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OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG ADULTS IN EXTENDED FOSTER CARE

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OUTCOMES FOR YOUNG ADULTS IN EXTENDED FOSTER CARE

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Katie Sue Netzel
Michelle Becerra Tardanico
June 2014

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the outcomes for young adults in Extended Foster Care. Extended Foster Care is a relatively new program within the Child Welfare system, which provides services for former foster youth between the ages of 18 and 21 to become more successful, independent young adults. Before the implementation of Extended Foster Care in 2012, most of the foster children were left to fend for themselves after they turned 18, which resulted in negative outcomes. Extended Foster Care is a seemingly helpful program; however, due to its new existence there has been very limited research regarding the outcomes of these young adults in Extended Foster Care. This study used secondary data from the San Bernardino County Legislative, Research and Quality Support Services Unit. After data retrieval, independent t-tests and chi-squared tests were conducted using SPSS version 21. The independent variable of days spent in Extended Foster Care was compared to the following dependent variables: disability status, education status, housing status, and employment status and its barriers. The results of this study showed that the longer a young adults stays in Extended Foster Care, the higher their likelihood is of positive housing, employment, and education status. This study suggests it is critical to continue to provide Extended Foster Care services and further research needs to be conducted to ensure program quality and to continue to improve the services to this vulnerable, young adult population.

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DEDICATION

First and foremost, I would like to dedicate this to my husband and three children. To my amazing, encouraging, loving, generous, kind and supportive husband, without your willingness efforts and endless guidance and support, I would not have done this without you. Thank you for standing by me in more ways than I can explain. You have taught me the importance of education and anything in life is obtainable as long as you have the will, passion, and determination as well as dedication to do it.

Secondly, to my three children, you have and always will be my inspiration to go above and beyond each and every day. Thank you for being patient, supportive, and loving every step of the way. Not a day goes by that I am not thankful to have the three of you in my life. I recognize the three of you sacrificed a lot of time to allow me to pursue my educational goals and for that I appreciate each of you and thank you for all your patience with me in the last several years. I hope I have instilled the importance of obtaining an education and to follow your dreams, goals and aspirations regardless of the struggles or challenges that will lay ahead of you.

I would also like to dedicate this to my parents and sisters. To my parents, you have raised me to always be proud of who I am and encouraged me to always do my best. Thank you for helping me in every way imaginable. To my sisters, thank you for providing me with endless emotional support and demonstrating the importance of self-care. To my grandparents, your

unconditional love, support, and words of wisdom has taught me to be the person that I am today. I hope I made you proud.

To my friend and thesis partner, it was such a pleasure working with you throughout this entire process. I wish you nothing but the best in your future endeavors and hope we have the opportunity to work together again. Last but certainly not least, to my outstanding cohort, WE DID IT!

Michelle Tardanico

I would like to dedicate this to my amazing family and friends. This thesis, along with my Master's Degree, would never have been possible without their love and support. First, to my husband and best friend, Brian, words cannot express how much I love and appreciate your support and dedication in seeing me succeed. You have been by my side through many of life's obstacles and triumphs. You have been my shoulder to cry on, a listening ear for me to vent to, and have always been able to put a smile on my face. My sanity throughout this program has been maintained through your love.

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I would also like to dedicate this to my friends. If I did not have my friends here to laugh with and talk with I would have gone insane. After having a stressful day I could always count on my friends to get me through it. I had the pleasure of being a part of an amazing cohort here at CSUSB, many of whom have become lifelong friends. One of these amazing friends is also my thesis partner Michelle Tardanico. Michelle, I dedicate this to us my dear! We have worked so hard together and it has been such a pleasure being your partner.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide an overview of the history of young adults aging out of the foster care system and the past outcomes associated with that transition. This chapter will then discuss Extended Foster Care (EFC), along with the services and benefits it provides and the eligibility requirements. Furthermore, studies pertaining to similar programs relating to EFC, its effectiveness, and the primary goals and purpose of this study will be addressed.

Background and Problem Statement

Each year about 20,000 youths exit the foster care system at the age of 18. Entering into adulthood is generally a time marked with enthusiasm and anticipation. Both foster youth and non-foster youth alike look forward to turning 18 and becoming more independent. However, multiple studies have shown that foster youth have many more obstacles in their transition to adulthood, which leads to various negative outcomes (Cunningham & Diversi, 2012; Geenan & Powers, 2007).

The first negative outcome discussed is in the area of education. Only 39 to 65 percent of foster youth earn a high school diploma before leaving the foster care system. According to Courtney et al. (2010), of young adult's ages 23 and 24 in the general population only 7.3 percent reported not having their high school diploma or GED. This percentage jumped to 24.4% for the same aged young adults who had been in the foster care system. As a result, the number of

youth continuing on to post-secondary education is much lower than the general population. Only 6 percent of former foster youth ages 23-24 had a two or four year degree (Courtney et al., 2010). This lack of education also leads to negative outcomes in housing and employment for foster youth (Jones, 2011).

About 62 percent of foster youth who have exited foster care are unemployed and the few who are employed are generally working in unskilled, low wage jobs, which result in an unstable income. The household income levels of previous foster youth are 35 percent lower than the general population.

Unfortunately, this economic instability leads to high rates of homelessness among former foster youth (Geenan & Powers, 2007; Jones, 2011).

