS files on an external USB drive kept in a locked-file cabinet only accessible to the researcher.

Upon completing the three-year retention period, the researcher will delete the survey in Qualtrics®. Qualtrics® (2021) may retain some copies of deleted data on backup media for up to 90 days for the following reasons: to comply with legal obligations, to enforce company agreements, and to resolve disputes. During the 90 days, Qualtrics® ensures inaccessibility to the data except for the researcher to restore the data if necessary. Upon completion of the three-year storage guidelines, raw data without identifiers will be retained if the university wants to review the data for future publications. Qualtrics® (2021) will permanently delete the data when the required purposes no longer exist.

### ***Procedural Controls***

The research is a quantitative correlational study to determine to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering. The current study includes variables, and with any given variable, there will be specific answer choices that are coded, resulting in inevitable data errors. Therefore, to detect and correct coding errors, the process of data cleaning is warranted (Crossman, 2020) and is critical to the validity of quantitative methods (Osborne, 2013).

For this study, possible-code cleaning was implemented by the researcher as the process of checking to see that only the codes assigned to the answer choices for each question appear in the data file (Crossman, 2020). For example, the researcher defined possible codes for each question before entering the data into SPSS. Then, as the statistical data is entered into SPSS,

any number entered outside the pre-defined codes will result in an error message alarming the researcher of the incorrect coding, preventing data entry errors (Crossman, 2020).

Accuracy in data collection, data entry, and data analysis is essential. Therefore, procedural controls are vital in quantitative research to reduce research errors (Spacey, 2018). Within this research study, procedural controls were implemented by scoring the results of participants' Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS), the Family Support Scale (FSS), and the Placement Disruption Questionnaire twice to confirm the reliability of the measurement scales. Another procedural control is online survey methods, which will keep participants isolated from other participants while independently completing surveys. This control aims to avoid interference from unpredicted or unintended stimuli impacting survey results, which will affect the validity of the assessment tools (Spacey, 2018). Variable control is also used in research to keep a variable constant to minimize its influence on the results (Spacey, 2018). Within this research study, the criterion variables, foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering were the variable controls used to prevent the influence of test results. The study implemented time constraints in survey completion to guarantee that foster care displacements, foster carer satisfaction, and intent to continue fostering remain constant for the duration of the study (Spacey, 2018).

The researcher used a multiple regression for the analysis procedure for this research study. A multiple regression is appropriate for this research design as a multiple regression allows multiple predictor variables to be part of the regression model that predicts the criterion variable (Laerd Statistics, 2020). This regression model component is valuable to the current study, which included three moderator variables; informal and formal supports and quantity of foster care support services, one predictor variable, foster care displacements and two criterion

variables, foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering. Multiple regression with alpha level  $\alpha = 0.05$  will produce an 80% confidence level (Brydges, 2019). A statistical power of .80 implies that a study will correctly reject the null hypothesis 80% of the time and report a false negative committing a Type II error at 20% (Brydges, 2019).

### **Data Analysis**

It is not known to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering. The researcher expanded on social support theory through data analysis as it correlates with foster parent satisfaction and intent to continue fostering using online surveys. The researcher conducted a multiple regression test to determine if foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster parent satisfaction, number of foster care displacements, and intent to continue fostering.

**Research Questions/Hypotheses.** The research questions and subsequent hypotheses guided this quantitative, correlational study:

**RQ1:** If and to what extent does the quantity of foster care support services significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering?

**H01:** The quantity of foster care support services does not significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

**H1a:** The quantity of foster care support services does significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

**RQ2:** If and to what extent do formal foster care support services significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering?

**H02:** Formal foster care support services does not significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

**H2a:** Formal foster care support services does significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

**RQ3:** If and to what extent do informal foster care support services significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering?

**H03:** Informal foster care support services does not significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

**H3a:** Informal foster care support services does significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

### ***Data Preparation and Cleaning***

After entering the data into the SPSS program, the researcher thoroughly examined the information for missing data. Mirzaei et al. (2022) determined that missing data occurs when an input has not been entered or generated and may include intended or unintended actions of the responder or researcher. For example, respondents may have skipped questions, data encoding errors may occur, or issues with electronic devices and internet connectivity may result in missing data (Mirzaei et al., 2022). For this research study, the researcher did not implement the method of multiple imputations, as the study produced no missing data at the individual

participant level (Ballard et al., 2021). Multiple imputations would have created imputed data sets representing multiple sets of plausible values to obtain one estimate (Ballard et al., 2021). In other words, multiple imputations replace missing data with substituted values (Ballard et al., 2021).

The researcher conducted a data screening to identify and correct potential problems with the data prior to data analyses (Warner, 2013). Data screening allows the researcher to describe the sample and discover if data has been entered correctly or out-of-range values exist (Warner, 2013). Also, data screening allows the researcher to discover the existence of outliers missing values and check assumptions before conducting statistical tests (Warner, 2013). Data screening also allows the researcher to analyze the descriptive statistics, including gender, age, years of fostering, ethnicity, education level, household income, and employment status.

### ***Descriptive Statistics***

The researcher tested for the assumption of a normal distribution to ensure value for using a multiple regression by conducting measures of central tendency: mean, median, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis (Warner, 2013). Descriptive analysis procedures will determine the data distribution (Warner, 2013). Statistical Package for Social Science; SPSS is useful in research by producing scatter plots, charts, tables, histograms, and frequencies (Warner, 2013). A scatter plot performed in the SPSS program examines linearity to determine if the data of the two variables resemble a straight line (Warner, 2013). If the data does not violate the assumption of linearity, the researcher will use a multiple regression to test the null hypothesis of the study. Finally, the researcher tested for outliers. An outlier is an extreme score on the low or high end of a frequency distribution of a quantitative variable and is shown on a scatter plot (Warner, 2013).

### *Inferential Statistics*

The researcher conducted several tests to analyze the data and test the null hypotheses (Warner, 2013). The researcher used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to analyze the data collected from the participants (Warner, 2013). Statistical Package for Social Science is a software package widely used in social science to complete statistical analysis (Warner, 2013). The software can complete many statistical tests such as Pearson product-moment correlation, Spearman's rho, chi-square tests, t-test, ANOVA, and linear regressions (Warner, 2013). The researcher utilized a secured location when loading the data into the software. Statistical Package for Social Science supported this researcher in the data analysis process by computing a multiple regression test (Warner, 2013) to analyze foster parent retention and placement disruption moderated by social support.

The researcher used a multiple regression to test all hypotheses of the study. Multiple regression uses several explanatory variables to include social support to predict the outcome of response variables; foster carer satisfaction, and intent to continue fostering (Warner, 2013). Multiple regression examines how multiple independent variables are related to one dependent variable (Warner, 2013). The study set statistical significance and risk of Type I error at  $\alpha = .05$  for each correlation, implying that the likelihood of incorrectly concluding an existing relationship between X and Y is less than five percent, displaying Type I error, that is a rejection of  $H_0$  when  $H_0$  is true (Heppner et al., 2016; Warner, 2013).

Statistical assumptions underlie most multivariate statistical tests, such as multiple regression (Meyers et al., 2005; Warner, 2013), which has eight assumptions related to the study design and the nature of the data (Laerd Statistics, 2020). The assumptions related to the study design concern (1) if the design has a continuous dependent variable and (2) if the design has



two or more independent variables, which are either continuous or categorical. The assumption of independence of observations is designed to test for 1st-order autocorrelation, which means that the observations in a sample are independent of each other and that the measurements for each sample subject are not related to the measurements of other subjects (Laerd Statistics, 2020).

The remaining six assumptions relate to the nature of the data (Laerd Statistics, 2020). The assumption of normality suggests that the Y outcome variable should be a quantitative variable with normally distributed scores (Warner, 2013). The assumption of linearity suggests that the relation among all pairs of variables should be linear (Warner, 2013). The assumption of homoscedasticity suggests that the regressions to predict Y from X1 should be homogeneous across levels of X2, and the variance in Y scores should be homogeneous across levels of X1 (and levels of X2) (Warner, 2013). The assumption of multicollinearity occurs when two or more independent variables are highly correlated (Laerd Statistics, 2020; Tsagris & Pandis, 2021), which can cause the coefficient to be falsely nonsignificant as standard error can inflate or deflate (Tsagris & Pandis, 2021). Additionally, significant outliers, high leverage or highly influential points should not exist in a multiple regression as they are unusual (Laerd Statistics, 2020). Finally, in a multiple regression, residuals, also defined as errors, should be approximately normally distributed to determine statistical significance (Laerd Statistics, 2020). Should one or more of these assumptions be violated, the statistical results may be biased or distorted (Meyers et al., 2005; Warner, 2013).

To address statistical assumptions, all data results were entered and screened for violations of normality and analyzed by SPSS. The SPSS results generated ordinal data from participants' scores on the Likert scale questionnaires, nominal data from demographics such as

gender and race, and ratio data from questions of the age of participants and income. Multiple regression is a practical statistical test for this research as the researcher predicted the following assumptions: The Y outcome variables social support and motivation are quantitative, and the researcher predicts the scores will be normally distributed. The researcher assessed possible violations of this assumption by looking at the univariate distributions of scores on Y (Warner, 2013). Also, the researcher predicted a linear relationship between the variables within the study and predicted no significant outliers (Meyers et al., 2005; Warner, 2013). The researcher assessed possible violations of linearity by examining bivariate scatter plots for all variable pairs (Warner, 2013). The researcher predicted that the regressions to predict Y from X1 would be homogeneous across levels of X2, and the variance in Y scores will be homogeneous across levels of X1 (and levels of X2) (Warner, 2013). The research qualitatively assessed this assumption by grouping study subjects based on scores on the X2 variable and conducting a separate X1, Y scatter plot or bivariate regression for each group. Multiple regression is appropriate if the slopes are similar across groups (Warner, 2013).

Suppose the existing assumptions of analysis are violated. In that case, the researcher's ability to trust study results and validly draw inferences about the results will be impacted (Warner, 2013), as well as the probability of making Type I and Type II errors will be misleading (Heppner et al., 2016). There are options to consider when assumptions of normality are violated by incorporating data transformation, which may make nonlinear relations linear, minimize the impact of extreme outliers, or make non-normal distributions nearly normal (Warner, 2013). Alternatively, if statistical assumptions are violated, the researcher has the following options: make corrections to the data to no longer violate the assumptions, use an

alternative statistical test that will fulfill all assumptions, or proceed with the data analyses despite the violation of assumptions (Laerd Statistics, 2020).

### **Summary**

Foster parent retention and placement stability continue to be a challenge for the child welfare system as there exists a shortage of licensed foster homes available to accommodate the growing rate of youth placed in foster care. Previous research has identified social support and motivation to foster as protective factors influencing foster parent success outcomes (Rhodes et al., 2003). Therefore, the purpose of this quantitative correlational study is to determine to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

Chapter three outlined the research methods used to answer the study's three research questions and hypothesis, including a non-experimental quantitative methodology employing correlational using a cross-sectional, single group design. An in-depth discussion of the population, study sample, recruitment strategies, and study site were outlined in Chapter three. The study population included 102 licensed non-relative foster parents located in North Carolina. Study participants were recruited through convenience sampling from five foster care agencies, including the Department of Social Services (DSS). The latter provided the researcher with site permission to conduct the research study via recruitment flyers provided to each study site to administer to foster parents. Chapter three also included data collection procedures in which study participants completed the TFPSS, the FSS, and the TIQ survey instruments via online Qualtrics®. The rationale for selecting the instruments was due to the instrument's value in previous qualitative research that specifically targeted the foster parent population.

Chapter three outlined measures taken to protect human subjects, including ethical considerations and the implementation of consent forms. Each participant signed a consent that informed the participant of information and comprehension about the study and voluntariness of their participation (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978). Also, the consent described the study's purpose, participants' obligations, potential risks, and expectations related to the completion of three survey questionnaires (Heppner et al., 2016; Appendix C). To protect the confidentiality of participants and site locations, the researcher did not obtain any personal identifiers from participants or the study sites. The researcher identified participants by the number of survey completion and identified site locations by FCA1, FCA2, FCA3, FCA4, and DSS.

Chapter three concluded with a discussion of data analysis procedures, including using SPSS to conduct multiple regression analysis to determine if foster care support services moderate the relationship between foster care displacements, foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering. The subsequent chapter four provides details for the study results, including descriptive statistics to describe the research data. Descriptive statistics summarize information about a sample computed by SPSS (Warner, 2013). In addition, chapter four includes tables, charts, and figures to organize the statistical data results.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

### Overview

The purpose of this nonexperimental, correlational quantitative study was to determine to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderated the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering among nonrelative foster carers. The participants in this study were 102 non-relative foster carers currently licensed among five foster care agencies located in North Carolina. The study employed three self-administered questionnaires, including the Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS; Mihalo et al., 2016), the Family Support Scale (FSS; Dunst et al., 1984), and the Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ; Keys et al., 2017) to capture the participants' responses. This chapter details the quantitative measures employed within the present study to include descriptive statistics of the sample, including means, frequencies, and standard deviations, presentation of the results by research questions, hypotheses, and alternate hypotheses associated with this study, and a summary of the findings.

### Research Questions

The research questions and corresponding hypotheses for the present study were:

**RQ1:** If and to what extent does the quantity of foster care support services significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering?

**H01:** The quantity of foster care support services does not significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

**H1a:** The quantity of foster care support services does significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

**RQ2:** If and to what extent do formal foster care support services significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering?

**H02:** Formal foster care support services does not significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

**H2a:** Formal foster care support services does significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

**RQ3:** If and to what extent do informal foster care support services significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering?

**H03:** Informal foster care support services does not significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

**H3a:** Informal foster care support services does significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

### **Changes to Recruitment**

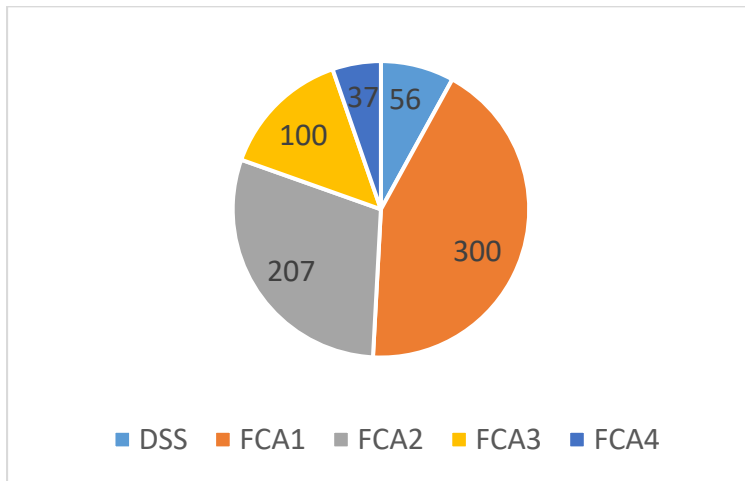
During the data collection phase, the researcher experienced challenges acquiring consistent data from participants and identified barriers that prevented participants from completing the surveys. One barrier concerned the limitations set on the recruitment of participants from only three counties in North Carolina, which excluded licensed foster parents

located in other counties of North Carolina but were licensed among the five foster care agencies who provided site authorization. A second barrier identified by the researcher was the restriction on recruitment efforts, as the researcher initially did not include social media as a recruitment strategy. As a result, the researcher requested an IRB modification to allow the study to include licensed foster parents within the five site agencies licensed in all of North Carolina and allow social media as a method for participant recruitment. Therefore, the researcher stopped data collection for approximately 11 days while awaiting IRB modification approval.

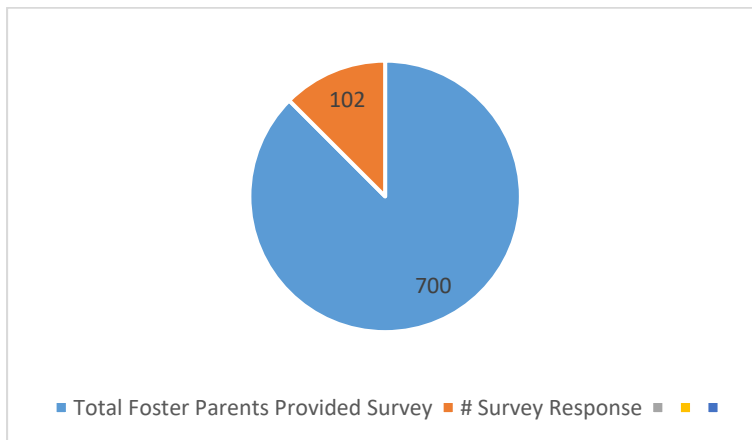
### **Descriptive Statistics**

The study was conducted among five foster care agencies, including the Department of Social Services (DSS), FCA1, FCA2, FCA3, and FCA4 in North Carolina. These foster care agencies were selected based on their willingness to participate in this research study. The agencies have a large and diverse population of non-relative licensed foster parents to participate in this study.

The data shown in Figure 4 was provided to the researcher by each foster care agency. Displayed in Figure 4 is the 2021 descriptive data for the foster parent population among the five foster care agencies. Specifically, Figure 4 shows the 2021 data for (a) the total foster care population within all five foster care agencies, (b) the total foster parent population for DSS (56), (c) the total foster parent population for FCA1 (300), (d) the total foster parent population for FCA2 (207), (e) the total foster parent population for FCA3 (100), and (f) the total foster parent population for FCA4 (37). While Figure 5 shows the total foster parent population for all five foster care agencies (700) in comparison to the total number of foster parents who completed the survey in its entirety (N = 102).

