

FOSTER

CARE

BREAK

AN EMPIRICAL
STUDY OF
FACTORS
ASSOCIATED
WITH
BREAKDOWN
OF FOSTER CARE
IN SPAIN

DOWN

Mónica López & Jorge F. del Valle
University of Oviedo, Spain

ANTECEDENTS IN SPAIN

- Until the 80s practically the sole child care measure was residential care
- New laws defined the possibility of foster care establishing this option as the most appropriate
- Foster care has been implemented slowly and unequally
(And it is still far from being the preferential measure)

Situation in which one of the parts involved **prematurely terminates** the intervention before having achieved the goals established in the case plan

FOSTER CARE BREAKDOWN

Can have **negative consequences** for foster children, families and placement programs



To determine the **rate of breakdown**
and the variables associated



SAMPLE

- **318** placements (176 in a foster family and 142 in kinship care)
- Of which, **83** cases (26.1%) had been closed because of **breakdown**

INSTRUMENTS AND PROCEDURE

- Review of **child care files** through an instrument with variables on the children, the biological and foster families, and the process
- Interview with **social workers**

THE **RATE** OF **BREAKDOWN**

... in the total sample was **26.1%**, although
it was significantly different in kinship care
(19.7%) than in foster care (31.2%)

THE KEY FACTOR OF AGE

For **age at placement closure**, the differences of mean age between breakdown and no-breakdown groups were not significant, neither for foster nor kinship care

(Ages of children who concluded their placement
in breakdown were high, mainly adolescents)

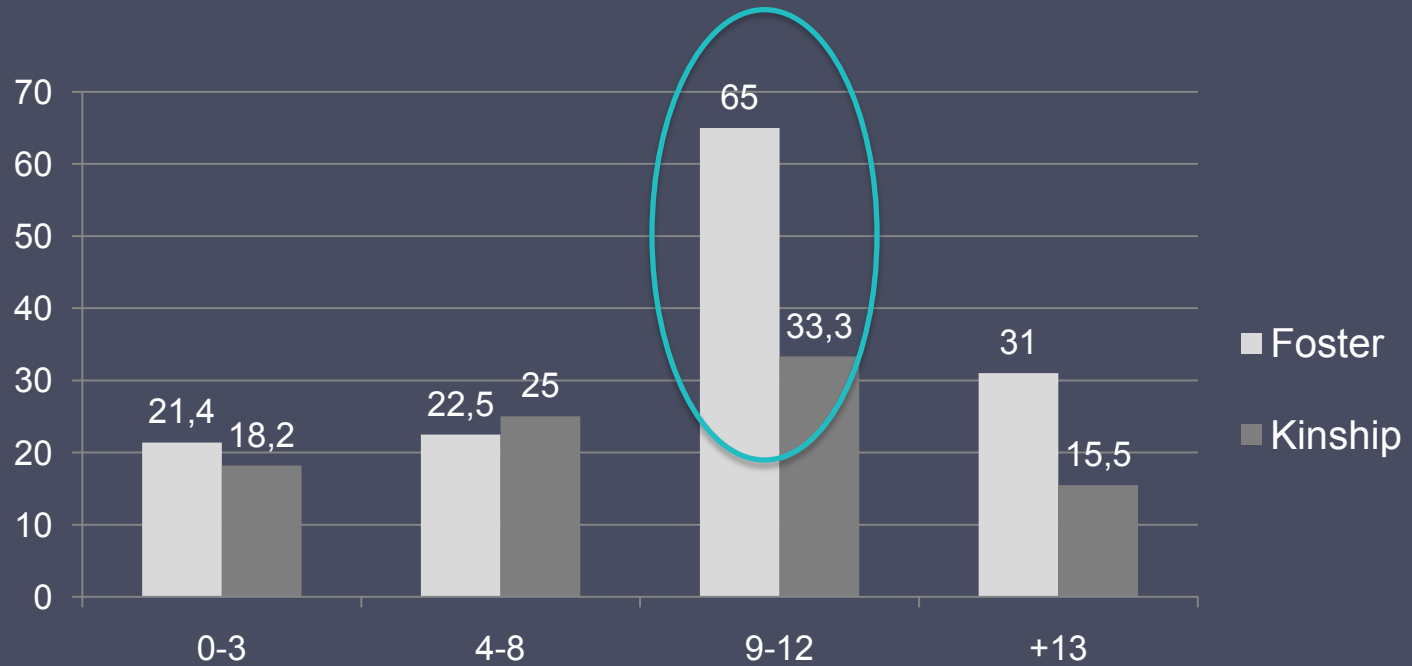
For **children's age at placement**, no significant differences were found in kinship care. However, breakdowns in foster care referred mainly to children placed at older ages (breakdown: $M = 9.37$; no breakdown: $M = 7.69$)

