Evaluating a group support program for kinship foster families: evidence on how to enhance resilience

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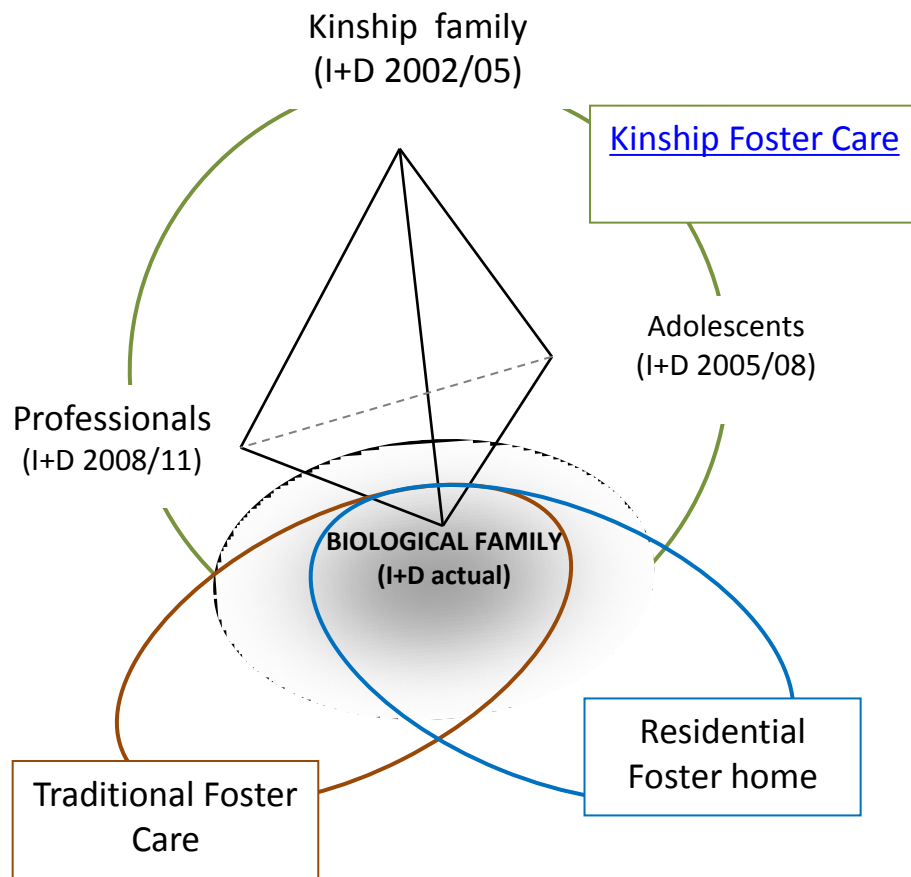M. Cruz Molina
Crescencia Pastor
Ainoa Mateos

7th International
Foster Care
Research Network
Meeting
9-11 September 2013

Context

Resilience in kinship fostering

«a combination of reorganisational **processes** of mental schemes and behaviours which empowers a family **under stress** to recover and maintain **optimum equilibrium between functionality and wellbeing**, balancing their resources and needs»

(Gómez & Kotliarenco, 2010)

Kinship family
(I+D 2002/05)

Kinship Foster Care

Adolescents
(I+D 2005/08)

Professionals
(I+D 2008/11)

BIOLOGICAL FAMILY
(I+D actual)

Traditional Foster Care

Residential Foster home

The program KFFSP (PFAFE)

Introductory session	Foster families: let's introduce ourselves
Session 1	Kinship foster care: different aspects
Session 2	Different roles
Sessions 3a & 3b	Development : the changes and their consequences
Session 4	Relationship with biological parents : visits
Session 5	Different educational styles
Sessions 6a & 6b	Managing conflict positively
Session 7	Preventing high-risk behaviour
Session 8	Support for carers
Session 9	Bonds with the community and use of resources

Resilience of foster families

Objectives of the study

•Discover more about the factors and resilience mechanisms affecting foster families.