**Figure 4***Foster Parent Population by Agency*

*Note.* DSS = Department of Social Services, FCA1 = Foster care agency 1, FCA2 = Foster care agency 2, FCA3 = Foster care agency 3, FCA4 = Foster care agency 4

**Figure 5***Foster Parent Population in Comparison to Survey Response*

*Note.* 102 = total participant population, 700 = total foster parents among the five site agencies.

**Description of Sample**

A total of 102 participants ( $N=102$ ) completed the demographic questionnaire and survey instruments. Participant demographic information included gender, age, racial background, and



marital status presented in Tables 1 through 3 and Figure 6, displaying frequency distributions, percentages, mean, standard deviation, and confidence intervals (CI). Additionally, this section provides information about participants' duration of fostering, the number of foster placements, and the number of placement disruptions. Foster parents who participated in the study were (N= 102). Of the 102 completed surveys, nine participants were male (8.8%), and 93 were female (91.2%). Table 1 shows the distribution for variable gender.

**Table 1**

*Gender Distribution of Survey Respondents (N = 102)*

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	9	8.8	8.8	8.8
Female	93	91.2	91.2	100.0
Total	102	100.0	100.0	

*Note.* All participants identified as either male or female to account for the sample total.

Out of the 102 participants, 23 participants were African American (22.5%), 77 were Caucasian (75.5%), one participant identified as Asian (1.0%), one participant identified as other (1.0%), and 0 participants were identified as Latino/Hispanic (0.0%). These racial classifications reflected the participants' perception of their race. Table 2 shows the distribution for variable race/ethnicity.

**Table 2***Racial Background Distribution of Survey Respondents (N = 102)*

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
African American/Black	23	22.5	22.5	22.5
Asian	1	1.0	1.0	23.5
Caucasian	77	75.5	75.5	99.0
Other	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total	102	100.0	100.0	

*Note.* Race/ethnicity Hispanic is excluded from this table as no participants identified as

Hispanic. The participant who identified as other did not report specifics.

Out of the 102 participants, 17 participants were single (16.7%), 71 participants were married (69.6%), 7 participants were dating/living with a partner (6.9%), and 7 participants were divorced/separated (6.9%). Table 3 shows the frequency and percentage for variable Marital Status.

**Table 3***Marital Status Distribution for Survey Respondents (N = 102)*

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Single	17	16.7	16.7	16.7
Married	71	69.6	69.6	86.3
Dating/Living with a partner	7	6.9	6.9	93.1
Divorced/Separated	7	6.9	6.9	100.0
Total	102	100.0	100.0	

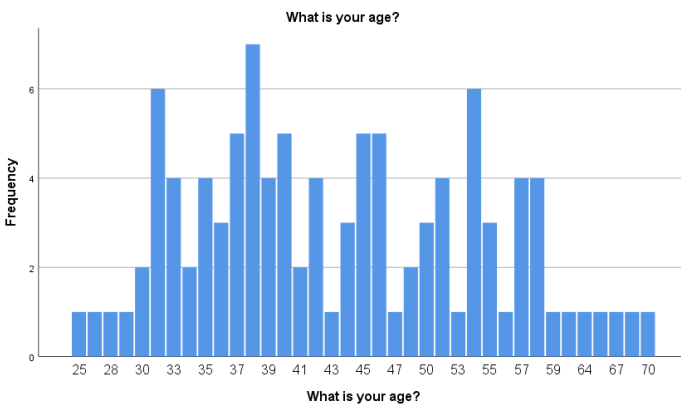
*Note.* No participants identified as widowed. Divorced/separated was not differentiated.

The participants in the sample ranged in age from 25 to 70 years old, with a mean (*M*) age of 44. A mean (*M*) score provides information about the size of a typical score in a sample and corresponds to the center of a distribution of scores in a sample (Warner, 2013). The sample

mean,  $M$ , is obtained by summing all the  $X$  scores in a sample of  $N$  scores and dividing by  $N$  (Warner, 2013). Out of the 102 participants, the sample was relatively young ( $M = 44.24$ ,  $SD = 10.26$ , and  $\sigma^2 = 105.271$ ; see Figure 6).

### Figure 6

*Participants' Age ( $N = 102$ )*

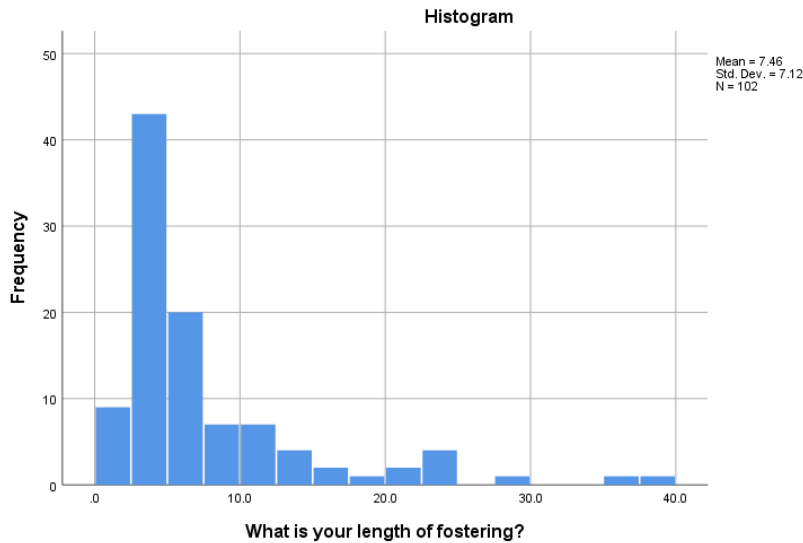


*Note.* Age of the sample ranged from age 25 to age 70. The most frequently reported age of the sample was age 38.

Of the 102 participants, the duration of fostering ranged between 2 - 39 years ( $M = 7.46$ ,  $SD = 7.12$ , and  $\sigma^2$  of 50.689). Study participants' duration of fostering is displayed in Figure 7 below.

## Figure 7

*Duration of Fostering for Survey Respondents (N = 102)*

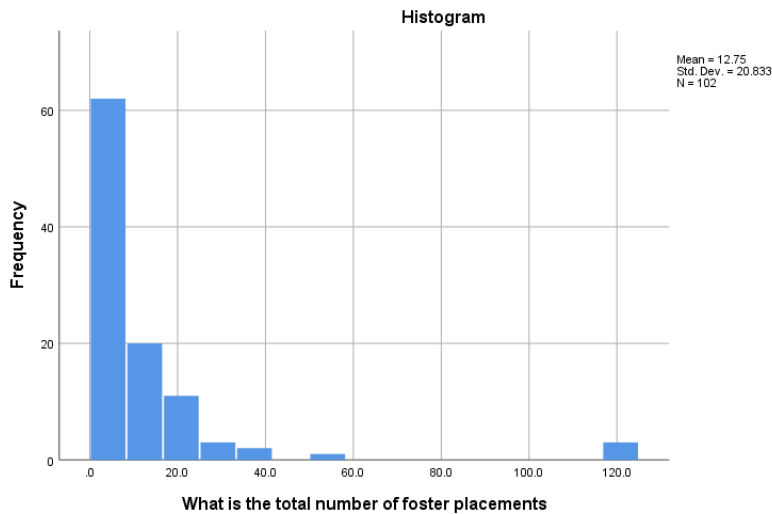


*Note.* Represents the length of fostering reported by the sample ranged from 2 years to 39 years.

Of the 102 participants, the number of foster placements ranged from 2 to 121 placements ( $M = 12.75$ ,  $SD = 20.833$ , and  $\sigma^2$  of 434.009). The majority of participants ( $N = 60$ , 58.84%) reported an average of 2-10 youth placements throughout their duration of fostering. Study participants' number of foster placements is displayed in Figure 8 below.

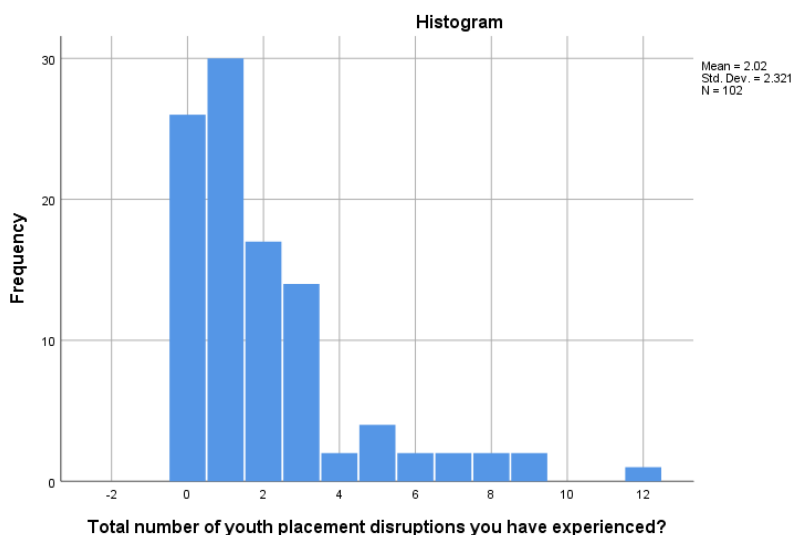
## Figure 8

*Number of Foster Placements for Survey Respondents (N = 102)*



*Note.* Represents the total number of foster youth placements reported for the sample for the duration of fostering.

Of the 102 participants, the number of placement disruptions ranged from 0 to 12 disruptions ( $M = 2.02$ ,  $SD = 2.321$ , and  $\sigma^2$  of 5.386). Most participants ( $N = 87$ , 85.3%) reported an average of 0-3 youth placement disruptions during their duration of fostering. The frequency for the predictor variable foster care displacements is provided in Figure 9 below.

**Figure 9***Frequency for Foster Care Displacements*

*Note.* Represents the total number of youth placements disruptions reported by the sample for the duration of fostering.

### **Descriptive Statistics and Reliability of Instrumentation**

The criterion variable foster career satisfaction yields four sub-scale scores corresponding with the TFP-SS. The TFP-SS allows for five to seven possible responses utilizing a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) and ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). Each domain on the TFP-SS is reported as a separate average score ranging from 1.0 to 7.0 for three domains and 1.0 to 4.0 for the fourth domain (Mihalo et al., 2016). Lower mean scores indicate foster parents who are very unsatisfied, while higher mean scores indicate foster parents who are very satisfied. Of the 102 participants, subscale professional parenting ranged from 11.00 to 70.00 ( $M = 46.71$ ,  $SD = 15.14$ , and  $\sigma^2 = 229.413$ ). Subscale parent efficacy ranged from 12.00 to 42.00 ( $M = 34.37$ ,  $SD = 5.52$ , and  $\sigma^2$  of 30.553). Subscale quality of training ranged from 3.00 to 21.00 ( $M = 13.22$ ,  $SD = 4.87$ , and  $\sigma^2 = 23.761$ ). Subscale support

from staff ranged from 6.00 to 30.00 ( $M = 19.98$ ,  $SD = 5.73$ , and  $\sigma^2 = 32.891$ ). As seen in Table 4, the TFP-SS scale achieved acceptable reliability. Cronbach's Alpha .945 and Cronbach's Alpha on Standardized items .949 for 28 total items.

**Table 4**

*Descriptive Statistics for Individual Scales of the TFP-SS*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Professional Parenting	102	11.00	70.00	46.7157	15.14640
Parent Efficacy	102	12.00	42.00	34.3725	5.52747
Quality of Training	102	3.00	21.00	13.2255	4.87448
Support from Staff	102	6.00	30.00	19.9804	5.73504
Valid N (listwise)	102				

*Reliability of Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS)*

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha on Standardized Items	Number of Items
.945	.949	28

*Note.* Cronbach's Alpha of 0.70 or more is satisfactory reliability.

The TIQ allows for seven possible responses utilizing a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Each item in the TIQ is summed for one composite score. The second criterion variable, intent to continue fostering, yields one composite score corresponding with the TIQ. Lower mean scores indicate an intent to continue fostering (i.e., remain in the role as a foster parent). In comparison, higher mean scores indicate a desire to discontinue fostering (i.e., leave role as a foster parent). Of the 102 participants, TIQ scores ranged from 3.0 to 21.00 ( $M = 10.11$ ,  $SD = 5.27$ , and  $\sigma^2 = 27.808$ ). As seen in Table 5, the TIQ scale achieved strong reliability scores. Cronbach's Alpha .731 and Cronbach's Alpha on Standardized items .722 for 3 total items.

**Table 5***Descriptive Statistics for Individual Scales of the TIQ*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total Score TIQ	102	3.00	21.00	10.1176	5.27331
Valid N (listwise)	102				

*Reliability of Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ)*

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha on Standardized Items	Number of Items
.731	.722	3

*Note.* Cronbach's Alpha of 0.70 or more is satisfactory reliability.

The moderator variables quantity of foster care support, formal support, and informal support services yield one composite score corresponding with the FSS. The FSS allows for five possible responses utilizing a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all satisfied) to 5 (extremely satisfied). The FSS is divided into four subscale scores to obtain a total family support scale score (Dunst et al., 1984). Each domain on the FSS is reported as one composite score ranging from 1.0 to 7.0 for three domains and 1.0 to 4.0 for the fourth domain (Mihalo et al., 2016). Higher scores on the FSS indicate greater amounts of social support, while lower scores on the FSS indicate limited social support (Hoang, 2018; Littlewood et al., 2012; Peshawaria et al., 2000). Of the 102 participants, scores on the FSS ranged from 1.00 to 95.00, ( $M = 47.46$ ,  $SD = 16.04$ , and  $\sigma^2 = 257.597$ ). As seen in Table 6, the FSS achieved strong reliability scores. Cronbach's Alpha .844 and Cronbach's Alpha on Standardized items .851 for 19 total items.



**Table 6***Descriptive Statistics for Individual Scales of the FSS*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total Score FSS	102	1.00	95.00	47.4608	16.04984
Valid N (listwise)	102				

*Reliability of Family Support Scale (FSS)*

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha on Standardized Items	Number of Items
.844	.851	19

*Note.* Cronbach's Alpha of 0.70 or more is satisfactory reliability.

**Data Cleaning**

A data screening was run to assess the data within the data sets using the explore feature in SPSS. Data used to run the data screening were four categorical variables of gender, ethnicity, age, and relationships status and three quantitative variables of self-reported results from the TFP-SS, the FSS, and the TIQ. Before conducting statistical analysis, a data screening was conducted to identify any missing data or errors in the data set (Warner, 2013), and the researcher then cleaned the data. The results of the data cleaning showed that 100% of the 102 datasets were valid with no missing cases/data. In reporting results from descriptive statistics, the Mean score was highest among the FSS (M= 47.46, SD =16.04) with a 95% confidence interval of [44.30, 50.61] compared to the TIQ (M= 10.11, SD= 5.27) confidence interval of [9.08 to 11.15], and the TFP-SS four domains of professional parenting role (M=46.71, SD = 15.14) confidence interval of [43.74, 49.69], treatment parent efficacy (M= 34.37, SD= 5.52) confidence interval of [33.28, 35.45], quality of training (M= 13.22, SD= 4.87) confidence interval of [12.26, 14.18], and support from staff (M= 19.98, SD= 5.73) confidence interval of [18.85 to 21.10]. Additionally, the Mean score was highest among number of youth placements

( $M= 12.75$ ,  $SD= 20.83$ ) with a 95% confidence interval of [8.66 to 16.84] compared to duration of fostering ( $M= 7.46$ ,  $SD= 7.12$ ) confidence interval of [6.05 to 8.85], and youth placement disruptions ( $M= 2.02$ ,  $SD= 2.321$ ) confidence interval of [1.56 to 2.48].

### **Data Analyses**

After cleaning and preparing the data for analysis, the data had to meet specific assumptions before submitting the data to multiple linear regression analysis to explore the relationships among the variables. Testing assumptions ensured the data met the standards for using a multiple linear regression. To conduct a multiple linear regression analysis, the data must meet the following eight assumptions: 1) one continuous criterion variable, 2) two or more predictor variables, which must be continuous or categorical, 3) independence of observations, 4) linear relationship between the criterion variable and each of the predictor variables, 5) homoscedasticity of residuals, 6) no or little multicollinearity, 7) no multivariate outliers, high leverage points, or high influence points and 8) residuals are approximately normally distributed to conduct a multiple linear regression analysis (Laerd Statistics, 2020).

### **Assumption Tests**

Before proceeding with the planned multiple regression, the suitability of the data was assessed concerning the assumptions underlying multiple regression.

#### ***One Continuous Criterion Variable***

The test of the first assumption confirmed measurability that the criterion variables, foster carer satisfaction (TFP-SS) and TIQ, are continuous. The variables are interval level data where the variables measure at a continuous level since it can be any value within the range of 0-70 for the TFP-SS and 0-21 for the TIQ. The data collected could be raw scores or means.

### ***Two or More Predictor Variables.***

The test for the second assumption confirmed measurability that the three predictor variables, quantity of social support services, informal social support services, and formal social support services, are continuous. The variables are interval level data where the variables measure at a continuous level since it can be any value within the range of 0-95. The data collected could be raw scores or means.

### ***Independence of Observations***

A Durbin-Watson test was used to ensure residuals were independent or uncorrelated.

The test for the Durbin-Watson statistic is shown in Table 7.