Young adults who left foster care at age 18 were 2.7 percent more likely to be homeless than those who had remained in care until age 21 (Dworsky & Courtney, 2010). In addition, 29 percent of former foster youths reported having food insecurities as young adults. Three quarters of former foster youth women between the ages of 23 and 24 had reported needing some type of government assistant. This number was one third for former foster youth men (Courtney et al., 2010).

Along with a lack of education and higher unemployment rates, former foster youth have been left to fend for themselves in the area of obtaining health care. About 30-50 percent of this population is lacking health care coverage. This is a concern because the foster youth population is reported to have higher rates of pregnancies and mental illnesses. Approximately one third of emancipated

foster youth have been diagnosed with a mental illness (Jones, 2011). About two thirds of women have been pregnant at least once since emancipating from foster care between the ages of 18 and 23. In The Midwest Study conducted in 2005, 57 percent of young adults who were former foster youths reported having health insurance coverage. Less than half had dental coverage. Two thirds of those participants with health insurance reported receiving this insurance through Medicaid or another government program (Courtney et al., 2010).

Knowledge regarding foster care children with disabilities is overrepresented in the child welfare system and often excluded from research (Hill, 2012). Expanding this knowledge can help increase the awareness of any specific challenges former foster youths with disabilities might face when transitioning out of the foster care system.

It is estimated that between 50 and 80 percent of young adults transitioning out of the foster care system have disabilities. These young adults are shown to be at high risk for negative adult outcomes such as lower unemployment rates, educational success, and economic stability compared to their non-disabled peers. In the Chapin Hall's 2005 Midwest Evaluation of the Adult Functioning of Former Foster Youth (The Midwest Study), 63 percent of the participants with disabilities were not enrolled in any education programs after emancipating from foster care. The rate of employment for young adults with disabilities was 40 percent compared to young adults without disabilities, which was 63 percent (Hill, 2009; Hill, 2012).

Attempts have been made by Congress to address the negative outcomes previously mentioned. Foster youths are known to have received some type of preparation for aging out of the system; however, each state is different in the programs they provide and age limits they set. In 1999, an amendment was made by the Foster Care Independence Act, which created the Independent Living Program. This act increased states funding to improve their independent living services to their youth and provide Medicaid to foster youth until the age of 21 (Geenen & Powers, 2007).

The Independent Living Program (ILP) provides services related to employment, education, housing, and daily living skills. This program is offered to foster youths starting at age 16 until they age out of the system at 18. However, Medicaid is offered until 21 years of age (Geenen & Powers, 2007). ILP was a step in the right direction toward independence for foster youth; however, it was still limited to the age of 18 and after 18 the former foster youth were on their own.

In 2001, California state legislature passed the California's Transitional Housing Placement Plus program (THP-Plus). The Corporation for Supportive Housing, the California Department of Social Services and the John Burton Foundation collaborated together to create this program, which provided up to 24 months of support services and affordable housing for young adults between the ages of 18-24 who were in the foster care system. The creation of these extended services decreased the negative outcomes. More young adults from

foster care were not only working more often, but they were being paid higher wages as well. In addition, more young adults were found to be enrolled in college (Lorentzen, Lemley, Kimberlin, & Byrnes, 2008). The only issue was that these services were only offered for 24 months and did not apply to everyone.

The California Fostering Connections to Success Act (AB 12) is an assembly bill that passed within the state of California in 2010, and was implemented in 2012, to extend foster care to all foster youth. This program took on the name of Extended Foster Care (EFC). EFC is specifically geared toward the assistance of successfully transitioning young, dependent adults into productive members of society. As permanency being the primary focus, extended assistance is provided to eligible, young adults within the child welfare and probation department who were in foster care placement on his or her 18th birthday (California Department of Social Services, 2011; California's Fostering Connections to Success Act: Court Procedures, 2012).

The goal of EFC is to give each former foster youth the opportunity to make their own decisions in regards to housing, employment, and education while offering ongoing support and assistance when difficulties occur up to 21 years of age. Services provided consist of the extension of payment benefits as well as additional transitional support services. The transitional support services offered include self-sufficiency through education and employment training opportunities, while remaining in a safe living environment (California Department

of Social Services, 2011; California's Fostering Connections to Success Act: Court Procedures, 2012).

Eligible housing options, listed from least independent to the most independent, while in EFC include remaining in a licensed group home or foster home, an approved non-related extended family member or relative placement, or a Supervised Independent Living Program (SILP). A SILP includes apartment living, college room and board arrangements, or a shared roommate setting approved by the County (California Department of Social Services, 2011).

EFC is a voluntary program; the former foster youth must sign a mutual agreement to the responsibilities related to participating in EFC. This includes remaining in monthly contact with a case manager and reporting any major changes. Also, a Transitional Independent Living Plan (TILP) must be in effect before the age of 18, ensuring the prospective recipient will meet at least one of the following requirements: graduation from high school or a high school graduation equivalent such as a GED; enrollment in some form of college (university or community college) or vocational training; working at least 80 hours per month; participating in a program to assist in promoting employment or removing barriers to employment; or if they are unable to meet any of the previously mentioned requirements due to a medical condition (California Department of Social Services, 2011; California's Fostering Connections to Success Act: Court Procedures, 2012).