•Analise changes generated in the family resilience when the KFFSP (in Spanish PFAFE) program is applied.

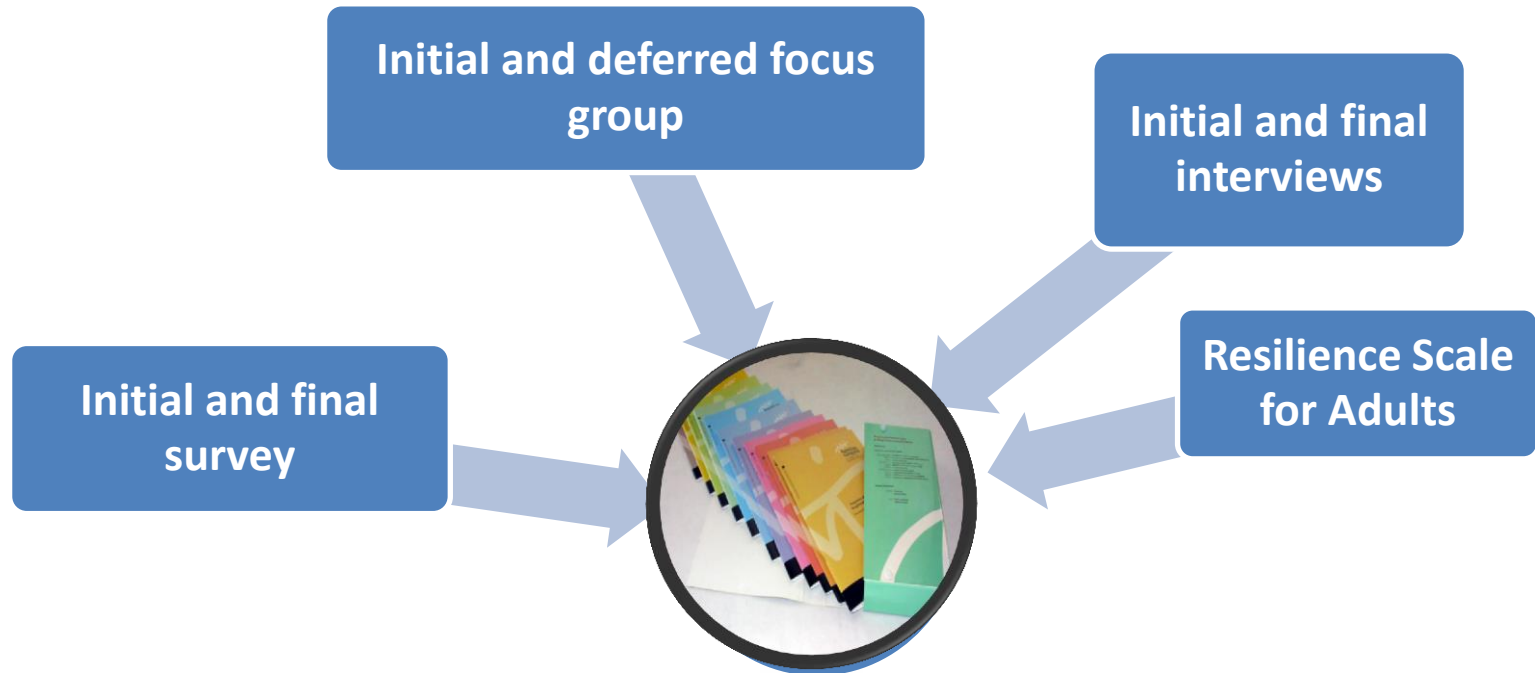# Research methodology

Action Research

- Research process is a powerful tool for changing the situation itself

- Care workers actively involved in the program

  – Acutely aware of changes and developments during and after the program.