**Table 7**

#### *Durbin-Watson Statistic*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.043 <sup>a</sup>	.002	-.018	5.32	1.94

*Note.* Predictors: Displacements, FSS. Criterion Variable: TIQ

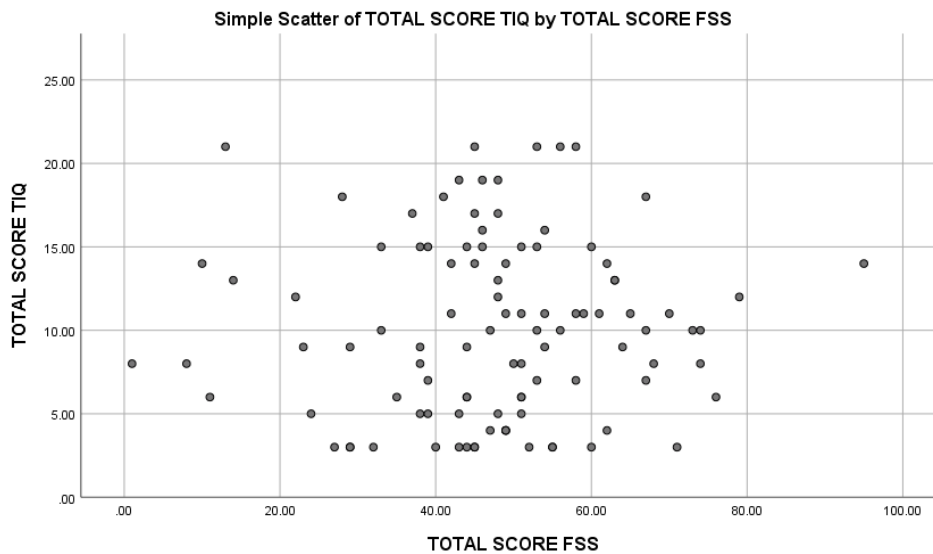
Table 7 shows that the Durbin-Watson value is 1.94. Although it is less than 2, SPSS does not provide a significance value for this test. The Durbin-Watson statistic can range from 0-4. A value of approximately 2 indicates no correlation (non-autocorrelation) between residuals. A value toward 0 indicates positive autocorrelation, and a value toward 4 indicates negative autocorrelation (Laerd Statistics, 2020). The Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.94 shows a positive autocorrelation but was still within the 1-3 range, which is required for the independence of observations. The researchers ignored the Durbin-Watson statistic since there is no practical reason the participants were related.

### *Linearity*

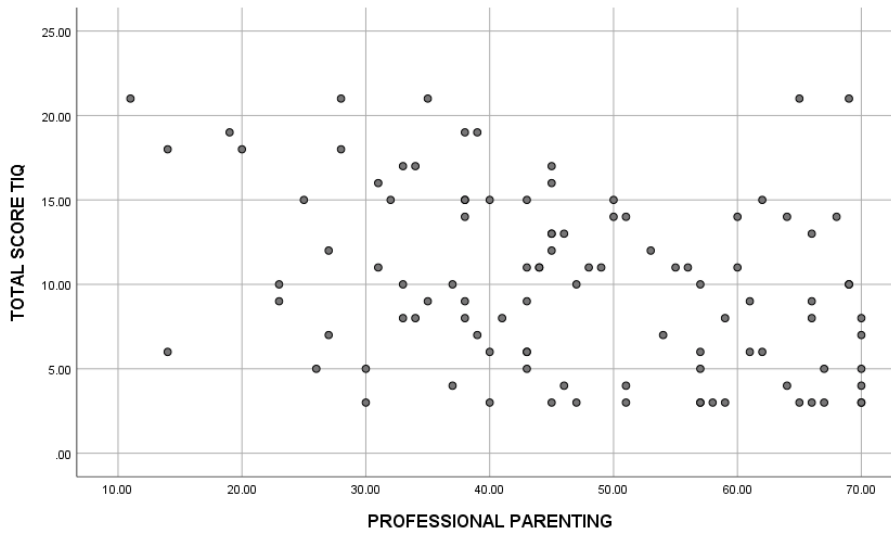
To test the linear relationship assumption between the predictor variables of quantity of social support services, informal social support services, formal social support services, represented by the FSS, and the criterion variables of foster carer satisfaction (TFP-SS) and TIQ, a scatterplot was used to represent the relationships. A visual inspection of the scatterplots showed an even distribution of the scatterplot as a horizontal bar and indicated a linear relationship, shown in Figure 10. The visual inspection of the scatterplots satisfied the assumption of linearity; therefore, the assumption was met.

**Figure 10**

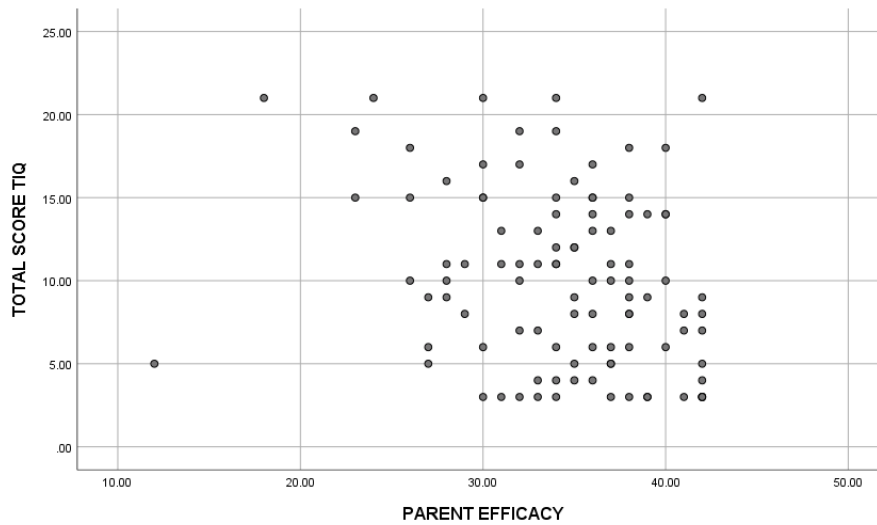
*Scatter Plot for Quantitative Variables*



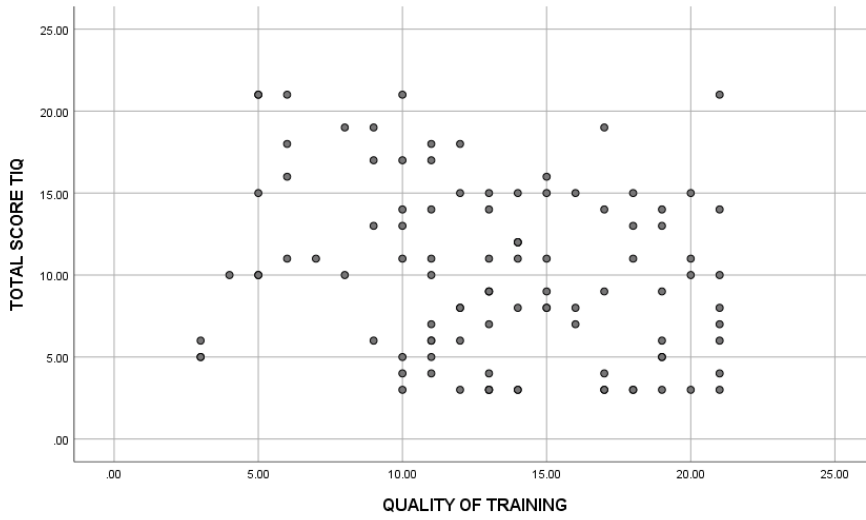
*Note.* Scatter plot for criterion variable TIQ and predictor variable FSS.



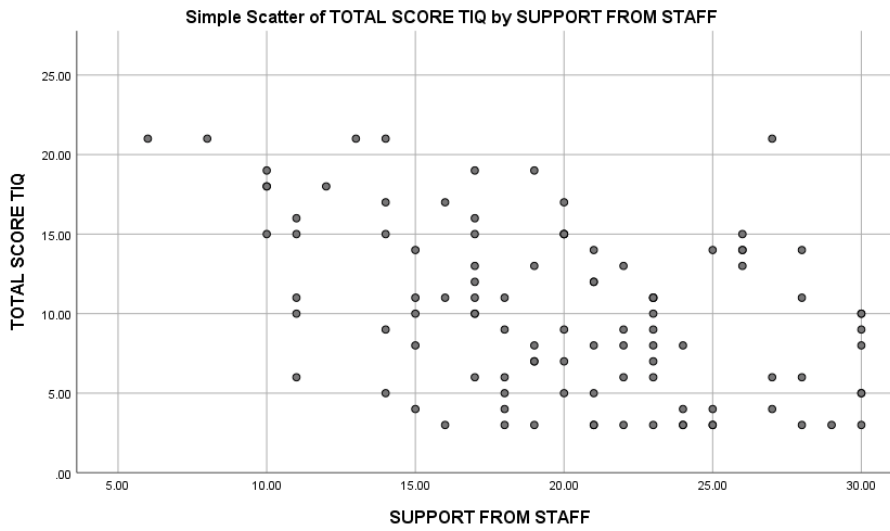
*Note.* Scatter plot for criterion variable TIQ and predictor variable TFP-SS (professional parenting).



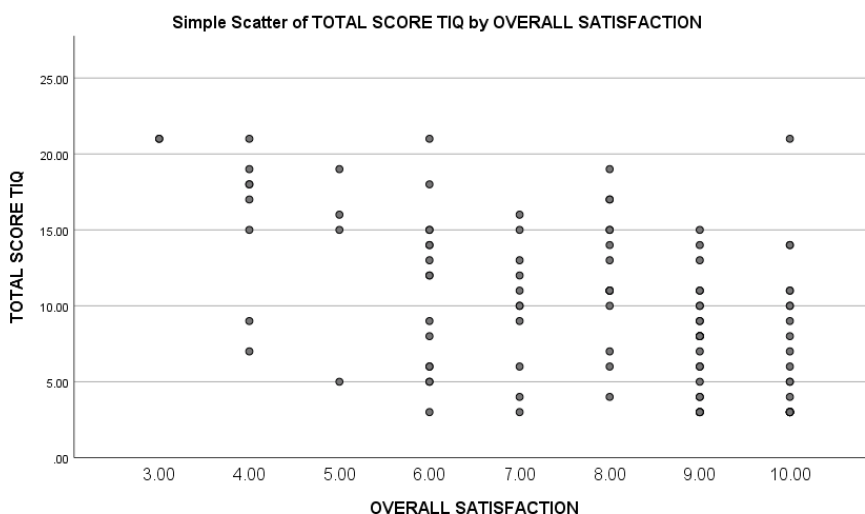
*Note.* Scatter plot for criterion variable TIQ and predictor variable TFP-SS (parent efficacy).



*Note.* Scatter plot for criterion variable TIQ and predictor variable TFP-SS (quality of training).



Note. Scatter plot for criterion variable TIQ and predictor variable TFP-SS (support from staff).



Note. Scatter plot for criterion variable TIQ and predictor variable TFP-SS (overall satisfaction).

### ***Multicollinearity***

A multicollinearity test was conducted for collinearity, specifically, if two or more predictor variables are highly correlated with the criterion variable (Warner, 2013). This can cause a Type II error (Laerd Statistics, 2020). The test results indicated that multicollinearity was not a concern as the coefficient output-collinearity statistics obtained variance inflation factor (VIF) values between 1 to 10, concluding that there are no multicollinearity symptoms.

Therefore, meeting the assumption (See Table 8).

**Table 8**

### *Collinearity Results*

Model	Unstandardized B	Coefficient Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.	Collinearity Tolerance	Statistic VIF
Constant	21.731	3.307		6.572	.000		
Total FSS Score	.002	.029	.006	.070	.944	.986	1.014
Overall Satisfaction	-1.085	.340	-.406	-3.192	.002	.464	2.153

Professional Parenting	.027	.054	.078	.503	.616	.311	3.215
Parent Efficacy	-.036	.105	-.037	-.340	.735	.620	1.613
Quality of Training	.135	.135	.124	.993	.323	.479	2.090
Support from Staff	-.258	.147	-.281	-1.754	.083	.292	3.420

*Note.* VIF < 10 in both cases indicating no collinearity between variables

### *Homoscedasticity of Residuals*

The researcher conducted the Glejser test to test for homogeneity or homoscedasticity to determine if the variance of Y scores is the same at each level of X (Warner, 2013). Based on output coefficients  $p = 0.317$  for FSS and for TFP-SS variable domains: overall satisfaction,  $p = 0.494$ , professional parenting role,  $p = 0.616$ , parent efficacy,  $p = 0.631$ , quality of training,  $p = 0.394$ , and support from staff,  $p = 0.145$ , meaning that the value of the variables  $> 0.05$ , it can be concluded that there is no assumption violation of homoscedasticity of variance (See Table 9 below) (Warner, 2013).

**Table 9**

### *Homoscedasticity Results*

Model	Unstandardized B	Coefficient Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.	Collinearity Tolerance	Statistic VIF
Constant	5.529	1.871		2.955	.004		
Total FSS Score	-.016	.016	-.102	-1.007	.317	.986	1.014
Overall Satisfaction	-.132	.192	-.101	-.687	.494	.464	2.153
Professional Parenting	-.015	.031	-.090	-.503	.616	.311	3.215



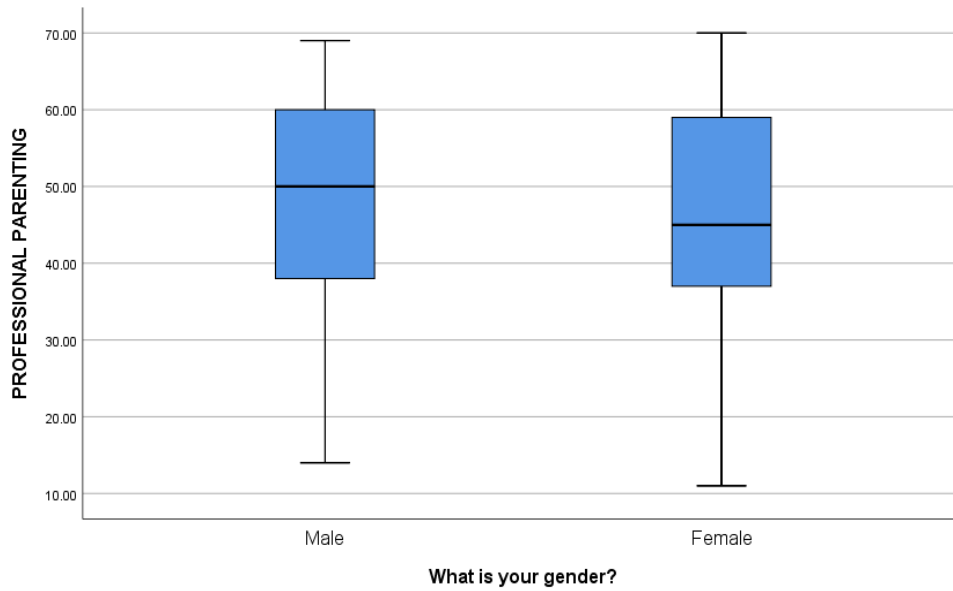
Parent Efficacy	-.029	.059	-.061	-.481	.631	.620	1.613
Quality of Training	-.066	.077	-.124	-.856	.394	.479	2.090
Support from Staff	-.122	.083	.273	1.469	.145	.292	3.420

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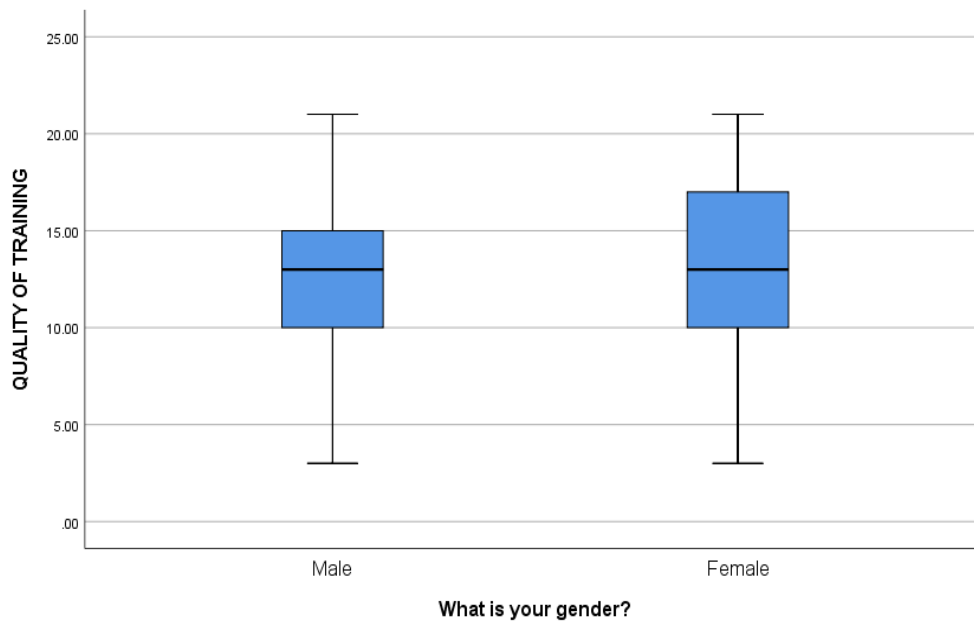
*Note.* No assumption violation of homoscedasticity of variance.