The TILP, which is required to be signed by the foster youth to participate in the EFC program, states specific goals for the young adult to acquire while in EFC to become a successful, independent adult. The goals include developing permanent connections with caring and committed adults, developing independent living skills and responsibility, and to live in the least restrictive placement, which is ultimately a SILP placement (California Department of Social Services, 2011.) Although the primary focus of EFC is to provide foster youth with assistance to a successful transition into adulthood, the effectiveness and success rates in California are unknown. This is due to its fairly new existence and minimal research conducted.

Purpose of the Study

Many research studies have been done regarding the negative outcomes associated with foster youths transitioning into adulthood. Previous research in this area has led to change in legislation to attempt to improve the negative outcomes associated with young adults from the foster care system. Research has also been conducted regarding the effectiveness of these programs; however, there is a gap in the literature regarding how young adults are doing in Extended Foster Care (EFC) in California since the recent change in legislation.

Due to the negative outcomes associated with this population, research must be conducted on the outcomes of EFC. With the assistance of extensive research, a clearer determining factor will be discovered as to the outcomes of EFC, respectfully, and if any revisions relating to the current transitional support

should be implemented. Because EFC is a new program, the purpose of this study is to evaluate the outcomes. The methods of evaluation would consist of conducting a quantitative analysis using secondary data to determine the outcomes of the young adult population, between the ages of 18 and 21, since the passing and implementation of AB12 in California.

Significance for Social Work Practice

According to the NASW Code of Ethics (2008), it is the role and duty of social workers to empower individuals of all ages by assisting them in becoming productive members of society. By conducting this study, a contribution will be made to all aspects of social work practice. For example, it is imperative to remain competent and current on all evidenced-based practices, including services specifically catered to certain populations (National Association of Social Workers, 2008).

Within the scope of the generalist intervention model and in relation to the young adult population, it is important to understand the eligibility requirements of services offered related to the specific needs of the clients. Creating an individualized independent plan as well as implementing and evaluating the effectiveness of the services and the level of independence prior to terminating services is essential. It is also imperative that these young adults have the necessary resources and means to become productive members of society and the role of a social worker is to empower and assist them in doing so.

In addition, the EFC program promotes permanency, safety, and the well-being of these young adults; which, are the primary goals of child welfare. As previously mentioned, the EFC program allows young adults to continue to remain in a safe, stable environment, while providing self-sufficiency through education and employment training opportunities. By doing so, it is promoting safety and permanency, rather than removing these youths from foster care without a plan or necessary skills to succeed in life; which can put them at risk of becoming homeless, causing their safety and well-being to be at risk.

Summary

Each year, young adults who were former foster children become emancipated and lack the knowledge and means to provide and care for themselves. As a result, former foster youth may become homeless, victims to crimes, diagnosed with mental illnesses, or have economic insecurity; all of which could be prevented with the proper services. As an attempt to resolve this issue, programs and legislative laws came into effect. However, additional research is needed to determine the effectiveness of these programs so amended changes can be made in the future as deemed necessary. With the innovative approach of this study, questions will be answered in regards to the outcomes of EFC; which in return, will eliminate barriers in the transition to independence among the young adult population.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The negative outcomes associated with foster youth aging out of the foster care system have already been discussed. A brief overview of previous policies has led to the topic of EFC and the passing of AB12. In order to assist in the research and understand the guiding theories and principles behind EFC, a review of the literature will be discussed.

Theories Related to Young Adulthood

The first theory to review is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. According to Maslow, humans must meet five essential needs, starting from the bottom up. The first need is physiological, which consists of a person's most vital needs such as food, water, and air. The second need is safety, which includes shelter, financial stability, health care, and security from the environment. The third need is love and belongingness or social needs. This includes the need for relationships, companionship and acceptance. This can come in the form of friendships, romantic relationships, community, church, family, etc. The fourth need is a person's esteem needs. After the first three needs are satisfied, the need for respect of oneself as well as respect from others becomes prominent. This can come in the form of accomplishments, feelings of value and worth, or social recognition (Taormina & Gao, 2013).

The highest level of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is self-actualization. Once all other needs have been met a person can begin to be completely comfortable with themselves and strive for personal growth and self-fulfillment. According to Maslow, this cannot take place if the four other needs have not been met first (Taormina & Gao, 2013).

Foster care is designed to meet Maslow's physiological and safety needs and hopes to meet the other three through obtaining stable, loving foster homes for these children. However, the truth is, youth in foster homes are more at risk than youth with similar histories still living at home. The same is said for former foster youth in adulthood (Stott, 2011).

Instead of being taken from a bad situation and placed in a loving environment to be raised until they are 18, foster children are sometimes transferred from home to home. In a study conducted by Tonia Stott (2011), the average number of placements for a foster child was found to be eight. One child in this study had been to 38 different foster homes in his lifetime (Stott, 2011).

The system meets a child's physiological needs and most of the time, their safety needs; however, they are left to fend for themselves regarding the need for love, self-esteem, and self-actualization. When a foster care youth leaves the system, they essentially do so having to meet all of their own needs for the first time by themselves. This can be difficult as they have not been taught to meet these needs. In a study conducted by Cunningham and Diversi (2012), one former foster youth states, "right away there were challenges: no money, no job,

no school...I was left on my own, and not prepared (Cunningham & Diversi, 2012, p. 599)."

A second theory to be examined is Erik Erikson's Theory of Psychosocial Development (2007). According to this theory, there are eight stages a human goes through in their lifespan, which contributes to a person's identity. Each of these stages poses a dilemma, which a person must solve in order to gain strength to meet the challenges of the next stage. However, if this dilemma is not resolved, it can cause difficulties later in life (Holloway, Holloway, & White, 2010).