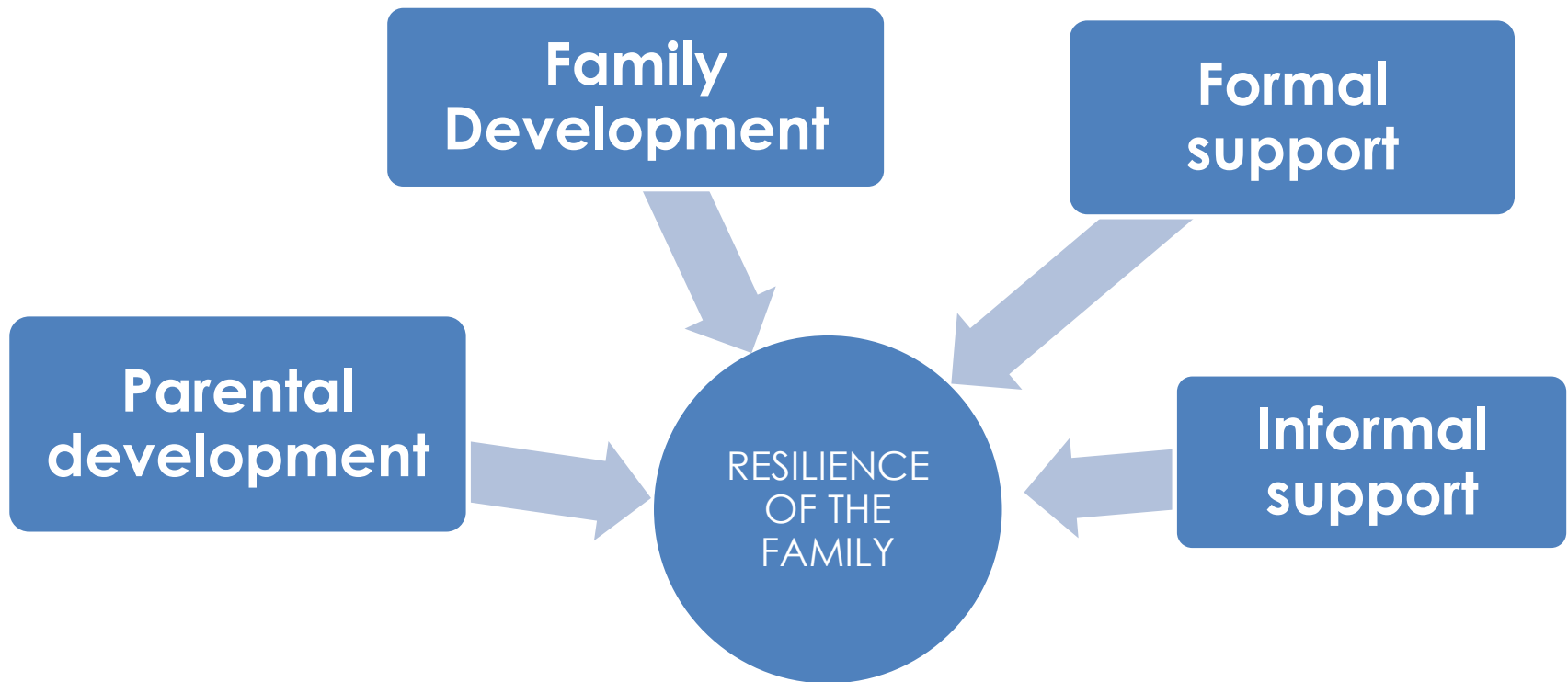- A successful outcome using GRISIJ expertise

Research methodology

INFORMATION SOURCES

Professionals of child welfare → Family Resilience ← Foster Family

TOOLS TO GATHERED INFORMATION

- Initial and deferred focus group
- Initial and final interviews
- Initial and final survey
- Resilience Scale for Adults