### ***Outliers***

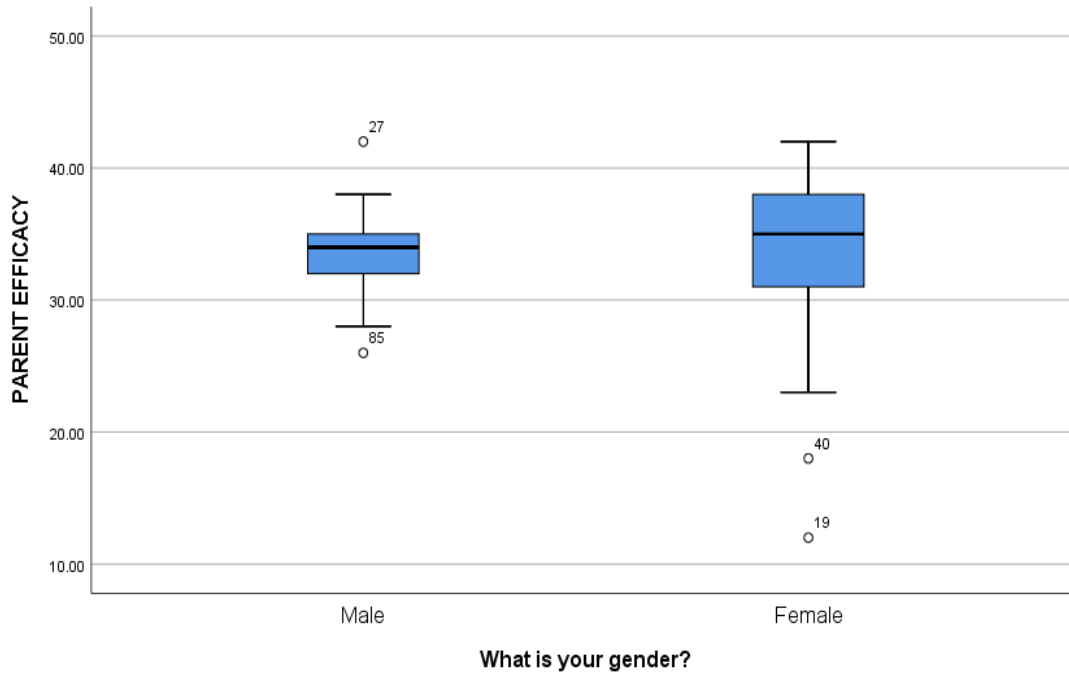
In a multiple linear analysis, to detect any significant outliers within a data set, the researcher used a box plot for TFP-SS by gender, and an additional box plot was used for FSS by relationship status. A final box plot was used for TIQ by ethnicity/racial status. There existed no outliers between TIQ and ethnicity/race. There existed eight outliers and two extreme values between relationship status and FSS in the categories of single (3 outliers and 2 extreme values), married (3 outliers), dating/living with a partner (1 outlier), and category of divorced/separated (1 outlier). Additionally, there existed 5 outliers between TFP-SS and gender in the domains of parent-efficacy (4 outliers) and support from staff (1 outlier); see Figure 11).

**Figure 11***Box Plot for Outliners*

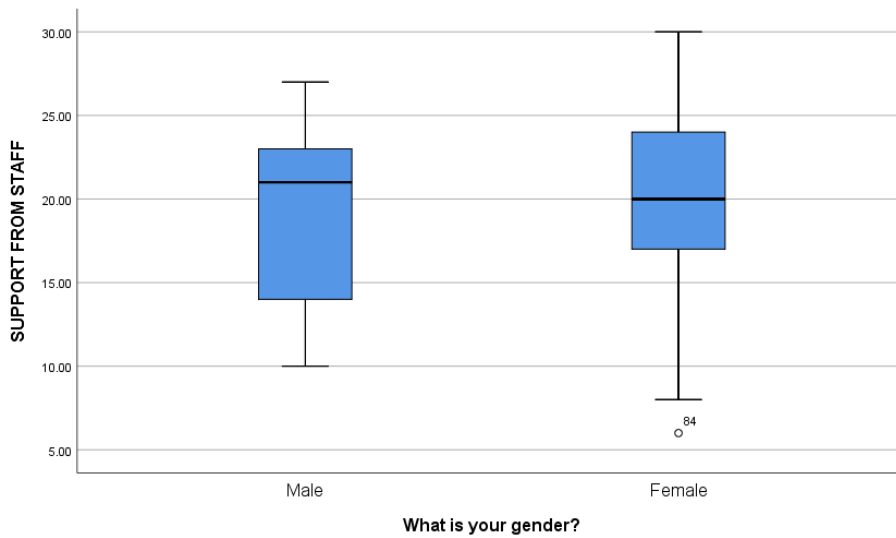
*Note.* No outliers were identified between gender and TIQ (professional parenting domain).



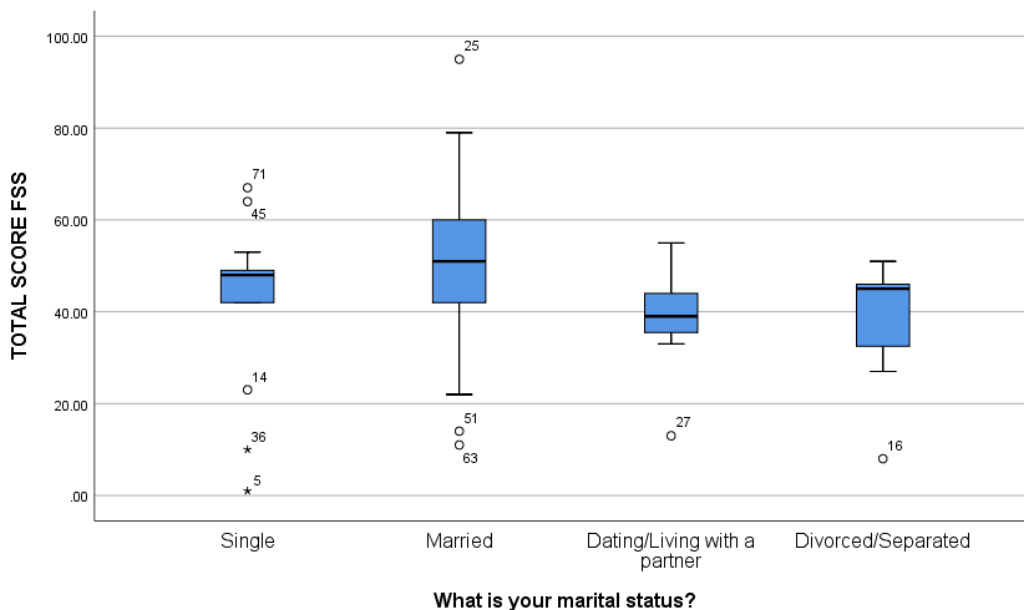
*Note.* No outliers were identified between gender and TIQ (quality of training domain).



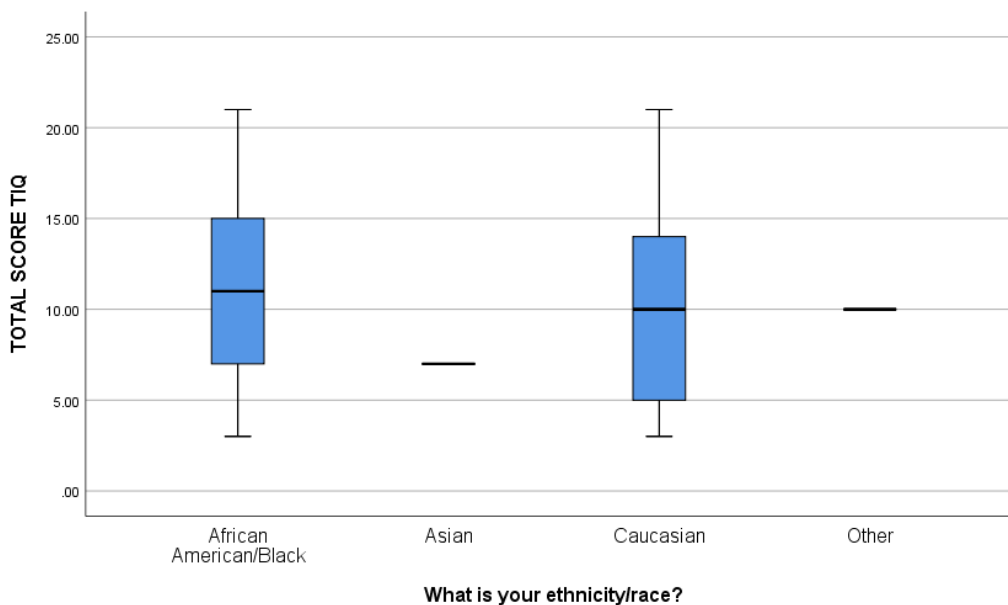
*Note.* Four outliers (27, 85 for male, and 19, 40 for female) were identified between gender and TIQ (parent efficacy domain).



*Note.* One outlier (84 for female) was identified between gender and TIQ (Support from staff domain).



*Note.* Eight outliers (14, 45, 71 for Single, 25, 51, 63 for Married, 27 for dating/living with a partner, and 16 for divorced/separated) and two extreme scores (5 and 35 for single) were identified between FSS and Marital Status.



*Note.* No outliers were identified between ethnicity/race and TIQ.

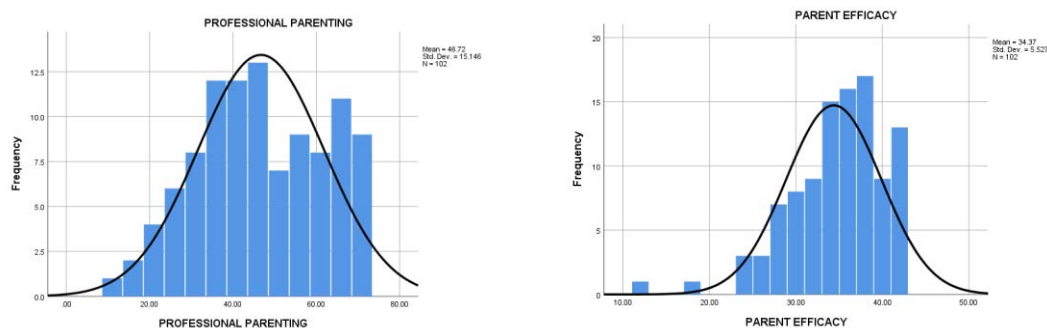
## Normality

An assumption common to all parametric analyses is that scores on quantitative variables should be normally distributed (Warner, 2013). Therefore, the researcher examined the normality of the residuals of the data. Residuals are the difference between the observed and predicted values (Laerd Statistics, 2020). To test this assumption, a histogram was run for the Y variables of the TFP-SS (Four Domains), the FSS, and the TIQ to ensure a bell-shaped curve that resembles a normal distribution of the residuals range. All Y variables displayed a normal distribution as skewness is valued at 0 (Warner, 2013) (see Figure 12). For the TFP-SS, parent efficacy domain, the histogram indicated the assumption of a normal distribution of residuals was not met since the figure indicated a negatively skewed distribution. Additionally, an inspection of the normal P-P- plot of normality (see Figure 13) was also conducted to ensure the residuals were linear.

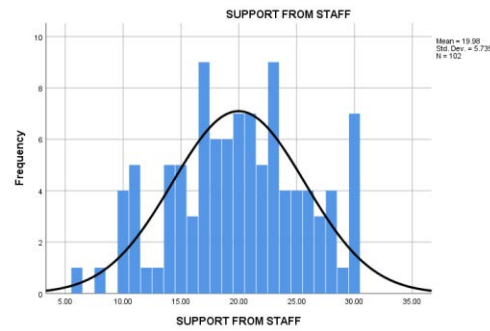
### Figure 12

#### *Histogram of Y Variables*

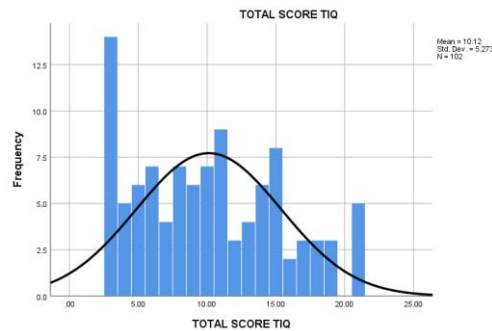
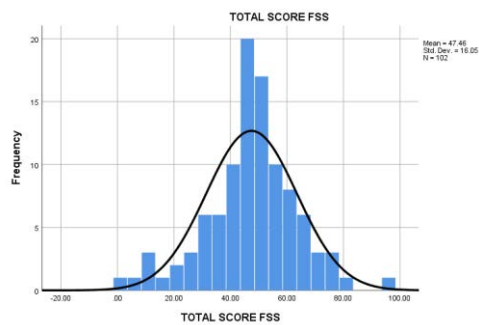
#### *TFP-SS Four Domain*



*Note.* Histogram for the distribution and normality of residuals for the variable, TFP-SS.  $M = 46.72$ ,  $SD = 15.146$ ,  $N = 102$                        $M = 34.37$ ,  $SD = 5.527$ ,  $N = 102$



*Note.* Histogram for the distribution and normality of residuals for the variable, TFP-SS.  $M = 13.23$ ,  $SD = 4.874$ ,  $N = 102$   $M = 19.98$ ,  $SD = 5.735$ ,  $N = 102$



*Note.* Histogram for the distribution and normality of residuals for the variable, FSS.  $M = 47.46$ ,  $SD = 16.05$ ,  $N = 102$   $M = 10.12$ ,  $SD = 5.273$ ,  $N = 102$

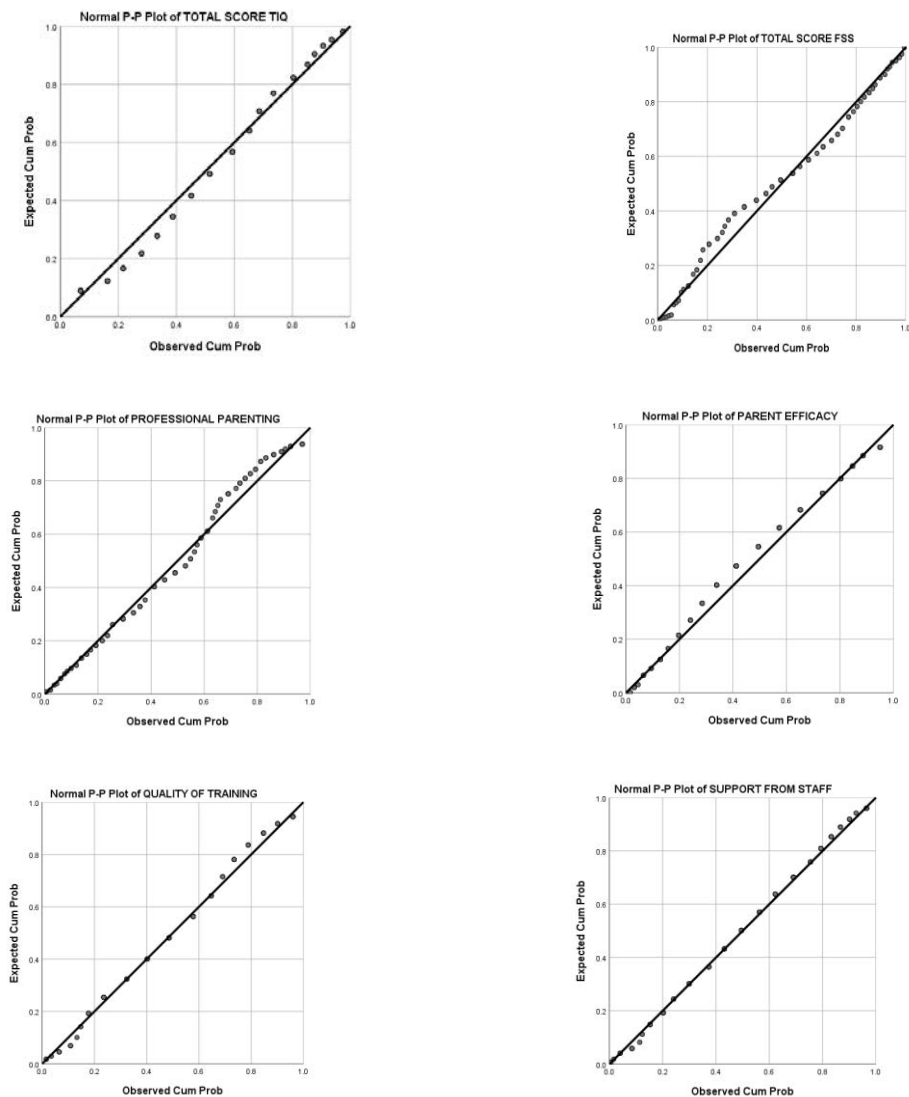
The Probability Plot (P-P Plot) of standardized residuals is a type of probability plot used to visually measure how a dataset and a distribution match each other (Warner, 2013). The variables of TIQ, FSS, and TFP-SS (4 domains) indicated that data contained approximately normally distributed errors as displayed on the P-P Plots below (see Figure 13). The FSS, and the TFP-SS, professional parenting domain distributions are somewhat peaked. They are close enough to indicate that the residuals are close enough to normal for the analysis to proceed (Laerd Statistics, 2020) (see Figure 13).

The data also met the assumption of non-zero variances: age,  $\sigma^2 = 105.271$ , duration of fostering,  $\sigma^2 = 50.689$ , number of placements,  $\sigma^2 = 434.009$ , placement disruptions,  $\sigma^2 = 5.386$ ,

FSS,  $\sigma^2 = 257.597$ , TIQ,  $\sigma^2 = 27.808$ , and the TFP-SS four domains,  $\sigma^2 = (229.413, 30.553, 23.761, 32.891)$ . None of the identified variables produced zero variance scores.

### Figure 13

*Normal P-P plot of standardized residual*



*Note.* Normal P-P plot for normality of residuals for TIQ, FSS, and TFP-SS

Finally, a crosstab was run for two categorical variables of relationship status and race/ethnicity. The results concluded extremely low cases of participants in two of the race/ethnic groups (i.e., N=1 Asian, N=1 Other, compared to N=64 Caucasian). The low number

of participants in the race/ethnic groups will make it difficult for a researcher to judge ethnicity/race with relationship status if all ethnic/race categories are used within this study. The results are shown in Table 10 below.