Erikson does not associate an age in which these stages need to be mastered, just that there are two outcomes, a successful outcome, and an unsuccessful outcome. Not successfully mastering a stage can derail other stages and cause issues. These stages are: trust vs. mistrust, autonomy vs. shame and doubt, initiative vs. guilt, industry vs. inferiority, identity vs. role confusion, intimacy vs. isolation, generativity vs. stagnation, and integrity vs. despair (Sokol, 2009; Holloway, Holloway, & White, 2010).

Erikson's first stage of trust vs. mistrust sets the tone for all future relationships. According to Schofield and Beek (2005), maltreated children are found to have a significant lack of trust and a heightened need for control. By not resolving this crisis, this unsuccessful stage, will now set the tone for how these children interact with others (Schofield & Beek, 2005).

During adolescence, the stage of identity vs. role confusion emerges. Success in this stage occurs when the individual can develop a sense of self and

personal identity can be formed. Failure during this stage can result in role confusion and a weak sense of self. According to Erikson, forming one's identity is an important part of personality development and is associated with positive outcomes (Sokol, 2009).

Children in foster care have expressed feelings of abandonment and being unlovable. Being taken from one's family, peer relationships, and community can damage self-esteem. Many children in foster care struggle with issues of low self-esteem and low self-worth (Luke & Coyne, 2008).

When a foster child ages out of the child welfare system at the age of 18, they are battling one of the most important stages in their life, intimacy vs. isolation. Young adults need to form loving relationships with others in order to build strong relationships and support. If this stage is not completed successfully loneliness and isolation can occur, making them more susceptible to depression and other negative outcomes in the future (Holloway, Holloway, & White, 2010).

According to Cunningham and Diversi (2012), previous foster youth describe their transition into adulthood as lacking the small steps toward autonomy that normal emerging adults receive in today's society. They also mention the loss of connectedness to others, including separation from their foster families, younger siblings, homes and sometimes communities (Cunningham & Diversi, 2012).

The final theory to be discussed is Jeffrey Arnett's Theory of Emerging Adulthood. The transition into adulthood is extremely crucial. According to Arnett

(2000), emerging adulthood is a form of development that occurs during the transitioning into adulthood. During the emerging adulthood development, young adults begin to examine the possibilities of life; such as love, work, and world views (Arnett, 2000).

As young adults transition they should have obtained a foundation level of education and training relating to their economic gain and independence. However, those who do not successfully complete the emerging adulthood transition, result in having risky behaviors; which include participating in unprotected sex and substance abuse (Arnett, 2000).

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

Based upon the review of theories that can be utilized to guide the research on the outcomes of EFC, it is believed that Jeffery Arnett's emerging adulthood theory is the best approach for this research. Arnett's theory is focused primarily on the transition of adulthood as well as the positive and negative outcomes of its completion; which is the primary focus of our research.

Former Studies Conducted on Extended Foster Care

In 2002, a study known as the Midwest Study was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the transition to adulthood amongst foster youth in an EFC program. Some of the few states that enacted EFC prior to the change in legislation were Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa; which are the three states this study was conducted for. The Midwest Study had a total of 732 eligible

participants who were between the ages of 17 and 18 (63 from Iowa, 474 from Illinois, and 195 from Wisconsin). The study participants were foster youth who entered the foster care system prior to 16 years of age and remained in foster care at 17 years of age (Courtney, Dworsky, Lee, & Raap, 2010).

Throughout the five year course of the study, the participants were interviewed every two years. During the interviews, information pertaining to their social environment and living situations were obtained, as well as the type of services received and their physical and mental health. The outcomes of the study showed 79% graduated or had a GED; 7% of women and 5% of men obtained an associate's degree; 17% were still in school; over 25% had no income for the past year; and nearly 30% claimed to experience food insecurity (Courtney, Dworsky, Lee, & Raap, 2010).

Since the passing of AB12 in California in 2010, the only studies found were unpublished studies conducted by former Masters of Social Work students from California State University, San Bernardino. Between the three different studies examined, foster parent's perceptions, social worker's perceptions and attitudes of the implementation of EFC were assessed. The studies showed EFC was viewed as a positive program and that young adults would benefit from receiving these services (Garcia & Moghaddam, 2013; Guzman, 2013; Melancon & Morris, 2013).

Gaps in the Literature

EFC is a relatively new program and there is a need for further research regarding the outcomes for young adults in EFC. It is evident that additional research is needed based on the amount of literature and theories identifying the negative effects on young adult development without EFC.

Based on the examination of the unpublished works already put out pertaining to EFC, it is clear that there are gaps. Foster parents and social workers have given opinions regarding the implementation of EFC; however, current outcomes of young adults participating in EFC cannot be found. Based on the review of the literature, four areas were chosen to help guide this study to determine the outcomes of young adults in EFC. These areas include the young adults length of stay in EFC, the type of housing being utilized, the young adults situation when they leave EFC, and the services being utilized by young adults while in EFC.