PLACEMENT DURATION

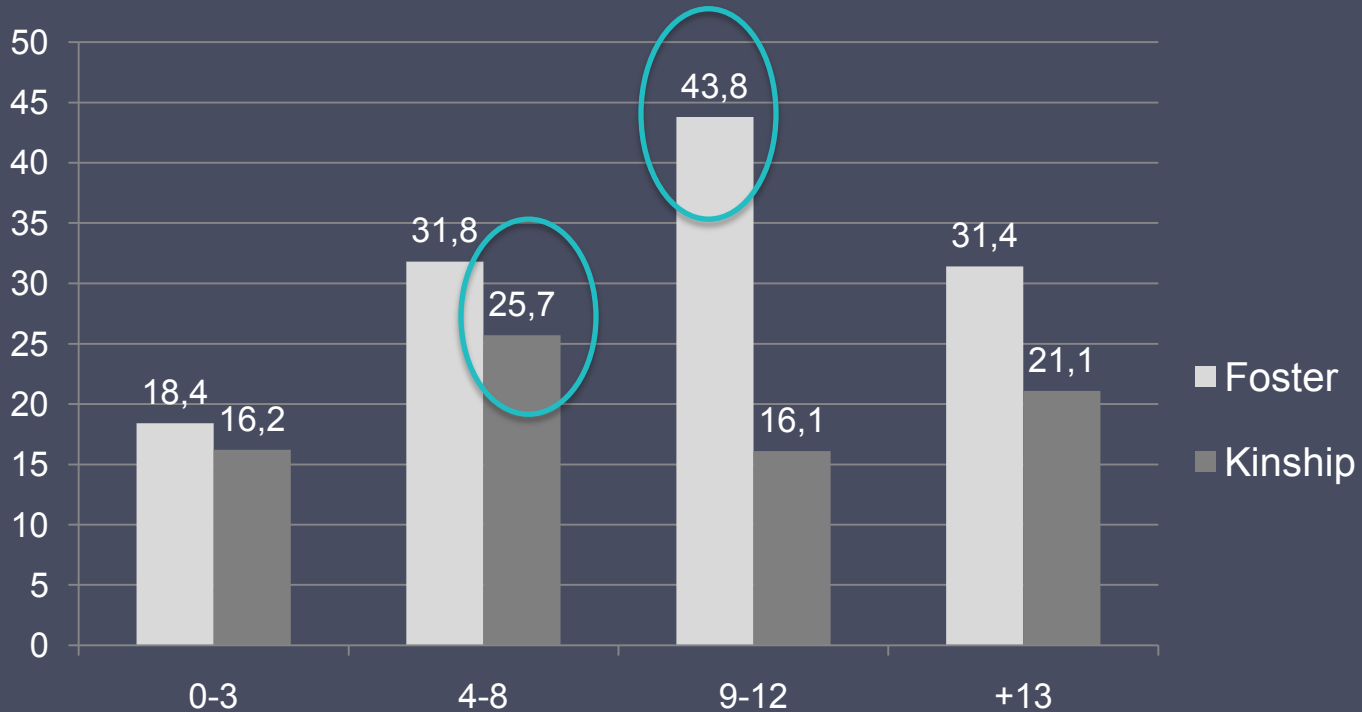
Breakdowns caused **shorter durations**, both for foster family (breakdown: $M = 2.62$; no breakdown: $M = 3.68$), and for kinship care (breakdown: $M = 3.26$; no breakdown: $M = 5.21$)