**Table 10**

*Crosstabulation*

	African American/Black	Asian	Caucasian	Other	Total
Single	9	0	7	1	17
Married	6	1	64	0	71
Dating/Living with a partner	5	0	2	0	7
Divorced/Separated	3	0	4	0	7
Total	23	1	77	1	102

*Note.* Crosstabulation of marital status and ethnicity/race

The histogram for TFP-SS, parent efficacy domain indicated the assumption of a normal distribution of residuals was not met since the figures indicated a negatively skewed distribution. All other histograms and P-Plots met assumptions of normal distributions. The effects of non-normally distributed errors of residuals can pose problems for efficiency, as the amount of error is not consistent across the full range of the data (Williams et al., 2013). Also, standard errors can be biased, resulting in confidence intervals and significance tests leading to wrong conclusions. Multiple regression analysis is more robust than other parametric tests against deviations from normality (Laerd Statistics, 2020). Therefore, even though the data did violate the assumption of normality as displayed on the TPF-SS, parent efficacy histogram, the researcher was able to proceed with a multiple linear regression analysis, fully understanding the consequences it could bring to the data results.



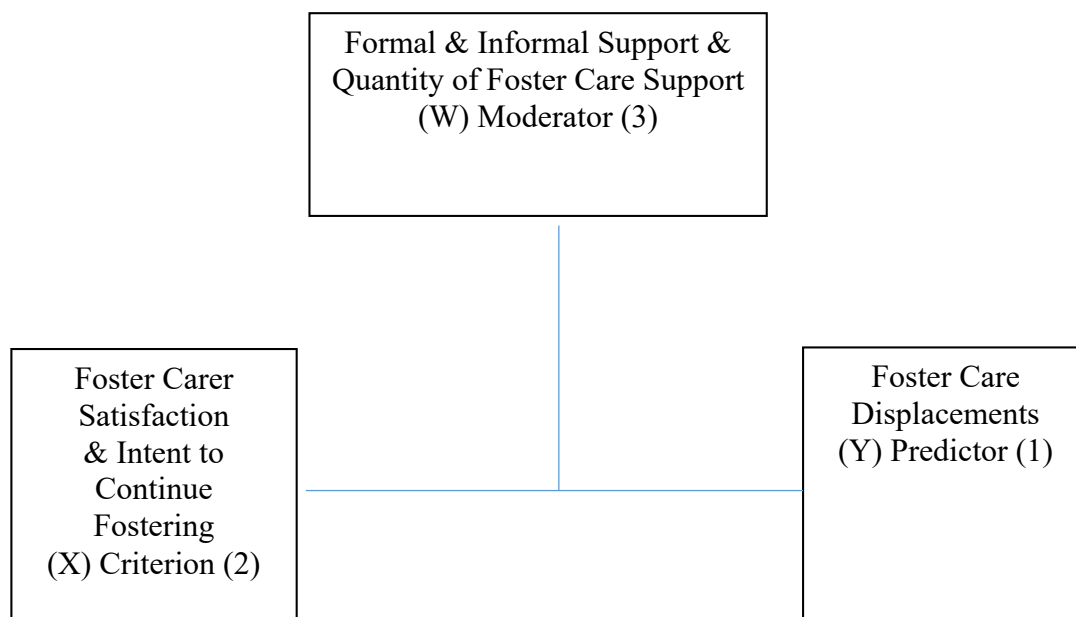
## Results

After data collection, data prepping and cleaning, and assumptions testing, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted. For this study, three research questions assessed if or to what extent a relationship existed between foster care displacements, foster carer satisfaction, and intent to continue fostering. Data was collected online from 102 participants using a demographic questionnaire and utilizing the Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS; Mihalo et al., 2016), the Family Support Scale (FSS; Hoang, 2018), and the Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ; Keys et al., 2017).

Hayes PROCESS Model 1 analysis (Figure 14) evaluated all three research questions.

### Figure 14

*Hayes PROCESS Model 1*



*Note.* Correlation and multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between the variables provided in Figure 14.

Presented below are the findings for the hypotheses of the study. Based on a multiple linear regression: fixed model,  $R^2$  deviation from zero, the required sample size was determined

for the current study by a priori statistical power analysis computation. Conducting a multiple regression based on this population with a .80 statistical power ( $1 - \beta$ ), .05 alpha ( $\alpha$ ), and a .15 medium effect size using four predictors according to G\*Power calculations, a sample size of approximately 85 (see Appendix E) was necessary to accurately reflect the target population (Brydges, 2019). To achieve the recommended target sample, the minimum sample size of 85 was increased by 20% (Brydges, 2019), which resulted in a minimum target sample for this study to consist of 102 participants. The result of the data collection produced 102 complete data sets for analysis, which exceeded the minimum sample size of 85 participants as identified by a priori statistical power analysis computation.

Using multiple linear regression analysis to test all three hypotheses is suitable if the data satisfies all eight assumptions. Testing the eight assumptions indicated that the data is continuous, the predictor variables are continuous, the two criterion variables are continuous, no multicollinearity, linearity and homoscedasticity were present, there was non-normality of residuals, and some cases of outliers and extreme values were present. Even though the assumptions of non-normality and outliers were not met, a multiple linear regression analysis was still appropriate for testing the null hypothesis of each of the three research questions. The limitations for having a non-normal distribution of the residuals were mentioned and considered.

### ***Hypothesis 1***

The first research question addressed if and to what the extent quantity of foster care support services moderated the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering. The null hypothesis asserted that the quantity of foster care support services does not significantly moderate the relationship between foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and foster care displacements. A multiple regression

was used to test the association between the quantity of foster care support services, foster carer satisfaction, and placement disruptions. For research question one, the results from the regression analysis are shown in Tables 11, 12, and 13.

**Table 11**

*Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Model Summary for Testing Hypothesis 1*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	.512 <sup>a</sup>	.262	.240	4.59

*Note.* Criterion variable: Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ) Predictors: (Constant),

Overall Satisfaction, Total FSS Score, Total number of youth placement disruptions

**Table 12**

*Multiple Linear Regression Analysis ANOVA for Testing Hypothesis 1*

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	736.855	3	245.618	11.619	.000
Residual	2071.733	98	21.140		
Total	2808.588	101			

*Note.* Criterion variable: Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ) Predictors: (Constant), Overall

Satisfaction, Total FSS Score, Total number of youth placement disruptions.

**Table 13***Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Coefficients for Testing Hypotheses 1*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			
	<i>B</i>	Std.Error	<i>Beta</i>	95%CI	<i>t</i>	Sig.
(Constant)	20.766	2.390		[16.02,25.50]	8.68	.000
Placement Disruptions	-.128	.197	-.056	[-.519, .264]	-.646	.520
Total Score FSS	.003	.029	.011	[-.053, .060]	.121	.904
Overall Satisfaction	-1.368	.233	-.512	[-1.829, -.907]	-5.883	.000

*Note.* Criterion variable: Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ)

The results indicated a significant relationship does exist between quantity of foster care support services, foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and placement disruptions,  $F(245.618, 21.140) = 11.619, p = .000, R = .512, R^2 = .262$ . Based on the significance value for research question one, the statistic indicated the relationship between variables is significant ( $p < .05$ ). Therefore, the statistic rejects the null hypothesis. The quantity of foster care support services is significant to foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and foster care displacements. Therefore, the research accepts the alternative hypothesis H1a.

***Hypothesis 2***

The second research question addressed if and to what the extent formal foster care support services moderated the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering. The null hypothesis asserted that formal foster care support services does not significantly moderate the relationship between foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and foster care displacements. A multiple regression was used to test the association between formal foster care support services, foster carer

satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and placement disruptions. For research question two, the results from the regression analysis are shown in Tables 14, 15, and 16.

**Table 14**

*Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Model Summary for Testing Hypothesis 2*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	.517 <sup>a</sup>	.268	.245	4.58

*Note.* Criterion variable: Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ)

**Table 15**

*Multiple Linear Regression Analysis ANOVA for Testing Hypothesis 2*

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	751.880	3	250.627	11.94	.000
Residual	2056.709	98	20.987		
Total	2808.588	101			

*Note.* Criterion variable: Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ) Predictors: Satisfaction, Formal

Support, placement disruptions

**Table 16***Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Coefficients for Testing Hypothesis 2*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	95% CI	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	19.821	2.311		[15.23, 24.40]	8.57	.000
Placement Disruptions	-.134	.197	-.059	[-.524, .257]	-.679	.499
Overall Satisfaction	-1.35	.232	-.508	[-1.81, -.898]	-5.85	.000
Formal Support	.050	.059	.074	[-.066, -.167]	.855	.395

*Note.* Criterion variable: Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ)

Predictors: (Constant), Overall Satisfaction, Formal Support, placement disruptions.

The results indicated a significant relationship does exist between formal foster care support services, foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and placement disruptions,  $F(250.627, 20.987) = 11.942$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $R = .517$ ,  $R^2 = .268$ . Based on the significance value for research question one, the statistic indicated the relationship between variables is significant ( $p < .05$ ). Therefore, the statistic rejects the null hypothesis. Formal foster care support services are significant to foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and foster care displacements. Therefore, the research accepts the alternative hypothesis H2a.

### ***Hypothesis 3***

The third research question addressed if and to what the extent informal foster care support services moderated the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering. The null hypothesis asserted that informal foster care support services does not significantly moderate the relationship between foster carer

satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and foster care displacements. A multiple regression was used to test the association between informal foster care support services, foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and placement disruptions. For research question three, the results from the regression analysis are shown in Tables 17, 18, and 19.

**Table 17**

*Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Model Summary for Testing Hypothesis 3*

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> Square	<i>Adjusted</i> <i>R</i> <i>Square</i>	<i>Std.</i> <i>Error of</i> <i>the</i> <i>Estimate</i>
	.514 <sup>a</sup>	.264	.241	4.59

*Note.* Criterion variable: Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ)

Predictors: (Constant), Overall Satisfaction, Informal Support, placement disruptions

**Table 18**

*Multiple Linear Regression Analysis ANOVA for Testing Hypothesis 3*

Model	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean</i> <i>Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Regression	740.675	3	246.892	11.700	.000
Residual	2067.913	98	21.101		
Total	2808.588	101			

*Note.* Criterion variable: Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ) Predictors: Satisfaction, Informal Support, placement disruptions.

**Table 19***Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Coefficients for Testing Hypothesis 3*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			
	<i>B</i>	Std. Error	<i>Beta</i>	95% CI	<i>t</i>	Sig.
(Constant)	21.479	2.266		[16.98, 25.97]	9.48	.000
Placement Disruptions	-.133	.198	-.059	[-.525, .259]	.674	.502
Overall Satisfaction	-1.371	.232	-.513	[-1.83, -.910]	-5.90	.000
Informal Support	-.019	.043	-.038	[-.106, .067]	-.443	.659

Note. Criterion variable: Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ)

The results indicated a significant relationship does exist between informal foster care support services, foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and placement disruptions,  $F(246.892, 21.101) = 11.700, p = .000, R = .514, R^2 = .264$ . Based on the significance value for research question three, the statistic indicated the relationship between variables is significant ( $p < .05$ ). Therefore, the statistic rejects the null hypothesis. Informal foster care support services are significant to foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and foster care displacements. Therefore, the research accepts alternative hypothesis H3a.

Additionally, a significant correlation was found between foster carer satisfaction, support from staff, parent efficacy, and turnover intention  $F(19.800, 1.743) = 11.358, p = .000, R = .788, R^2 = .605$ . A significant correlation was found between intent to continue fostering, support from staff, placement disruptions, and ethnicity/race  $F(83.854, 20.251) = 4.141, p = .000, R = .599, R^2 = .358$ . Finally, data results revealed a significant correlation between



placement disruptions, length of fostering, ethnicity/race, and parent efficacy  $F(213.829, 4.354) = 3.176, p = .001, R = .529, R^2 = .280$ .

## Summary

This quantitative correlational study aimed to determine to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderated the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering among nonrelative foster carers licensed in North Carolina. Chapter 4 presented a detailed presentation of the descriptive findings, analysis procedures of the data collected, and results per research question. The study variables were measured by participants three self-reporting surveys, including the Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS; Mihalo et al., 2016), the Family Support Scale (FSS; Dunst et al., 1984), and the Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ; Keys et al., 2017), and by participants completing demographic questionnaires to determine gender, age, racial background, and marital status. Data analyses included descriptive statistics and analysis of the data using multiple linear regressions for the sample of 102 participants.

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample in the study to show participant demographic information, which included gender, age, ethnicity, length of fostering, number of foster placements, and number of placement disruptions. All three research questions utilized multiple linear regression analysis to examine the relationships between the variables. The statistical analyses showed a significant relationship between foster care support services, foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and foster care displacements. The statistical analysis showed a significant relationship between formal/informal foster care support services and foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and foster care displacements. The

variable support from staff, a type of formal support, produced significant results independently of the FSS, suggesting support of the alternative H2a.

The study had limitations that could have influenced the interpretation of the results. One limitation was that the recruitment of participants was based on voluntary participation in the study, which resulted in a convenience sample that limited the generalizability of results (Terrell, 2016), as convenience samples are widely biased (Freund et al., 2010). Another limitation included the use of self-reporting via Likert scale instruments, the TFP-SS (Mihalo et al., 2016), the FSS (Dunst et al., 1984), and the TIQ (Keys et al., 2017) as the researcher assumed all participants answered all questions honestly and accurately. Lastly, the accuracy of participant responses may have been flawed by self-bias and falsifications even though participants were encouraged to answer truthfully. The researcher had no control or influence to guarantee that participants communicated honestly and accurately in their responses.

In Chapter 5, the researcher summarizes the research's findings, conclusions, and implications. In the final chapter, the researcher discusses the theoretical and practical implications. Lastly, Chapter 5 concludes with recommendations for future research and practice.

## CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

### Overview

The purpose of this nonexperimental, correlational quantitative study was to determine to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering among 102 nonrelative foster carers licensed among five foster care agencies in North Carolina. This chapter discusses this study's significant results and key findings based on the three research questions and corresponding hypotheses. Inferences from current literature discussed in Chapter two are included in the implications section, which also addresses methodological and practical implications that may be valuable from a Christian worldview. Chapter five discusses the study's delimitations, limitations, and recommendations for future research, policy, and social work practice. Chapter five concludes with a summary of the chapter.

### Discussion

Foster parent retention and youth placement stability are a challenge for the child welfare system as the shortage of licensed foster homes continue to disrupt youth stability in care. Despite the shortage of foster homes, there are currently 418,917 children in the foster care system in the United States (Kelly, 2019). Of these children, 46% are placed in non-relative foster homes (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2021), and of these placed youth, 18.9% will experience two placement disruptions in 18 months (Dolan et al., 2013), while 64% will experience three or more placement disruptions in 24 months (NCDHHS, 2018). Research has explored many factors contributing to youth placement disruptions, including the challenge for foster care agencies to acquire and retain foster parents, as approximately 30 to 50% of foster parents discontinue fostering after the first year (CHAMPS, 2019). Therefore, the purpose of this

non-experimental, correlational quantitative study was to determine to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderated the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering among nonrelative foster carers.

The independent variables, foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering, were analyzed, and four other factors were categorized as demographic information. Participant demographic information included gender, age, racial background, and marital status. Additional variables included participants' duration of fostering, the number of foster placements, and the number of placement disruptions.

The study utilized three instruments: the Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS; Mihalo et al., 2016), the Family Support Scale (FSS; Dunst et al., 1984), and the Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ; Keys et al., 2017). The TFP-SS was developed to measure satisfaction among treatment foster parents (Mihalo et al., 2016). The TFP-SS was utilized to assess foster carers' attitudes about their professional parenting role, efficacy, training quality, and staff support (Mihalo et al., 2016). The FSS was developed to measure and assess the sources of social support available to families raising children (Dunst et al., 1984). The FSS identified sources of social support as family, friends, social groups, professional agencies, service providers, and religious groups (Hoang, 2018; Littlewood et al., 2012; Peshawaria et al., 2000) and consisted of five areas for support: kinship, spouse/partner, informal, programs/organizations, and professional services (Dunst et al., 1984). Lastly, the TIQ was developed to measure foster parents' intentions to continue fostering that utilized a three-item questionnaire rating one's intention to continue fostering that incorporated multiple measuring items (Keys et al., 2017).

A multiple regression was used in this study to evaluate a possible relationship between foster care support services, foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and placement disruptions with the variables age, gender, duration of fostering, and the number of youth placements. The researcher sought to measure the degree and relationship between two or more variables (Gall et al., 2010). Therefore, it was appropriate to process multiple correlations due to the number of variables.

The three research questions below that are central to this study were:

### ***Research Question I***

If and to what extent does the quantity of foster care support services significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering? Data results indicated a significant relationship between the quantity of foster care support services, foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and placement disruptions. The statistic rejects the null hypothesis. Thus, the researcher accepts the alternative hypothesis H1a as the quantity of foster care support services is significant to foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and foster care displacements.

In support of the data results, a review of the literature showed historically that support for the fostering role serves as a positive resource in reducing negative outcomes (Boss et al., 2017) and that quantity of social support services among foster parents is vital (Cooley et al., 2019) when received from support organizations, contacts in the local community, and support from social workers (Sidery, 2019). Additionally, Ozbay et al. (2007) suggested that social support must be accessible, reliable, adequate, and available during high stress, crisis, or hardships to promote positive outcomes. Some conceptualizations of social support suggest that the number of support/quantity available to a person is considered beneficial (Richardson et al.,

2018).

On the other hand, data results from the current study contradict previous research, which suggests that how adults perceive the helpfulness of their supports affects well-being outcomes rather than the quantity of supports available (Montpetit et al., 2017). Additionally, Geiger et al. (2013) revealed that a lack in the quality of the supportive interaction between staff and foster parents contributes to foster parent satisfaction versus the quantity of support. Finally, to contradict current data results, previous research discovered that financial support/compensation is associated with foster carer satisfaction (Marcellus, 2010; Rodger et al., 2006) and intent to continue fostering (Rhodes et al., 2001) in comparison to the quantity of foster carer support services.