Summary

The current amount of literature retrieved has provided a clearer understanding of the goals, benefits, and implications of EFC prior to the existence of AB12. Theories related to the transition of young adulthood were identified as well as the negative outcomes of not successfully completing the transition into adulthood. Current studies have been conducted pertaining to the implementation of EFC; however, a gap in the literature was found relating to

young adults' outcomes since EFC has been implemented. This study will focus on the outcomes of young adults in EFC.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This chapter includes a description of the research methods and procedures guiding this study. The design of the study, sampling and data collection methods utilized, instruments chosen, and the procedures will be addressed. Additional information relating to how the researchers will protect the human subjects and analyze the data will also be addressed.

Study Design

Since the full implementation of AB12 in 2012, limited research has been conducted regarding the outcomes of EFC. This study explored these EFC outcomes by determining the type of services the young adults in EFC utilized as well as the length of time they stayed in EFC. Data relating to the type of housing utilized, employment status, disability status, and education status are additional factors this study explored to determine outcomes of the EFC program.

EFC is fairly new and is exploratory research at this point; therefore, the research method used for this study was quantitative study using secondary data from San Bernardino Children and Family Services. The quantitative approach was the most suitable for this study because the variables mainly consisted of numeric data relating to demographics and information on EFC that already existed. Furthermore, there are strengths to utilizing a quantitative approach.

Data collection is fairly quick, it delivers precise numerical data, and the research findings can be generalized when the research is replicated (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

This is especially appealing because the amount of time allotted for this research was short. Although the strengths of using a quantitative method outweighed the weaknesses, we still understood that there were weaknesses. For example, some findings from quantitative research can produce outcomes which are too generalized to apply to specific populations, situations, and people (Johnson & Christensen, 2008).

Sampling

The researchers requested data from the San Bernardino County's Legislation, Research, and Quality Support Services Unit (LRQU). The LRQU provides data analysis and information, which they have previously collected from the agency and County to measure programmatic outcomes. The data obtained by the LRQU was gathered by conducting surveys, reviewing administrative databases from the San Bernardino County Children and Family Services, analyzing case reviews, and reviewing customers' feedback (2012 Annual Report: San Bernardino County Human Services, 2012).

The research method of this study consisted of analyzing secondary data with purposive sampling, which was gathered from the LRQU. The researchers chose to utilize secondary data because the LRQU already had the data readily available to produce the outcome measures of this study. A list of the certain

demographics and variables needed was sent to the LRQU by the researchers to narrow down the amount of data needed.

Using secondary data had strengths for the researchers such as the ability to obtain a substantial amount of information in a short amount of time. This was of particular advantage to this research due to the limited amount of time allotted to conduct the study. In addition, it was cost effective (Boslaugh, 2011). Possible weaknesses of using secondary data could be weaker data quality and adequacy of information (Grinnell & Unrau, 2011). However, due to the nature of this study, this should not have affected the outcome.

The sample population consisted of 426, eighteen to 21 year old, male and female, young adults, who had either been in or were currently in the EFC program. This specific sample was chosen because of the nature of this study. The study aimed to examine the outcomes of the EFC program; therefore, all young adults who had been in the program or were in the program needed to be included in the sample size.

Data Collection and Instruments

No instruments were used in obtaining the data collection. The researchers sent a letter to the San Bernardino County Children and Family Services seeking their approval for the research and their permission to use their data via the LRQU. The LRQU has multiple purposes for collecting their data. They use the data to assess needs and programs, examine budgets and provide reports to federal and state agencies, ensure quality, and assess other needs as

they arise (2012 Annual Report: San Bernardino County Human Services, 2012). For the purpose of this study, secondary data regarding demographics of the EFC population and specific variables associated with EFC was requested and approved.

The demographic information collected consisted of participant's age; gender; race; and Hispanic indicator. The categorical variables related to EFC collected consisted of the number of days in EFC; education status; employment status and barriers; disability status; and housing status. The dependent variable used in this study was the number of days spent in EFC. The independent variables chosen were disability status, education status, housing status, and employment status and its barriers.

Procedures

The data collected for this study was predetermined by the researchers and was submitted to the San Bernardino County Children and Family Services for approval to use that specific data provided by the LRQU. As soon as the data was approved and made available, the LRQU sent the data to the researchers via a password protected, encrypted access file. The researchers then converted the data to SPSS form and saved it on a private, password protected computer.

Protection of Human Subjects

Due to the data being collected as secondary data obtained by the LRQU, there were no human subjects participating in this study. In addition, there was

no identifying information given in the data and numeric representations took the place of the participant's names. However, precautions were still made in regards to protecting the confidential information received from the LRQU. Password protected thumb drives, sky drive accounts, and computers were utilized at all times. The only individuals with access to this information were the MSW student researchers, Katie Netzel and Michelle Tardanico, and the California State San Bernardino research committee members, Dr. Carolyn McAllister and Dr. Janet Chang. All information was deleted upon completion of the study.

Data Analysis

In order to properly analyze the data, a combination of univariate and bivariate analyses were conducted. In addition, the researchers analyzed descriptive statistics on all variables previously described. A univariate analysis included frequencies and percentages of the demographics in order to describe the sample. The statistical tests utilized in this study included a non-directional, independent t-test and Chi Square. The Chi Square test was used to show a relationship between the independent variable, which was days spent in EFC and the dependent variables, which were disability status, education status, housing status, and employment status and its barriers.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the procedures involved in the current study. The design was discussed and the sample described. The specific

procedures used in this mixed method design were discussed as was the process for data analysis and the protection of human subjects.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

The information provided in this chapter was obtained from the sample and data received from the Legislative, Research and Quality Support Services Unit (LRQU). Data presented includes univariate demographics and bivariate statistics showing relationships between days in EFC and disability status, education status, housing status, and employment status and its barriers. A presentation of these findings will be reported in this chapter.