(One third of the breakdowns occurred before the end of the first year of placement and half of them before the end of two years)

RATES OF BREAKDOWN RELATED TO THE CHILD'S AGE AT CLOSURE



RATES OF BREAKDOWN RELATED TO THE CHILD'S AGE AT PLACEMENT



IMPACT OF FACTORS ON BREAKDOWN AT FOSTER FAMILY

		Breakdown (N=55) %	No breakdown (N=121) %	χ^2	p
Children	Sex (male)	43,6	49,46	0.33	.568
	Presence of health problems	17,3	24	0,57	.451
	Intellectual disability	14,5	0,8	11,98	.001
	Presence of behavior problems	81,6	34	27.65	.000
	Has received psychological treatment	32,7	13,2	8,82	.005
	Academic performance problems	69,6	43	7.67	.006
	Physical abuse	18,2	12,4	0.62	.432
	Physical negligence	34,5	42,1	0.62	.430
	Emotional abuse	21,8	17,4	0.24	.621
	Total abandonment or renouncement	20,0	24,0	0.15	.698
Process	Prior measure of residential care	81,8	62,8	5.51	.019
	Prior breakdown of foster care	23,6	14,0	1,83	.177
	Measure of guardianship	90,9	81,8	1,76	.185
	Visits	49,1	61,2	1,79	.182
	Frequent visits	30,4	31,0	0,00	.999

IMPACT OF FACTORS ON BREAKDOWN AT FOSTER FAMILY

		Breakdown (N=55) %	No breakdown (N=121) %	χ^2	p
Family of origin	Father's drug addiction	16,4	19,0	0,04	.833
	Father's alcoholism	5,5	14,0	1,99	.159
	Father's mental health problems	5,5	1,7	0,84	.359
	Father in prison	10,9	12,4	0,01	.975
	Mother's drug addiction	16,4	22,3	0,49	.480
	Mother's alcoholism	5,5	10,7	0,52	.396
	Mother's mental health problems	21,8	17,4	0,24	.621
	Mother in prison	12,7	15,7	0,08	.775
	Mother does not intervene or is absent	14,5	22,3	0,99	.321
	Mother cooperates	26,3	34,7	1,68	.196
	Mother's opposition	9,1	10,7	0,00	.947
	Mother ambiguous	23,6	11,6	3,37	.067
	Foster family	Foster family is a couple	81,8	78,3	0,11
Multiple placement		14,5	22,5	1,04	.309
Presence of children in foster family		61,8	55,0	0,47	.495
Foster parents' children younger		20,0	15,9	0,04	.842
Income of more than 24,000 euros		16,4	33,1	4,45	.035
Higher studies	21,8	45,5	7,99	.005	

IMPACT OF FACTORS ON BREAKDOWN AT KINSHIP FAMILY

		Breakdown (N=55) %	No breakdown (N=121) %	χ^2	p
Children	Sex (male)	42,9	49,1	0,15	.701
	Presence of health problems	16,7	33,0	1,70	.192
	Intellectual disability	0	3,5	0,13	.713
	Presence of behavior problems	65,0	48,2	1,21	.271
	Has received psychological treatment	28,6	12,3	3,40	.065
	Academic performance problems	68,4	50,6	1.30	.204
	Physical abuse	14,3	9,6	0,14	.710
	Physical negligence	46,4	36,0	0,65	.421
	Emotional abuse	53,6	22,8	8,92	.003
	Total abandonment or renouncement	17,9	21,1	0,01	.909
Process	Prior measure of residential care	46,4	14,0	12,59	.000
	Prior breakdown of foster care	25,0	9,6	3,50	.061
	Measure of guardianship	78,6	56,1	3,84	.050
	Visits	42,9	57,0	1,29	.256
	Frequent visits	58,3	37,3	1,06	.303