Research methodology

DIMENSIONS of CONTENT ANALYSIS

Sample: kinship foster families

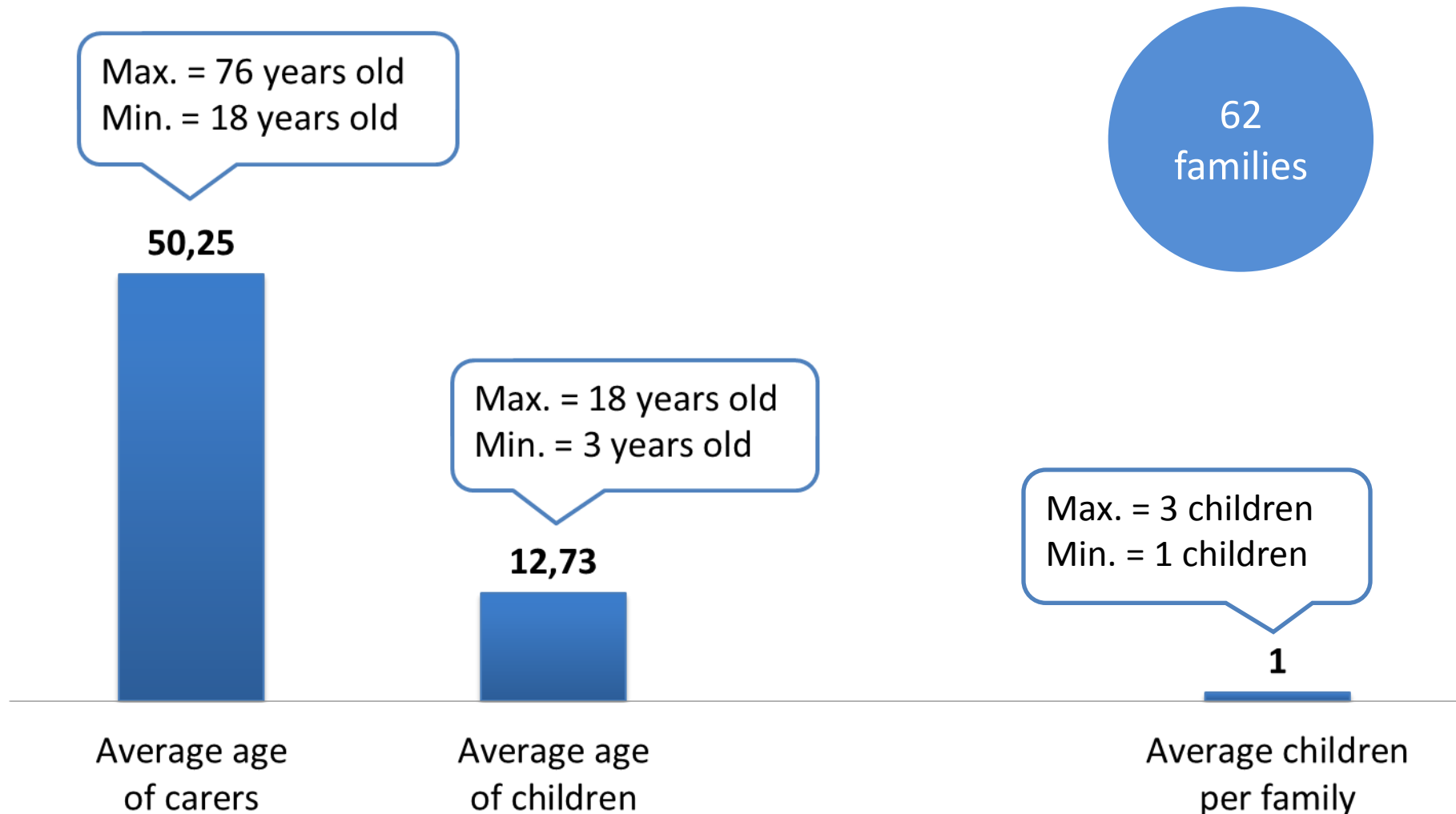**Galicia**
21 families
3 groups

Catalonia