Presentation of the Findings

Demographics

The sample (N=426) was retrieved from the San Bernardino County Legislation and Research Unit and was comprised of young adults in the Extended Foster Care Program in San Bernardino County, California. The sample consisted of 231 females (54.2%) and 195 males (45.8%). The dominant ethnicity of the sample was Caucasian (40.1%) followed by Black (30.5%), Hispanic (2.3%), American Indian (1.9%), and Asian Pacific Islander (1.4%). Nearly 24% were unable to determine or declined to state their ethnicity. Participants that identified themselves as Hispanic (N=157) comprised 36.9% compared to those who did not (N=269, 63.1%). The ages of the study participants ranged from 18 and 22 years old, with the average age being 19 (M = 19.4806. SD = .74125). The great majority of the participants (N=414, 97.2%)

did not report having a medical disability. Please see Table 1 for the demographics of the participants.

Table 1. Demographics of the Participants

Variable	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage
Gender	426		
Male		195	45.8%
Female		231	54.2%
Age (Mean=19.486 years)	426		
18		122	28.6%
19		182	42.8%
20		116	27.1%
21+		6	.14%
Ethnicity	426		
White		171	40.1%
Black		130	30.5%
Hispanic		10	2.3%
American Indian		8	1.9%
Asian/Pacific Islander		6	1.4%
Unable to Determine		9	2.1%
Decline to State		92	21.6%
Hispanic Indicator	426		
No		269	63.1%
Yes		157	36.9%
Medical Disability	426		
No		414	97.2%
Yes		12	2.8%

Variables Related to Extended Foster Care

Over 66 percent of the study participants completed high school or equivalent and 33.6 percent did not. A fairly equal number of participants reported attending college or vocational training (50.5%) as compared to those who did not attend college or vocational training (49.5%). During the course of the study, study participants reported having employment barriers. Two hundred and fifteen (50.5%) participants claimed to remove the employment barriers and 211 participants (49.5%) indicated the employment barriers have not been removed. In relation to employment, a majority of participants (80.3%) worked less than 80 hours per month compared to those who worked more than 80 hours per month (19.7%). Over 29% of participants listed Supervised Independent Living Placement as their last placement of record while in EFC. The second largest number of participants identified a relative or non-related extended family member (NREFM) (28.6%) as their last placement while in EFC. The least number of participants reported their last placement as being in the Transitional Housing Program (THP), Foster Care, or a Tribe Specified Home (1.6%). Please see Table 2 for Variables Related to Extended Foster Care.

Table 2. Variables Related to Extended Foster Care

Variable	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage
Days in EFC	426		

Variable	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage
1–182 days(6mo)		114	26.8%
183–365 days(6mo–1yr)		118	27.7%
366–547 days(1yr–1.5yrs)		85	20.0%
548–730 days(1.5yrs–2yrs)		74	17.4%
731 days or longer(2 yrs +)		35	8.2%
Employed 80+ Hours	426		
Yes		84	19.7%
No		342	80.3%
Employment Barriers Removed	426		
Yes		215	50.5%
No		211	49.5%
Highest Grade Reported	424		
Ninth Grade		1	.2%
Tenth Grade		9	.2%
Eleventh Grade		103	24.2%
Twelfth Grade		284	66.7%
First Year of College		25	5.9%
Second Year of College		2	.5%
High School or Equivalent	426		
Completed		283	66.4%
Not Completed		143	33.6%
Attending College or Vocational School	426		
Yes		215	50.5%
No		211	49.5%
Housing Status	426		
Foster Family Agency Certified Home		80	18.8%
Foster Family Home		16	3.8%
Supervised Independent Living Placement		124	29.1%

Variable	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage
Relative/NREFM Home		122	28.6%
Court Specified Home		7	1.6%
Group Home		46	10.8%
Small Family Home		10	2.3%
Guardian Home		14	3.3%
Transitional Housing Project, Foster Care, or Tribe Specified Home		7	1.6%

Bivariate Statistics

A Pearson Chi-Square test was conducted to examine the duration of days in EFC with the following dependent variables: employment status, education status, medical disability, and housing status. The results of the test displayed a significant difference between the duration in EFC and being employed 80 hours per month while in EFC ($\chi^2 = 22.313$, $df = 4$, $p < .000$). As the duration in EFC increased, there was also an increase of participants that were employed 80 hours per month at some point during EFC. Within the first 6 months of EFC, 86.8% of study participants reported not being employed for 80 hours and 13.2% were employed. After two years, or longer, 68.6% of participants reported not being employed for 80 hours and 31.4% reported to be employed for 80 hours.

The length of days in EFC and the removal of employment barriers were also found to have a significant difference ($\chi^2 = 32.635$, $df = 4$, $p < .000$). The

duration EFC has been found to increase the removal of employment barriers. A total of 63.2% of study participants reported experiencing employment barriers within the first six months of EFC. However, as the duration in EFC increased the removal of employment barriers also improved as only 20% reported still experiencing employment barriers.