### ***Research Question 2***

If and to what extent does formal foster care support services significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering? Data results indicated a significant relationship between formal foster care support services, foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and placement disruptions. Therefore, the statistic rejects the null hypothesis. Thus the researcher accepts the alternative hypothesis H2a as formal foster care support services are significant to foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and foster care displacements.

In support of the data results, a review of the literature showed historically that formal support, more specifically, a positive relationship with caseworkers, is associated with positive foster caregiver satisfaction outcomes (Marcellus, 2010; Rodger et al., 2006). Additionally, studies have shown that having meaningful connections during a time of need is beneficial in successfully managing challenges (Barton et al., 2014). Rodger et al. (2006) suggested that

receiving formal and informal support is vital for fostering caregiver success, including retention.

A significant association was found for foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and the number of placement disruptions for the variable of support from staff independently of the FSS. Therefore, suggesting the variable support from staff, a type of formal support is significant to foster parent success outcomes, supporting the alternative H2a. The significance of the variable support from staff, support previous research that suggest formal support, specifically a positive relationship with agency staff is associated with positive foster caregiver satisfaction (Marcellus, 2010; Rodger et al., 2006). MacGregor et al. (2006) referenced the importance of the type of support, including support from staff, as significant to foster parent success outcomes. In comparison, Sidery (2019) concluded that support from social workers (staff) is crucial in meeting the needs of foster parents. To contradict the current data results, Shiba et al. (2016) revealed that formal social support was not associated with foster carer success outcomes. Therefore, discrediting that formal support services is significant to foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and placement disruptions.

### ***Research Question 3***

If and to what extent does informal foster care support services significantly moderate the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering? Data results indicated a significant relationship between informal foster care support services, foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and placement disruptions. Therefore, the statistic rejects the null hypothesis. The researcher accepts the alternative hypothesis H3a as formal foster care support services are significant to foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and foster care displacements.

In support of the data results a review of the literature showed historically that informal

support always positively impacts parental success outcomes (Byrne et al., 2012) and is a protective factor in foster parent retention and placement stability (Shiba et al., 2016).

Additionally, Viseu et al. (2018) confirmed the impact of social support in promoting successful outcomes, in that social support reduced the magnitude of the relationship between stress, anxiety, and depression and is beneficial to foster parents' well-being and fostering success (Cavazzi et al., 2010). Piel and colleagues (2017) concluded that informal supports, such as other foster parents, family and friends, and faith communities, may contribute to family resilience and the success of foster placements (Buehler et al., 2003).

To contradict current data results that informal support services is significant to foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and placement disruptions, Palant and Himmel (2019) identified adverse reactions to informal supports in that participants experienced feeling overwhelmed, annoyed, high anxiety, unstable mental health, and an altered self-awareness in response to supports overreacting, displaying pity towards stressful situations, and experiencing unwanted confrontations and undesirable reactions from informal social supports.

### **Theoretical Literature**

This study was guided by the theoretical model presented by Drennon-Gala and Cullen (Cullen, 1994; Drennon-Gala, 1994, 1995), whose work in social support provided a framework for exploring the relationship between social support, foster parent success outcomes, and fostering decisions (MacGregor et al., 2006). This study concludes that social support services in the form of quantity, informal, or formal support services are significant to foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and placement disruptions among licensed non-relative foster carers. Additionally, while conducting the current study, the variable support from staff, independently of the FSS identified by Tonheim and Iversen (2019), was confirmed in most



cases to be significant to foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and the number of placement disruptions. To support this finding, previous research for social support theory identified negative outcomes in connection with lack of informal and formal social support. For example, Tonheim and Iversen (2019) identified a correlation between foster parents' lack of support and lack of follow-up from caseworkers to an increase in youth placement disruptions. Youth placement disruptions is a negative outcome to lack of social support, in which 18.9% of youth experience two placements while 8.5% of youth experience three or more placements within 18 months in foster care (Dolan et al., 2013) and 64% of youth experience three or more placements within 24 months or longer in care (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS, 2018). Ozbay et al. (2007) concluded that social support as a functional dimension in the form of quality of supportive relationships is more predictive of foster parent success outcomes. Previous research concluded that social support is linked to emotional and relational well-being (Shorey & Lakey, 2011). They were suggesting a correlation between social support and foster parent success outcomes.

On the contrary, many theoreticians and researchers have disagreed with social support theory's theoretical and operational definition, resulting in confusion and implicit assumptions regarding social support concepts (Shorey & Lakey, 2011). Therefore, the correlation between social support and foster parent success outcomes has been challenged as social support has become more encompassing in its meaning. Social support is a more complex concept that considers anticipation of support, perception of support, quality and quantity of supportive interactions, and the characteristics of persons, behaviors, relationships, and social systems (Hupcey, 1998). Therefore, theoreticians and researchers suggest that almost any type of social interaction is considered a type of social support (Hupcey, 1998). If any type of social interaction

can be considered a type of social support, then how can research statistically differentiate between type and quantity of social support services and their significance to foster parent success outcomes? Also, can research statistically conclude that one type of social support is more significant to foster parent success outcomes than another?

### **Implications**

The findings of this study have multiple implications for social workers and the child welfare system. The study contributed to current literature on foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and placement disruptions moderated by foster care support services in several contexts. In this study, foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering represented the criterion variables, and foster care displacements represented the predictor variable. Because of the high rate of foster parents discontinuing fostering, understanding the relationship between foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering is essential in reducing foster care displacements and recruiting new foster parents to enter fostering. Previous research indicated that the influence of social support is linked to variables that directly influence placement stability and is associated with the challenges of foster parent retention and satisfaction (Cooley et al., 2019). This study examined the experience of non-relative foster parents regarding their perspective of receiving social support and its impact on foster parent satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and placement disruptions.

### ***Empirical Implications***

The empirical implications of this study are based on the actual lived experiences of licensed foster parents who participated in completing the self-reported surveys. Participants shared their personal experiences with formal, informal, and quantity of social support services as licensed foster parents and how social support impact success outcomes. Based on the

experiences reported by study participants, the researcher can imply that foster parents are receiving insufficient social support. As a negative outcome, the lack of support significantly impacts foster parent satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and placement disruptions. Additionally, the researcher can imply that formal support, specifically from staff, has a significant association with foster parent satisfaction and youth placement disruptions.

The empirical implications in this study can be significant to the successful outcomes of foster parents if child welfare agencies consider study participants' perception of the role of support from staff as a valuable factor that significantly influences their overall satisfaction with fostering and significantly influences their intent to continue in their fostering role. Therefore, incorporating adequate and appropriate strategies and interventions to increase the level of support from staff provided to foster carers is vital. Additionally, child welfare agencies should explore the race/ethnicity of foster parents and the association with youth placement disruptions to determine if a positive or negative connection exists regarding the quality/quantity of staff support received by foster parents based upon race/ethnicity of foster parents as study results revealed a significant relationship between ethnicity/race of foster parents and the occurrence of placement disruptions.

### ***Theoretical Implications***

The theoretical implications of this study build on the existing theory of social support. Cullen (1994) suggested that instrumental, informational, emotional, and appraisal support reduce the likelihood of adverse outcomes as social support theory is the perception or actuality of being cared for and receiving assistance and support from a social network (Cullen, 1994). Findings from the current study indicated the significance of social support theory to the lived experience of non-relative foster carers as foster carers who participated in this study identified

concerns with lack of support from staff. Previous research identified a correlation between foster parents' lack of support and lack of follow-up from caseworkers to increased placement disruptions (Tonheim & Iversen, 2019). Findings from this study indicated the value of support from staff being significant to foster parent satisfaction and intent to continue fostering.

### ***Practical Implications***

The results from this study can inform the development of systemic and universally integrated approaches to adequately support foster carers in efforts to minimize vulnerabilities associated with negative outcomes. The first practical implication stems from the significant correlation between support from staff and turnover intention. This relationship implies that foster carers' lack of support from staff impacts one's intent to continue fostering. A second implication of the findings is a significant correlation between support from staff and foster carer satisfaction. This relationship implies that foster carers' lack of support from staff impacts one's level of satisfaction with fostering. Previous research has found that increasing social support and providing support from staff are linked to increased foster parent satisfaction and retention (Denby et al., 1999; Piescher et al., 2008).

This research can support developmental science and promote the practical implementation of prevention, early intervention, and policy strategies for foster carers. Child welfare agencies may use the results of this study to incorporate social support services as a positive intervention and resource that is readily available and accessible to foster parents on a local level. The child welfare system may use the results of this study to improve agency practices and policies that will better support the needs of foster parents on a global level.

### ***Implication for Social Work***

The implication for social services involves increasing support from agency staff,

sufficient agency staff training, and allowing foster carers to have a more active role in court proceedings, as many participants of the current study expressed in the TFP-SS open-ended question. The TFP-SS allowed participants to openly share any additional thoughts or suggestions concerning their satisfaction. However, the open-ended question in the TFP-SS did not change the validity of the survey instrument as participants' open-ended responses were not scored in connection with the 28 ordinal level questions but participant responses matched the findings of the current study. Foster carers involved in this study described their experience in collaboration with social workers/caseworkers as a disaster, dissatisfying, lack of trust, and an overall traumatic experience, more specifically traumatic when faced with false allegations. Additionally, some participants of the current study described the foster care system as broken and that it is extremely difficult to work with DSS compared to a private foster care agency.

A second implication is to engage an ambiguous loss framework when developing interventions for removing children from care. Ambiguous loss occurs when an individual experiences a lack of clarity about a loved one's physical or psychological presence (Mitchell, 2016). To support this concept, participants in the current study expressed they would have benefited from a debrief after the removal of a child from their home by means of a placement disruption and a planned transition. Study participants agreed that increased communication from agency staff regarding expectations and separation would be beneficial. Additionally, as Newquist et al. (2020) discovered, foster parents reported that training regarding personal grief and loss would help cope with the ambiguous loss of foster children as many foster parents expressed sadness at the child's physical absence after the child was removed from the home.

### **Christian Worldview**

The Biblical perspective of support guided the interpretation of this study's findings.

Understanding the importance of support and its meaning through a Christian worldview is guided by Biblical scripture “God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them” (Hebrews 6:10, KJV). The interpretive lens of the Bible identifies various types of support that are directly related to the results of this study: encourage, help, and protect. “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up” (1 Thessalonians 5:11, KJV). “Help others with all the strength and energy that God supplies” (1 Peter 4:11) and “Let each of you look not only to his interests but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4, KJV). Encourage foster parents to perform at their best by building them up and motivating them towards success. Help foster parents during times of struggle, challenges, and hardships by providing access to various forms of support and protecting foster parents during times of vulnerability and weakness. The Bible references the supportive need for encouragement, help, and protection of Christian believers. Where is the same supportive need for foster parents?

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

Delimitations are purposeful decisions the researcher makes to limit or define the study's boundaries (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2019). The researcher chose the topic of this study based on the researcher's personal experience as a foster carer in the child welfare system.

Delimitations set by the researcher as boundaries of this study included the research questions, the study variables identified, and the target population chosen for the study were all controlled by the researcher for the goal of this study to be complete. Additionally, the researcher controlled for the variable of age, years fostering, and number of foster placements by including participants aged 25 and older, who had a minimum of two years of fostering experience and had a minimum of two foster youth placements. The researcher incorporated these delimitations into

the study to control for foster parent experience. To clarify, the state of North Carolina requires a minimum age to be a foster parent as 21. Based on the survey instruments and the data needed for this particular research, the researcher believed it to be more accurate to recruit foster parents with a minimum level of experience fostering based on age, years of fostering, and the number of foster youth placed in their home to report personal experiences with fostering accurately.

The researcher also included only non-relative foster parents for this study while excluding all other types of foster parents. Additionally, the researcher recruited participants in North Carolina to be included in this study, which delimited the participation of foster parents who resided in other states. Although the findings in the present study add to the field, the current study is not without limitations. Limitations are constraints outside of the researchers' control that could affect the generalizability of the results (Terrell, 2016).

First, this study may not be generalizable to all foster parents, considering that this study only recruited a small sample size of 102 non-relative foster parents despite approximately 700 foster parents licensed among the five foster care agencies in North Carolina. Additionally, the sample was primarily White, heterosexual females who resided in the state of North Carolina, which limited the researcher's ability to generalize the results to other states. A larger sample size, controlling for demographic-related differences, would benefit future studies to increase the generalization of findings to primary male caregivers and other racial-ethnic groups.

A second limitation identified within this study included the researcher's self-selection of survey methodologies and potential researcher bias, as the researcher is currently licensed as a non-relative foster parent in North Carolina. Also, using survey methodologies can only uncover relationships among variables and not cause and effect (Schelble et al., 2010). Although the

study revealed a directional relationship among study variables, the researcher can only infer why these directional relationships were uncovered.

A third limitation that may have negatively impacted data results is the lack of voluntary participation of many foster care agencies within North Carolina. The researcher contacted approximately 25 licensed foster care agencies requesting their voluntary participation in this study. Despite this inquiry, only five foster care agencies agreed to participate, excluding many licensed non-relative foster parents who might have provided additional insight, perception, and information to better support the research hypotheses.

A final limitation to this study was the researcher's inability to survey foster parents that have discontinued fostering as the researcher only had access to participants who were currently fostering. Suppose the researcher would have had access to foster parents who discontinued fostering. In that case, the criterion variable intent to continue fostering may have produced different results, as these parents could have provided insight into factors that contributed to their decision to discontinue fostering. Therefore, the researcher's inability to access non-fostering parents created an unavoidable bias regarding their intention to continue fostering with the sample foster parents.

The study results should be interpreted cautiously as study participants self-selected to participate. Therefore, it is not clear if foster parents that participated have different characteristics than individuals who did not participate in the study solely because they decided to take the time to participate and share their experiences. For example, foster parents who completed the survey in its entirety may have had more time, availability, fewer life stressors, and more access to resources (e.g., computer access, internet) than the foster parents who did not complete the survey. Non-study participants may have represented those foster parents with less



social support services, lower foster parent satisfaction, and lower intent to continue fostering, which would make the recruited sample less than representative of the population of foster parents.

Since this study used self-reported measures, participants may have responded to questions in socially desirable ways, possibly resulting in subject bias, underreported responses, and lack of honesty from participants. Because the study required online survey completion, there is a possibility that foster parents could have participated but did not have computer and internet access were excluded from participating in the study. Despite these limitations, the study's strengths far outweigh its limitations and contribute to understanding the vital need for collaborative social support services to promote foster parent success outcomes. The study's findings contribute to policy and practice implications for social workers who work directly with foster parents and add substantially to the current knowledge base in foster parent success outcomes.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the study limitations, there are several recommendations for future research that researchers in foster parent success outcomes should consider. First, future studies should involve a more extensive and diverse group of foster carers, including a more ethnically and racially diverse sample, as this study recruited majority Caucasian participants. Also, future studies should involve a larger population of male foster carers, as this research only recruited 9 male participants from a total sample of 102 participants. A diverse sample would allow further study of how culture, ethnicity, and gender play a role in perceived social support and parental stress as related to family resilience. Also, future research should replicate the study and include discontinued foster parents in the sample who may be able to share additional factors that

influence foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering, as the current study only recruited actively fostering parents, who were not able to express reasons for discontinuation of fostering.

Future research should consider incorporating an alternative survey instrument that would reduce the number of questions asked of study participants and produce a survey instrument that is shorter in duration. A possible limitation of this study was the lengthy survey instrument that potentially prevented approximately 20 foster parents from completing the survey in its entirety. The current survey combined three surveys into one included demographic questions and criteria/inclusion questions for participants, which may have resulted in participants experiencing survey overload or fatigue, and as a result, discontinued completion of the survey. Survey overload, similar to information overload, occurs when participants find the volume of surveys tedious and overwhelming, resulting in the lack of survey completion (Roetzel, 2019).

Future research should recruit foster parents from all states. The current study only included foster parents licensed in North Carolina, which excluded approximately 51 potential participants due to geographical restrictions. A broader geographical sample will permit the share of experiences from foster parents among multiple states in the United States, as foster parent experiences, perception of support, and satisfaction may differ from state to state as policy, procedure, and regulations differ state-state level.

Finally, future research should include foster parents licensed under the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) exclusively to compare the experiences of foster parents licensed under the state level (DHHS) with privately licensed foster care agencies, as this study did not differentiate between private foster care agencies and the DHHS. An exclusive sample of foster parents licensed under the DHHS may contribute to the research on foster parent outcomes

as DHHS foster parents may have a different experience of support than privately licensed foster parents.

### **Summary**

The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to determine to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderated the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering among nonrelative foster carers licensed in North Carolina.

In chapter 5, the researcher summarized the study findings in response to the three research questions. The chapter followed with a discussion of the empirical, theoretical, and practical implications, identified delimitations and limitations of the study, and concluded with recommendations for future research and practice. Although the data gathered had insufficient variation to achieve generalizability of results, the study found that many foster parents surveyed were dissatisfied with specific areas of their interaction with the department of social services (DSS) agency social workers. Foster parents specifically reported a lack of trust and support of agency DSS social workers, feeling a lack of inclusion in decisions, court/legal proceedings, and reported social workers needing mental health training to better support youth in care. Also, foster parents reported a lack of agency support during allegations/investigations, felt that foster parents are not legally protected, and that many DSS agencies should be investigated.

Study results concluded that the quantity of foster care support services, formal supports services, and informal support services does have a significant correlation between foster carer satisfaction, intent to continue fostering, and placement displacements. Additionally, a more significant association was found between foster carer satisfaction and support from staff independently of the FSS. Also, a significant association was found between intent to continue

fostering, support from staff, number of placement disruptions, and ethnicity/race independently of the FSS.