IMPACT OF FACTORS ON BREAKDOWN AT FOSTER FAMILY

	Breakdown (N=55) %	No breakdown (N=121) %	χ^2	p	
Family of origin	Father's drug addiction	32,1	40,4	0,34	.560
	Father's alcoholism	25,0	14,0	1,27	.261
	Father's mental health problems	3,6	0,9	0,04	.850
	Father in prison	42,9	19,3	5,63	.018
	Mother's drug addiction	28,7	46,5	2,26	.133
	Mother's alcoholism	3,6	15,8	1,94	.164
	Mother's mental health problems	32,1	9,6	7,63	.006
	Mother in prison	28,6	14,9	2,03	.155
	Mother does not intervene or is absent	17,9	30,7	1,25	.263
	Mother cooperates	46,4	39,5	0,21	.648
Foster family	Mother's opposition	3,6	2,6	0,00	.999
	Mother ambiguous	21,4	9,6	1,95	.163
	Foster family is a couple	71,4	64,0	0,27	.606
	Multiple placement	35,1	39,3	0,04	.845
	Presence of children in foster family	-	-	-	-
	Foster parents' children younger	-	-	-	-
	Income of more than 6,000 euros	35,7	15,8	4,50	.035
	Elemental studies	32,1	21,9	0,79	.375

IMPLICATIONS OF THESE RESULTS

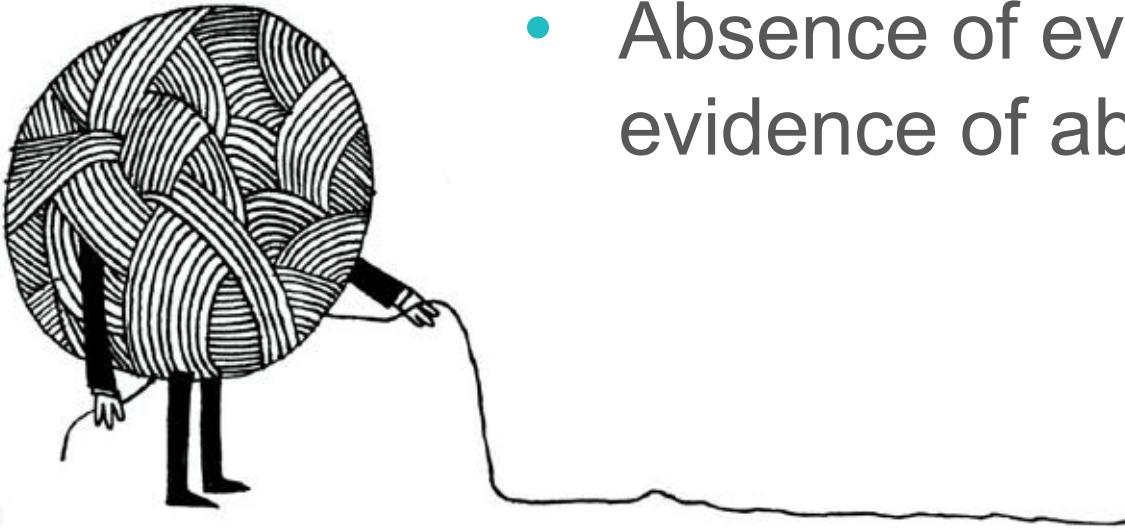
(IN THE SPANISH CONTEXT)



- Adequate support for foster families
- Continuous training and psychological support services
- Family mediation in kinship care
- Systems of detection

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- Accuracy of records
- Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence



THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION

Mónica López

monicalopezlopez@gmail.com