In regards to the education status, there was a significant difference between the duration of EFC and the highest grade reported while in EFC ($\chi^2 = 45.568$, $df = 24$, $p < .005$). An increase of participants completing their first year in college was reported after two years of being in EFC (14.9%) as compared to only 2.7% within the first six months. A significant difference was discovered between the amount of days in EFC and attending college or vocational school at some point while in EFC ($\chi^2 = 457.995$, $df = 4$, $p < .000$). During this portion of the study, 68.4% of participants reported they were not attending college or a vocational training program during the first six months of being in EFC. However, as time progressed in EFC, there was a significant decrease as 14.3% reported not attending college after two or more years in EFC.

Lastly, there was a significant difference between the duration of days in EFC and the last placement recorded while in EFC ($\chi^2 = 80.819$, $df = 36$, $p < .000$). During the duration of one year in the EFC program, the last placement recorded was relative/NREFM placement (28.1% within six months; 28.8% within six months to one year). After one year of entering the EFC program, the dominant placement listed was Supervised Independent Living Placement

(30.6%). As time progressed, the Supervised Independent Living Placement continued to increase to 48.6% after a year and a half. However, there was an insignificant difference between the days in EFC and the two following dependent variables: completing high school or equivalent at some point in EFC and medical disability. Please see table 3 for the Bivariate Statistics.

Table 3. Bivariate Statistics

Variables	Chi Square X^2	<i>df</i>	Significance
Duration in EFC and Employment	22.313	4	$p < .01$
Duration in EFC and Employment Barriers	32.635	4	$P < .01$
Duration in EFC and Highest Grade Reported	45.568	24	$P < .01$
Duration in EFC and Attending College or Vocational School	47.995	4	$p < .01$
Duration in EFC and Last Placement	80.819	36	$p < .01$
Duration in EFC and Completing High School or Equivalent	6.844	4	$p = .144$
Duration in EFC and Medical Disability	3.187	4	$p = .527$

Summary

This chapter described the important variables in the sample and the univariate statistics were presented and displayed in a table. Participants' responses to the dependent variables were quantified and the relevant points were discussed. The bivariate analysis of Chi-Square between the independent variable, days in EFC, and the dependents variables were presented.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter will discuss and examine the major findings of this study. These findings will then be linked to the previous literature to examine any major similarities or differences. Future implications for social work practice, policy, and research will be addressed and limitations to this study as well as direction for future research will be explored. The analysis of the variables yielded some interesting findings between the demographics and the variables related to EFC.

Discussion

Demographics

In regards to the demographics portion, it was found that there are more females (54.2%) than males (45.8%) participating in EFC. Findings from previous literature also found to have a higher rate of females in EFC compared to males (Courtney et al., 2009). The average age of young adults in EFC in this study was 19 years of age (42.8%), which was the same compared to The Midwest Study conducted in 2002 (Courtney et al., 2005). A total of 171 participants (40.1%) identified themselves as White. In comparison to the findings conducted by Courtney et. al. (2005), the findings are different as a higher portion of participants were African American in their study. Therefore, the two studies do not present similar results based on the ethnicity of the participants.

Variables Related to Extended Foster Care

This study found that the duration in EFC contributed to gaining employment among the participants in the study. Nearly 13% of the participants were employed 80 hours per month at some point during EFC within the first six months of admission. However, as the duration in EFC increased, the results demonstrated a significant increase in the number of participants employed 80 hours per month. Of the participants who were in EFC for two or more years, 31% stated they were employed. This finding was consistent with Courtney et al.'s (2009) study, which also indicated that young adults' duration in EFC was positively related to a gradual growth in employment.

The study also revealed that duration in EFC played a significant role in removing the employment barriers that were experienced while in EFC. The results indicated a removal of barriers as the length of time in EFC increased. Within the first six months in EFC, 63% of participants reported the existence of employment barriers. After one year or more in EFC, 47% of the participants reported a continuing existence of employment barriers. As the length of time in EFC increased, the removal of employment barriers decreased. Following two years or more, 20% of the study participants reported a continuation of employment barriers. Researchers speculate that this decline in employment barriers is due to the implementation of EFC providing job training skills to the young adults. The Midwest Study implicated that a majority of the study participants received job training skills before or during the course of the studies

(Courtney et. al., 2010). Therefore, the longer a participant is in EFC, the fewer employment barriers they face. In comparing the findings in this study with those in previous studies, EFC is effectively meeting the needs of former foster youth and enhancing independence by strengthening and providing the necessary tools and skills needed to become productive members of society.

Regarding the education variable, the findings demonstrated a significant increase in the relationship between the length of time in EFC and secondary education. Nearly 32% of the participants reported attending college or vocational school within the first six months of entering EFC. After one year in EFC, 49% of the participants reported attending college or vocational school. Within two years or longer, nearly 86% of the participants were achieving their academic advancements or vocational school. These findings were consistent with previous studies, which found that EFC played an important role in young adult's education status (Courtney et al., 2010).

The researchers also analyzed the relationship between days in EFC and the highest level of high school completed. These findings came back with no real significance. The researchers speculate the lack of significance in days in EFC and high school achievement is due to the fact that high school education took place before the young adult entered into the EFC program. Also, the increase in secondary education status among the young adults in EFC shows an improvement in education altogether.