Recommendations for further research should include a more diverse participant sample to explore the influence of culture, ethnicity, and gender on perceived social support. Future research should consider the perspective of discontinued foster parents to aid in determining factors that influence foster care displacements and intent to continue fostering. Finally, future research should explore a shorter survey instrument to reduce potential dropout rates and incomplete survey responses as the researcher believes the duration of the survey deterred approximately 20 participants.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A

### IRB Approval Letter

[External] IRB-FY21-22-197 - Initial: Initial - Exempt

do-not-reply@cayuse.com <do-not-reply@cayuse.com>

Fri 12/3/2021 5:06 AM

To: Hester, Bridgette (Community Care and Counseling) [REDACTED] Watts, Latasha Denise  
[REDACTED]

[ EXTERNAL EMAIL: Do not click any links or open attachments unless you know the sender and trust the content. ]

## LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.

### INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

December 3, 2021

Latasha Watts  
Bridgette Hester

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY21-22-197 SOCIAL SUPPORT AS A MODERATOR TO FOSTER CARE  
DISPLACEMENT AND FOSTER PARENT OUTCOMES

Dear Latasha Watts, Bridgette Hester,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).

The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

**Your stamped consent form(s) and final versions of your study documents can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study on Cayuse IRB.** Your stamped consent form(s) should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document(s) should be made available without alteration.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of

continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**

*Administrative Chair of Institutional Research*

**Research Ethics Office**

## Appendix B

### IRB Modification Approval Letter

[External] IRB-FY21-22-197 - Modification: Modification

do-not-reply@cayuse.com <do-not-reply@cayuse.com>

Tue 2/1/2022 12:44 PM

To: Hester, Bridgette (Community Care and Counseling) [REDACTED]; Watts, Latasha Denise  
[REDACTED]

[ EXTERNAL EMAIL: Do not click any links or open attachments unless you know the sender and trust the content. ]

## LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 1, 2022

Latasha Watts  
Bridgette Hester

Re: Modification - IRB-FY21-22-197 SOCIAL SUPPORT AS A MODERATOR TO FOSTER CARE  
DISPLACEMENT AND FOSTER PARENT OUTCOMES

Dear Latasha Watts, Bridgette Hester,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has rendered the decision below for IRB-FY21-22-197 SOCIAL SUPPORT AS A MODERATOR TO FOSTER CARE DISPLACEMENT AND FOSTER PARENT OUTCOMES.

Decision: Exempt

Your request to include participants from within the entire state of North Carolina and to utilize "social media platforms such as, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn to recruit additional foster parents beyond the 5 identified sites" has been approved. Thank you for submitting your revised consent form for our review and documentation. Your revised, stamped consent form can be found under the Attachments tab within the Submission Details section of your study in Cayuse IRB. Your stamped consent form should be copied and used to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without alteration.

Thank you for complying with the IRB's requirements for making changes to your approved study. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

We wish you well as you continue with your research.

Sincerely,

**G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP**

## Appendix C

### Agency Recruitment Letter

Date:

To: Whom it may Concern

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear: Agency Director

As a graduate student in the School of Behavioral Sciences at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate degree. The purpose of my research is to determine to what extent, if any, the type, and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer satisfaction and intent to continue fostering, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.


Participants must be a minimum of 25 years of age or older, be a licensed non-relative foster parent in North Carolina for a minimum of two consecutive years and have had a minimum of two foster youth placed in their home. Participants, if willing, will be asked to sign a consent form and if eligible complete a set of survey questions. It should take approximately one hour to complete the survey questionnaire. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

If approval is granted from your agency, participants will complete the survey questionnaire online at a setting of their choice (i.e., home, work, etc.). The survey process should take no longer than 1 hour to complete. Survey results will be pooled for the dissertation project and individual results of this study will remain confidential and anonymous. Should this study be published, only pooled results will be documented. No costs will be incurred by either your agency or the individual participants.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I can follow up with you via email or a telephone call per your response to this email. I will be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at that time.

If you agree, please respond to this email by providing a contact number to discuss further details. Alternatively, kindly submit a signed letter of permission on your agency's letterhead acknowledging your consent and permission for me to conduct this survey/study at your agency.

Very Respectfully,  
Latasha D. Watts  
BA/QMHP/MSW/LCSW  
Doctoral Student at Liberty University



## Appendix D

### Site Authorization



Date: August 25, 2021  
 Latasha D. Watts (Doctorate Student)  
 Liberty University  
 1971 University Blvd.  
 Lynchburg, VA 24515

**Subject:** Site Approval Letter

Dear: Latasha D. Watts:

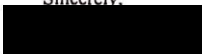

After careful review of your research proposal entitled Social Support as a Moderator to Foster Care Displacement and Foster Parent Outcomes, I have decided to grant you permission to recruit foster parents within our agency to participate in your study. I have agreed to utilize your study recruitment flyer to provide to our foster parents via email to invite them to participate in your study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

- [I/We] will provide Latasha D. Watts' study recruitment flyer to our foster parent member list via email to invite them to participate in her research study.
- [I/We] grant permission for Latasha D. Watts to contact the recipients of the monetary gift cards via email to provide them with an electronic visa gift card.
- [I/We] will not provide potential participant information to Latasha D. Watts, but we agree to send her study information to our foster parents on her behalf.
- [I/We] are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

When the researcher receives approval for her research project from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I agree to provide access for the approved research project. If we have any concerns or need additional information, we will contact Liberty University's IRB at 434) 592-5530 or at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,

  
 Nakia C. Batts, MA, LPC-A  
 NC Executive Director  
 Lutheran Services Carolinas  




## Appendix D (Continued)

### Site Authorization



August 27, 2021  
 Latasha D. Watts (Doctorate Student)  
 Liberty University  
 1971 University Blvd.  
 Lynchburg, VA 24515

**Subject:** Site Approval Letter

Dear: Latasha D. Watts:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled Social Support as a Moderator to Foster Care Displacement and Foster Parent Outcomes, I have decided to grant you permission to recruit foster parents within our agency to participate in your study. I have agreed to utilize your study recruitment flyer to provide to our foster parents via email to invite them to participate in your study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

- [I/We] will provide Latasha D. Watts' study recruitment flyer to our foster parent member list via email to invite them to participate in her research study.
- [I/We] grant permission for Latasha D. Watts to contact the recipients of the monetary gift cards via email to provide them with an electronic visa gift card.
- [I/We] will not provide potential participant information to Latasha D. Watts, but we agree to send her study information to our foster parents on her behalf.
- [I/We] are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

When the researcher receives approval for her research project from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I agree to provide access for the approved research project. If we have any concerns or need additional information, we will contact Liberty University's IRB at 434) 592-5530 or at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]  
 Ashley Lantz, MPA  
 Director/Union County Social Services  
 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[unioncountync.gov](http://unioncountync.gov)

## Appendix D (Continued)

### Site Authorization



August 31, 2021

Latasha D. Watts (Doctorate Student)  
 Liberty University  
 1971 University Blvd.  
 Lynchburg, VA 24515

**Subject:** Site Approval Letter

Dear: Latasha D. Watts:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled Social Support as a Moderator to Foster Care Displacement and Foster Parent Outcomes, I have decided to grant you permission to recruit foster parents within our agency to participate in your study. I have agreed to utilize your study recruitment flyer to provide to our foster parents via email to invite them to participate in your study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

- [I/We] will provide Latasha D. Watts' study recruitment flyer to our foster parent member list via email to invite them to participate in her research study.
- [I/We] grant permission for Latasha D. Watts to contact the recipients of the monetary gift cards via email to provide them with an electronic visa gift card.
- [I/We] will not provide potential participant information to Latasha D. Watts, but we agree to send her study information to our foster parents on her behalf.
- [I/We] are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

When the researcher receives approval for her research project from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I agree to provide access for the approved research project. If we have any concerns or need additional information, we will contact Liberty University's IRB at 434) 592-5530 or at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Respectfully submitted,

[Redacted Signature]

Jennifer Stout  
 Statewide Director of Licensing and Training  
 Thompson Child and Family Focus

## Appendix D (Continued)

### Site Authorization



Date: 9/7/21  
Latasha D. Watts (Doctorate Student)  
Liberty University  
1971 University Blvd.  
Lynchburg, VA 24515

**Subject:** Site Approval Letter

Dear: Latasha D. Watts:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled Social Support as a Moderator to Foster Care Displacement and Foster Parent Outcomes, I have decided to grant you permission to recruit foster parents within our agency to participate in your study. I have agreed to utilize your study recruitment flyer to provide to our foster parents via email to invite them to participate in your study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

- [I/We] will provide Latasha D. Watts' study recruitment flyer to our foster parent member list via email to invite them to participate in her research study.
- [I/We] grant permission for Latasha D. Watts to contact the recipients of the monetary gift cards via email to provide them with an electronic visa gift card.
- [I/We] will not provide potential participant information to Latasha D. Watts, but we agree to send her study information to our foster parents on her behalf.
- [I/We] are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

When the researcher receives approval for her research project from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I agree to provide access for the approved research project. If we have any concerns or need additional information, we will contact Liberty University's IRB at 434) 592-5530 or at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,

Erin Huneycutt, Clinical Director  
Turning Point Homes  
[REDACTED]

## Appendix D (Continued)

### Site Authorization



CHARLOTTE

Date: 9/14/21  
 Latasha D. Watts (Doctorate Student)  
 Liberty University  
 1971 University Blvd.  
 Lynchburg, VA 24515

Subject: Site Approval Letter

Dear: Latasha D. Watts:

After careful review of your research proposal entitled Social Support as a Moderator to Foster Care Displacement and Foster Parent Outcomes, I have decided to grant you permission to recruit foster parents within our agency to participate in your study. I have agreed to utilize your study recruitment flyer to provide to our foster parents via email to invite them to participate in your study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

- ✓ [I/We] will provide Latasha D. Watts' study recruitment flyer to our foster parent member list via email to invite them to participate in her research study.
- ✓ [I/We] grant permission for Latasha D. Watts to contact the recipients of the monetary gift cards via email to provide them with an electronic visa gift card.
- ✓ [I/We] will not provide potential participant information to Latasha D. Watts, but we agree to send her study information to our foster parents on her behalf.
- ✓ [I/We] are requesting a copy of the results upon study completion and/or publication.

When the researcher receives approval for her research project from Liberty University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), I agree to provide access for the approved research project. If we have any concerns or need additional information, we will contact Liberty University's IRB at 434) 592-5530 or at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,  
 Becky Santoro  
 Co-Founder/Co-Director  
 Foster Village Charlotte

## Appendix E

### Consent

**Title of the Project:** SOCIAL SUPPORT AS A MODERATOR TO FOSTER CARE DISPLACEMENT AND FOSTER PARENT OUTCOMES

**Principal Investigator:** Latasha Watts, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

#### **Invitation to be Part of a Research Study**

You are invited to participate in a research study to determine to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements and foster carer motivation. You were selected as a possible participant because you are age 25 or older, a currently licensed foster parent in North Carolina, with a minimum of two years of consecutive experience, and have had a minimum of two foster care placements. You are a licensed foster parent within one of the five foster care agencies of DSS, FCA1, FCA2, FCA3, and FCA4 in North Carolina. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

#### **What is the study about, and why is it being done?**

The purpose of this study is to determine to what extent, if any, the type and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements, foster carer satisfaction, and intent to continue fostering.

#### **What will happen if you take part in this study?**

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete a demographic questionnaire.
2. Complete three survey instruments via the online link Qualtrics: Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey, Family Support Scale, and Turnover Intention Questionnaire.

#### **How could you or others benefit from this study?**

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from participating in this research. Benefits to society may include an in-depth analysis of the impact of social support on foster care displacements, foster care satisfaction, and intent to continue fostering. This analysis may contribute valuable insight to current research exploring the impact of social support on foster parent success outcomes. Additionally, participants' perspectives may provide unique ideas that improve foster parents' support to reduce foster care displacements, promote foster parent satisfaction, and intend to continue fostering.

#### **What risks might you experience from being in this study?**

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

#### **How will personal information be protected?**

The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Foster care agency site locations will be assigned a pseudonym, and study participants' responses will be anonymous.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and may be used in future presentations. Hard copy data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. After the completion and publication of the study, all research-related data, including paper and electronic data, will be stored securely in locked storage for three years, after which time all hard copy data will be destroyed via the method of shredding, and the surveys will be deleted in Qualtrics® as well as any SPSS files.

#### **How will you be compensated for being part of the study?**

Participants may be compensated for their participation in this study. Participants will have the opportunity to win one of four \$25.00 visa gift cards. In order to be entered into the drawing for monetary compensation, participants must complete all procedures and surveys and provide their email addresses to the researcher. Upon completing the survey, you will have the option to opt-in to the raffle by providing your email address at the end of the online survey. Your email address will be pulled separately from your survey response to maintain the anonymity of participants. If you are chosen as the recipient of the monetary gift card, you will receive one of the four electronic gift cards via email. Raffle winners will be compensated after the study.

#### **Is study participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University, your assigned foster care agency, your current employment, or academic career. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

#### **What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in this study.

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?**

The researcher conducting this study is Latasha Watts. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have any questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Bridgette Hester, at [REDACTED].

#### **Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515, or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) ensures that human subjects research will be conducted ethically as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.*

**Your Consent**

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You can print a copy of the document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

**Yes, I Agree****No, I do not Agree**

## Appendix F

### Survey Screening Questionnaire (Inclusion Criteria)

1. Are you at least 25 years of age?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
2. Are you a non-relative foster parent?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
3. Are you licensed in North Carolina?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
4. Have you been a licensed foster parent for a minimum of two consecutive years?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
5. Have you had a minimum of two foster youth placements in your home?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No



**Appendix G**  
**Demographic Questionnaire**

- 1. What is your gender**
  - a. Male**
  - b. Female**
- 2. What is your ethnicity/race?**
  - a. African American/Black**
  - b. Asian**
  - c. Caucasian**
  - d. Hispanic**
  - e. Other**
- 3. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_**
- 4. What is your marital status?**
  - a. Married**
  - b. Single**
  - c. Dating/Living with a partner**
  - d. Divorced/Separated**
- 5. What is your length of fostering? \_\_\_\_\_**
- 6. What is the total number of foster placements (i.e., youth) you have fostered? \_\_\_\_\_**
- 7. What is the total number of youth placement disruptions you have experienced? \_\_\_\_\_**
  - a. A placement disruption is defined as any disruptions in which a foster youth was removed from your home (not including reunification, adoption, or aging out)?

## Appendix H

### Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS)

**RE: Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey or Foster Family Home Retention Survey (FFHRS)**

From: Strickler, Amy  
To: 'Watts, Latasha'  
Sent: 8/5/2021 12:33:13 PM

Hi Latasha,

Thank you for your interest in our survey! Jen Mihalo is one of my colleagues who is now attending medical school so she no longer works full-time with Pressley Ridge but she does some consulting with us still. Your dissertation sounds very interesting and is much needed information for how we can better support our foster parents. Yes, we reduced Denby's survey through a factor analysis process to 28 items and re-named it to the Treatment Foster Parent-Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS) we have foster care organizations across the country using our revised survey. I'm attaching both the original article that provides reliability and validity information about the survey, and another article that provides results from a learning community we conducted with these organizations who are members of FFTA (Family Focused Treatment Association) where we did a benchmarking project with them. The TFP-SS survey and user guide is also attached that will provide you with information around scoring the survey. The survey is copyrighted but is free to use for research purposes, so I just ask that you credit our article and that you do not make any changes to the wording of the actual questions. If you would like to reduce the survey further you would have to take out an entire domain instead of individual questions. Items can be added to the survey but must be analyzed separately. I would love to hear the results of your dissertation!

Also, if you're interested in getting involved in some networking opportunities with other foster care organizations, I highly suggest looking into FFTA. I am the chair of the Innovative Practices Collaborative and we meet on a monthly basis to discuss ways to use data and information to improve our practices in foster care and family preservation programs: <https://www.fftta.org/default.aspx>

Thank you,  
Amy



Strong Families  
Strong Communities **Amy Strickler, Ph.D.**  
Director, Organizational Performance Department  
Pressley Ridge  
Mailing Address:



## Appendix H (Continued)

### Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS)



## Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS) User Guide

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### About the Survey:

The Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS) was created as a measurement tool specifically to measure treatment parent satisfaction using a sample of 777 treatment foster families (Mihalo, Strickler, Trunzo, & Triplett, 2016).

The survey contains 28 total questions. There are 25 questions that measure four domains:

- |                                |                              |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1) Professional Parenting Role | 2) Treatment Parent Efficacy |
| 3) Quality of Training         | 4) Support from Staff        |

Three additional questions measure overall satisfaction, intent to continue fostering with the agency, and intent to refer others to become treatment parents with the agency. There is also a space where parents can include additional comments or suggestions.

### Using the Survey:

The TFP-SS can be used as long as the authors are credited and any changes are in accordance with the description below.

#### *Changes to the survey*

The survey should be administered in its entirety, or one or more domain(s) can be separated out. You may also substitute your program/agency name into questions for clarity. However, no other changes should be made to the wording of the questions or response choices; and no questions should be added or removed from domains.

#### *Frequency of measurement*

Typically the TFP-SS is administered annually, but can also be used on a bi-annually or quarterly basis to monitor changes in treatment parent satisfaction.

### Scoring Guidelines:

Results are presented as a percent of treatment parents who are satisfied overall and Top-Box scores. Top-Box scores are a common way to report results, and represent the percentage of treatment parents who choose the top answer.

*Overall Satisfaction:* % of individuals with "Pretty much satisfied" or "very satisfied"

*Top Box Satisfaction:* % of parents with "Very satisfied"

*Top Box Continue to foster:* % of parents with "Very likely"

*Top Box Refer Others:* % of parents with "Very likely"

## Appendix H (Continued)



Domains are reported as average scores for all treatment parents on all items in those domains. Specific interpretations are available for each domain based on the scale of responses.

