



SOURCES OF STRESS IN FOSTER CARE: SCALE OF STRESSFUL SITUATIONS IN FOSTER CARE

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STRESS IN FOSTER CARE FAMILY

- Foster parent – child = parent – child
- Is being foster parent stressful ?

- Family experience
 - Researches
- 
- YES !

How to measure this stress ?

- Researches:
 - mostly qualitative; stories of foster families
 - interruption of foster care; negative evaluation of foster parents; problems in relationships; accepting biological family; problems with foster agencies; worries about the future of the child...



STRESS IN FOSTER CARE FAMILY

- The aim of studies:
 - To design a way of measuring stressful experience that may originate in different situations concerning foster care- events and changes that foster care brings to a family and to assess effect of this specific stressors to family adaptation
- Theoretical frame:
 - McCubbin's model of family resilience (McCubbin, 2001)



STUDY I

- The aim:
 - To create a scale for measuring stress in foster families
- The scale was made in accordance to Family Inventory of Life Events -FILE (McCubbin, Patterson and Wilson, 1983)
- The choice of items:
 - author's practical experience
 - results of previous studies of foster parenting stress
- Scale consists of 36 items



STUDY I

- Items can be grouped into several categories
 - emotional problems of the child placed in the family
 - conflicts within the family
 - changes in daily routine of fostering
 - problems across the family's social networks
 - foster parent-foster child relations
 - administrative issues and charges for inadequate foster care



STUDY I

○ Sample:

- 30 foster non-kinship families, Južno-bački district, Serbia

○ Procedure:

- Data was collected at Social Welfare Centre
- Foster parents were asked to mark each situation from the scale that has happened to their family during the previous year
- Parents were asked to assess how stressful each situation was using a scale from 1 to 10



STUDY I

○ Results

- Families have experienced most of the stressors from the scale

(most frequently: emotional problems, problems with health, learning problems)

- None of the stressors was assessed as not stressful at all

(63,88% percent were assessed as highly stressful with marks 6 to 9)

- Cronbach's alpha was 0.73



STUDY II

- The aim:
 - To determine standard weights for each stress situation, verify characteristics of the scale and assess effect of stress concerning foster care
- The stressful situations in foster care scale - SSSH (Šilić, 2010):
 - responder answers with YES if situation from the scale happened to his family in the previous year
 - score: $SUM = \text{unit (item)} \times \text{standard weight (ponder)}$



STUDY II

○ Sample:

- 112 foster care non-kinship families from Belgrade and territory of Vojvodina, Serbia

○ Procedure:

- Data was collected at Social Welfare Centres and with the assistance of social workers from other cities
- Foster parents were asked to mark each stressful situation that has happened to their family in the previous year



STUDY II

○ Results

- The frequency of stressful situations was pretty much the same, the only change was that foster parents reported that their lack of free time because of the foster care responsibilities was very often a stressful situation
- Most of the sample survived less intensive stress (75% had lower scores of stress)
- More frequent stressors are those with lower standard weights
- Cronbach's alpha was 0.83
- We kept original items (stressors) in a scale



CONCLUSION

- SSSH (Šilić, 2010) provides record of most common stressful events in foster care families and includes the intensity of stress
- Further study conducted on a sample of 142 foster parents has shown the significance of stressful experience measured by this scale for family functioning, coping strategies, and overall family adaptability



CONCLUSION

- Use of SSSH (Šilić, 2010):
 - practice – to identify stressors, to measure intensity of stress, to recognise families that cope with much more stress than others, to recognise in which field family needs support from agencies
 - researches – studying specific impact of stress concerning foster care; to plan policies and systematic support to foster families



THANK YOU