As for housing, there were interesting findings pertaining to the last placement on record while in EFC. The major findings in housing consisted of relative or NREFM placement and Supervised Independent Living Placement. In the first year of EFC, the highest numbers of participants were found to be in relative/NREFM homes as their last placement recorded. Prior research conducted has shown to have similar findings as the greatest number of participants reported a relative home as their last placement recorded (Courtney et. al., 2005). As time progressed in EFC, a great majority of participants indicated Supervised Independent Living Placement (SILP) as their last placement after one year or more in EFC. Due to the lack of information found in previous studies regarding SILP, the researchers could not meaningfully compare this study to previous study findings.

Last, the researchers compared days in EFC and disability status. These results came back with no significance. This could perhaps be due to the small amount of people in this sample having reported having a disability. The sample size could be too small for a significant outcome. As reported by Hill (2012), children with disabilities in the foster care system are overrepresented and often excluded from research (Hill, 2012).

Limitations

Using secondary data from San Bernardino County's Legislative, Research and Quality Support Services Unit (LRQU) was a limitation in this study. One of the challenges was the amount of time it took to gain approval from

the County to conduct the study and to retrieve the data they allowed us to use. Another concern in using secondary data was that the data was already predetermined for us. In some instances we had limited or incomplete information that could not be used. For example, we had data pertaining to how many participants had obtained college degrees; however, we did not know the sex or race of those participants.

Another limitation to this study is the lack of previous research and literature related to Extended Foster Care. EFC is still a relatively newer topic; therefore, the research conducted on EFC is very limited, which made it more difficult when discussing and comparing our findings. A previous study on the outcomes of these young adults in San Bernardino County before EFC was implemented would have been helpful to have something to compare the results of this study to. In addition, the data obtained for this study is only from the past year or two since it has been fully implemented. Therefore, the outcomes for EFC are based on a short amount of time, with a smaller number of participants.

Implications for Social Work Practice, Policy, and Research

Implications for Practice

The topic of Extended Foster Care directly relates to social work practice. In addition, the Extended Foster Care Program exemplifies the ethics and values social workers adhere to in the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics.

According to the National Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics (2008), a social worker's main goal is to "enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty (para. 1)." Jeffrey Arnett's Theory of Emerging Adulthood describes young adults as vulnerable and often oppressed and living in poverty if they are unable to successfully transition into young adulthood, which as previous literature shows, many young adults were unsuccessfully transitioning into adulthood before the EFC program came about (Arnett, 2000).

Client empowerment is a huge part of social work practice and the EFC program allows previous foster youth to be empowered to make their own decisions and goals regarding their transition into adulthood with the guidance of their social worker. EFC promotes the young adult's right to self-determination and give them the opportunity to become more independent, successful adults.

The NASW Code of Ethics also describes service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence as its core values for the social work profession (National Association of Social Workers, 2008, para. 3). Before Extended Foster Care was implemented, the services delivered to this population were limited and very little importance was placed on the value of these young adults' dignity, self worth, and relationships as they transitioned out of foster care. Since EFC has been implemented, social workers are able to practice working with this population,

feeling confident that they are adhering to the ethical standard of the NASW Code of Ethics.

Implications for Policy

Due to the new existence of the Extended Foster Care program, an increase in trainings and conferences on this topic would be helpful to enhance social work practice and policy in working with this population. Foster parents and other care providers should be knowledgeable on this program and the benefits it offers. In addition to social worker and care provider trainings, the foster youth should be well-informed of the EFC program and their options before transitioning out of the foster care system.

The outcomes for Extended Foster Care in this study were positive. The longer the young adult stayed in EFC, the better their education, employment, and housing statuses were. Continued funding for this program is highly recommended due to the encouraging findings in this study. Also, continued research in this area is recommended to further develop the program.

Implications for Future Research

Future research in the area of Extended Foster Care is crucial. Research on comparing young adults' outcomes before EFC was enacted to their outcomes while currently in EFC would be helpful to fully grasp the difference EFC is making in this population. Also, continued research of the outcomes of EFC as time passes will help with the legitimacy of the findings that outcomes are positive. Right now, this program is new; however, when re-examined at five

or ten years the outcomes should be continually more positive, with more participants involved.

This study showed positive outcomes, which means young adults are now transitioning more successfully and independently out of care than before. It would be interesting for future research to study the young adults who were transitioning out of care before EFC to the young adults who transitioned with EFC. Researchers could examine if there is an association between a lower probability for these young adults who transitioned with EFC in creating the same cycle of abuse compared to those who transitioned without EFC.

Conclusion

The data analysis revealed some interesting findings regarding the demographics and variables related to Extended Foster Care. Although the data provided was secondary data and there were study limitations, it appears EFC is beneficial to this young adult population. Based on the findings of this study and the literature provided, it is evident that Extended Foster Care is effective and provides the necessary tools, services, and structure needed for young adults aging out of the foster care system to become productive and independent members of society.

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ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES PAGE

This project was a team effort and was written by two people throughout. However, for each phase of the project, certain writers took primary responsibilities, which are indicated below.

1. Data Collection:

Team Effort: Katie Netzel and Michelle Tardanico

2. Data Entry and Analysis:

Team Effort: Katie Netzel and Michelle Tardanico

3. Writing Report and Presentation of Findings:

a. Introduction and Literature:

Team Effort: Katie Netzel and Michelle Tardanico

b. Methods:

Team Effort: Katie Netzel and Michelle Tardanico

c. Results:

Team Effort: Katie Netzel and Michelle Tardanico

d. Discussion:

Team Effort: Katie Netzel and Michelle Tardanico