### *Professional parenting role:*

- Calculate average score of items on that domain (questions 1 through 10)
- Average scores on these items can be interpreted into groups as follows:
  - 1.0 to 1.9—*very unfavorable*
  - 2.0 to 2.9—*unfavorable*
  - 3.0 to 4.9—*neutral*
  - 5.0 to 5.9—*favorable*
  - 6.0 to 7.0—*very favorable*

### *Quality of Training*

- Calculate average score of items on that domain (questions 17 through 19)
- Average scores on these items can be interpreted into groups as follows:
  - 1.0 to 1.9—*very unfavorable*
  - 2.0 to 2.9—*unfavorable*
  - 3.0 to 4.9—*neutral*
  - 5.0 to 5.9—*favorable*
  - 6.0 to 7.0—*very favorable*

### *Treatment Parent Efficacy*

- Calculate average score of items on that domain (questions 11 through 16)
- Average scores on these items can be interpreted into groups as follows:
  - 1.0 to 1.9—*very unfavorable*
  - 2.0 to 2.9—*unfavorable*
  - 3.0 to 4.9—*neutral*
  - 5.0 to 5.9—*favorable*
  - 6.0 to 7.0—*very favorable*

### *Support from Staff*

- Calculate average score of items on that domain (questions 20 through 25)
- Average scores on these items can be interpreted into groups as follows:
  - 1.0 to 1.4—*Never*
  - 1.5 to 2.4—*Rarely*
  - 2.5 to 3.4—*Sometimes*
  - 3.5 to 4.4—*Often*
  - 4.5 to 5.0—*Very Often*

### **Questions:**

Any question about the TFP-SS can be directed to: Amy Strickler ([astrickler@pressleyridge.org](mailto:astrickler@pressleyridge.org))

### **References:**

Mihalo, J. R., Strickler, A., Triplett, D., & Trunzo, A. (2016) Treatment foster parent satisfaction survey validation and predictors of satisfaction, retention, and intent to refer. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 62, 105-110.

## Appendix H (Continued)

### Treatment Foster Parent Satisfaction Survey (TFP-SS)

(Mihalo, Strickler, Triplett, & Trunzo, 2016)

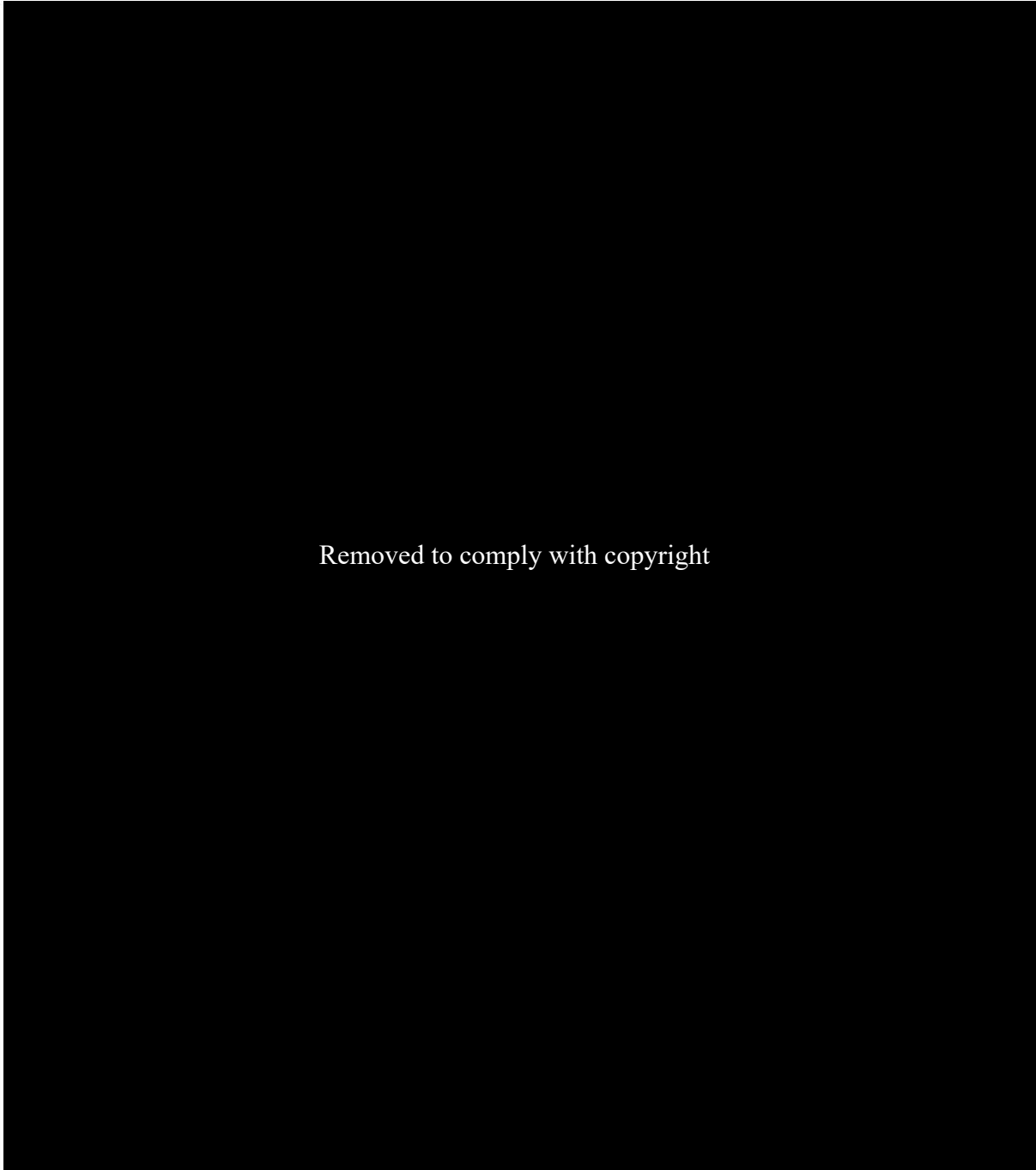
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

The questions below ask about your feelings as a foster parent and your experiences with our organization. Please complete this survey if you have had a child placed in your home in the past year. Your input as a foster parent is vital for ongoing improvement efforts for the program. Please be as honest as possible. Your responses are confidential.

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**Appendix H (Continued)**



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## Appendix I

### Family Support Scale (FSS)

 Reply all
  Delete
  Junk
  Block
  ...

[External] RE: Family Support Scale 1984

C

Sun 8/1/2021 5:58 AM

To: Watts, Latasha







FSS Scale.pdf  
435 KB

FSS\_Original.pdf  
660 KB

2 attachments (1 MB) [Download all](#) [Save all to OneDrive - Liberty University](#)

You don't often get email from [REDACTED]. [Learn why this is important](#)

[ EXTERNAL EMAIL: Do not click any links or open attachments unless you know the sender and trust the content. ]

Latasha,

Attached is the original version of the scale and the published version. Because you are using the scale for your dissertation research, you have permission to use the published version with proper citation. Let me know if you have any questions.

Carl

**From:** Watts, Latasha [mailto:[REDACTED]]  
**Sent:** Saturday, July 31, 2021 7:44 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Family Support Scale 1984

Good evening,

I am a doctorate student at Liberty University, dissertation topic is the impact of social support on foster parent motivation and placement stability.

I reviewed your research article: Family Support Scale: Reliability and Validity. *Journal of Individual, Family and Community Wellness (1984)*

I was wondering is there a way that I can obtain this instrument with the scoring sheet for my dissertation? As I plan to implement this instrument to foster parent participants to measure level of social support and influence of foster parent success outcomes.

If there is another avenue to obtain this instrument, can you advise.

Very respectfully,

Latasha D. Watts  
 Liberty University Doctoral Student

## Appendix I (Continued)

### Family Support Scale

*Carl J. Dunst, Carol M. Trivette, and Vicki Jenkins*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Listed below are people and groups that oftentimes are helpful to members of a family raising a young child. This questionnaire asks you to indicate how helpful each source is to *your family*. Please **circle** the response that *best describes* how **helpful** the people and groups have been to your family during the past 3 to 6 months. If a source of help has not been available to your family during this period of time, circle the NA (Not Available) response.

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## Appendix I (Continued)

### Family Support Scale Scoring Sheet

- A. Enter the individual item scores in the shaded spaces provided (i.e., the respondent's rating [1,2,3,4, or 5]). Items rated NA are scored 0 (zero) for purposes of determining helpfulness scores.
- B. Sum the scores to obtain total subscale scores for the five major sources of support.
- C. Divide the subscale scores by the number of items per subcategory to obtain an average score (for comparative purposes).
- D. Sum the unadjusted scores for the four informal sources of support subcategories to obtain the Informal Social Support Score.
- E. The unadjusted score for the professional services subcategory is the Formal Support Score.
- F. Sum the unadjusted scores for all 19 items to obtain the Total Family Support Scale Score.

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## Appendix J

### Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ)

↩ Reply all ▾ 🗑 Delete Not junk ▾ Block ...

[External] RE: Turnover Intention Questionnaire (TIQ)

ⓘ This message was identified as junk. It's not junk

R [REDACTED]  
Tue 8/10/2021 5:12 AM  
To: Watts, Latasha

👍 ↶ ↷ → ...

Turnover intentions ques... ▾  
59 KB

You don't often get email from [REDACTED] [Learn why this is important](#)

[ EXTERNAL EMAIL: Do not click any links or open attachments unless you know the sender and trust the content. ]

Dear Latasha

You are welcome to use the TIS for your research (please accept this e-mail as the formal permission letter). For this purpose please find the TIS-15 attached for your convenience. This TIS-6 (version 4) consists of the first six items high-lighted in yellow. You may use any one of these two versions. The TIS is based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

The only two conditions for using the TIS are that it may not be used for commercial purposes (other than for post graduate research) and second that it should be properly referenced as (Roodt, 2004) as in the article by Bothma & Roodt (2013) in the SA Journal of Human Resource Management (open access).

It is easy to score the TIS-6. Merely add the item scores to get a total score. The midpoint of the scale is 18 (3 x 6). If the total score is below 18 then it indicates a desire to stay. If the scores are above 18 it indicates a desire to leave the organisation. The minimum a person can get is 6 (6 x 1) and the maximum is 30 (5 x 6). No item scores need to be reflected (reverse scored).

It is recommended that you conduct a CFA on the item scores to assess the dimensionality of the scale. We found that respondents with a matric (grade12) tertiary school qualification tend to understand the items better and consequently a uni-dimensional factor structure is obtained.

If you wish to translate the TIS in a local language, you are welcome to do so. It is recommended that a language expert is used in the translate - back translate method. I wish you all the best with your research!




Best regards

Prof Gert Roodt


From: Watts, Latasha [REDACTED]  
Sent: Tuesday, 10 August 2021 03:08





## Appendix J (Continued)


### Turnover Intention Scale

 Reply all
  Delete
  Junk
  Block
 ...



**Re: [External] Re: Modified version of the Turnover Intention Questionnaire**

 Todd Daniel • Lead Evaluator at #HealthierMO [View profile](#)


 Daniel, Todd E 






Wed 8/11/2021 7:24 AM  
To: Watts, Latasha

Turnover Articles.zip 4 MB 
 Turnover Intention Quest... 548 KB 

2 attachments (5 MB) [Download all](#) [Save all to OneDrive - Liberty University](#)


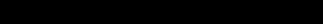
Here is what I came up with. I put all of the relevant documents into a single folder and zipped it. I also collected the PDFs of articles that I used.

In the folder you will find a copy of the section of my dissertation where I discuss turnover and the use of the scale, the scale itself with SPSS syntax, and some additional background information. That should be everything that you need.

Good luck on your dissertation and let me know how it all works out.

Dr. Todd Daniel  
Missouri State University  
Dept. of Information Technology and Cybersecurity

---

**From:** "Watts, Latasha"   
**Date:** Tuesday, August 10, 2021 at 9:19 PM  
**To:** "Daniel, Todd E"   
**Subject:** Re: [External] Re: Modified version of the Turnover Intention Questionnaire

**CAUTION: External Sender**



Good evening,

Thank you so much for your timely response. You are a life saver and I really appreciate you taking the time to get the scale to me. Also, the paragraph will assist as well for documentation.

Very respectfully,

Latasha D. Watts BA, QMHP, MSW, LCSW  
Liberty University Doctorate Student

---

**From:** Daniel, Todd E   
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 10, 2021 7:16 PM  
**To:** Watts, Latasha < jennings, Mary Ann

## Appendix J (Continued)

### Turnover Intention Scale

#### Turnover Intentions Questionnaire (TIP)

##### Modified Version 3-Item Scale

Keys, Daniel, Jennings, Havlin, Russell, & Korang-Okrah, 2017

The following questions aims to ascertain the extent to which you intend to remain in your role as a foster parent. Please read each question and indicate your response using the scale provided for each question.

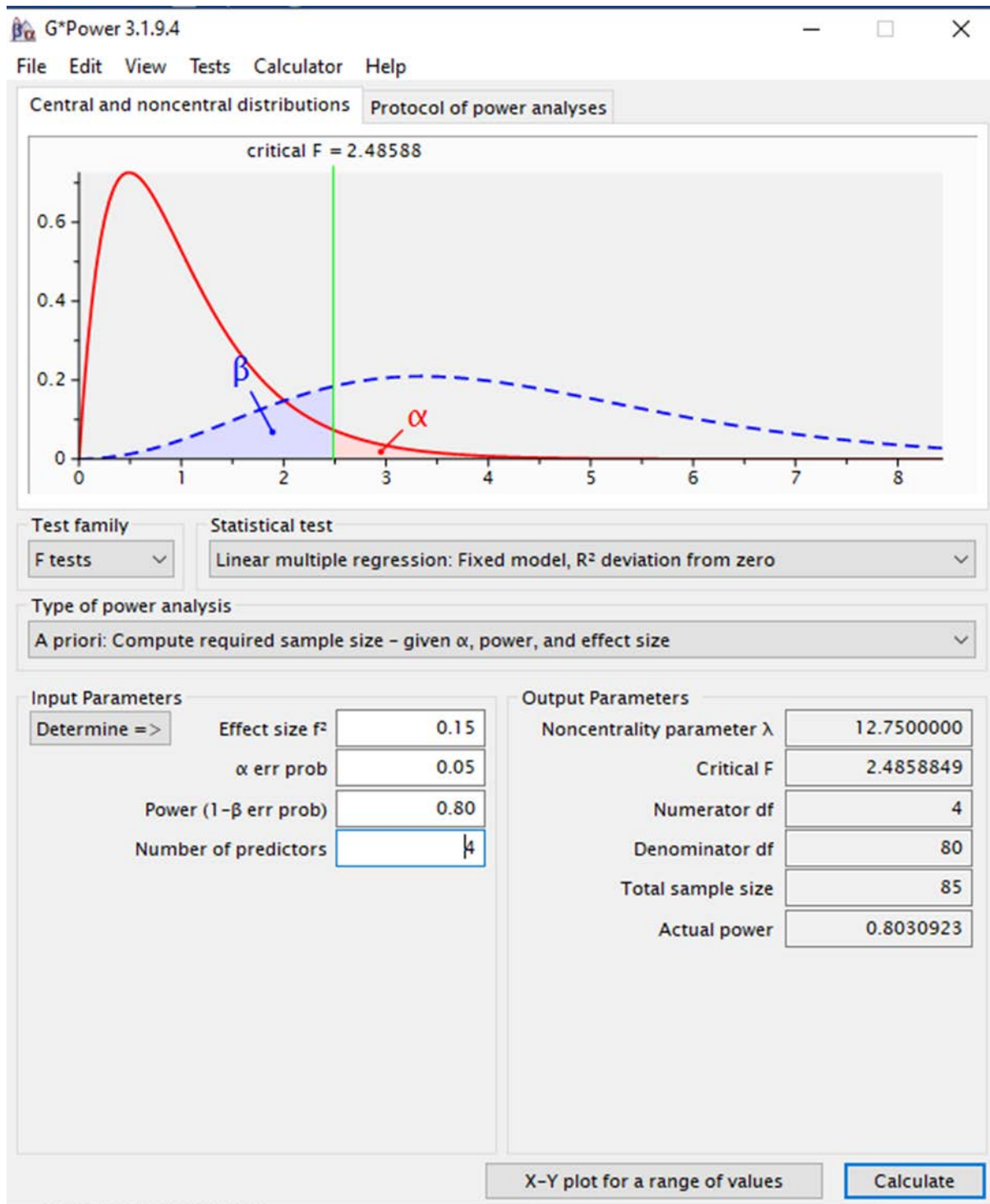


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## Appendix K

### Power Analyses



## Appendix L

### Recruitment Flyer

# Research Participants Needed

## Social Support as a Moderator to Foster Care Displacement and Foster Care Outcomes

- Are you 25 years of age or older?
- Are you a currently licensed non-relative foster parent?
  - Are you licensed in North Carolina?
- Have you been fostering for a minimum of 2 consecutive years?
  - Have you had a minimum of 2 youth foster placements?



If you answered **yes** to **ALL** questions, you may be eligible to participate in a research study.

The purpose of this research study is to determine to what extent, if any, the type, and quantity of foster care support services moderates the relationship between foster care displacements, foster carer satisfaction, and intent to continue fostering.

Participants will be asked to complete an anonymous online survey via Qualtrics asking about their perception of foster carer support services, satisfaction with fostering, and intent to continue fostering. Consent information will be provided at the beginning of the survey.

Participants will be given the option to enter their email address at the end of the survey into a raffle to win one of four \$25 VISA gift cards. Email addresses will not be linked to your survey data to preserve anonymity.

Survey Link: [https://liberty.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_77mVm7ZpKaOt4W2](https://liberty.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_77mVm7ZpKaOt4W2)

Latasha D. Watts, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Please contact Latasha D. Watts at [REDACTED] for more information.