8 families
1 group

Balearic Islands
16 families
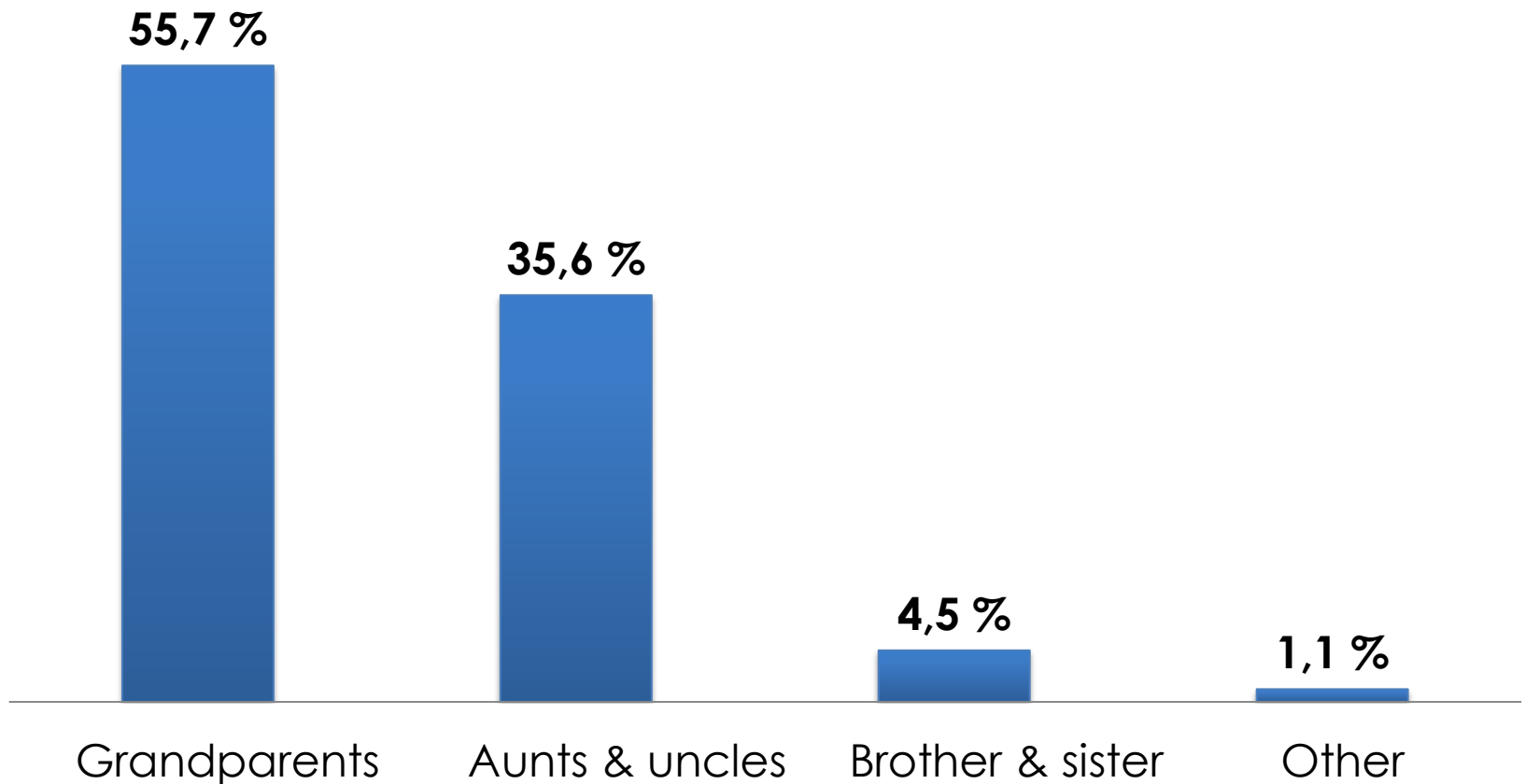2 group

Murcia
17 families
2 groups

62 families

Sample: kinship foster families

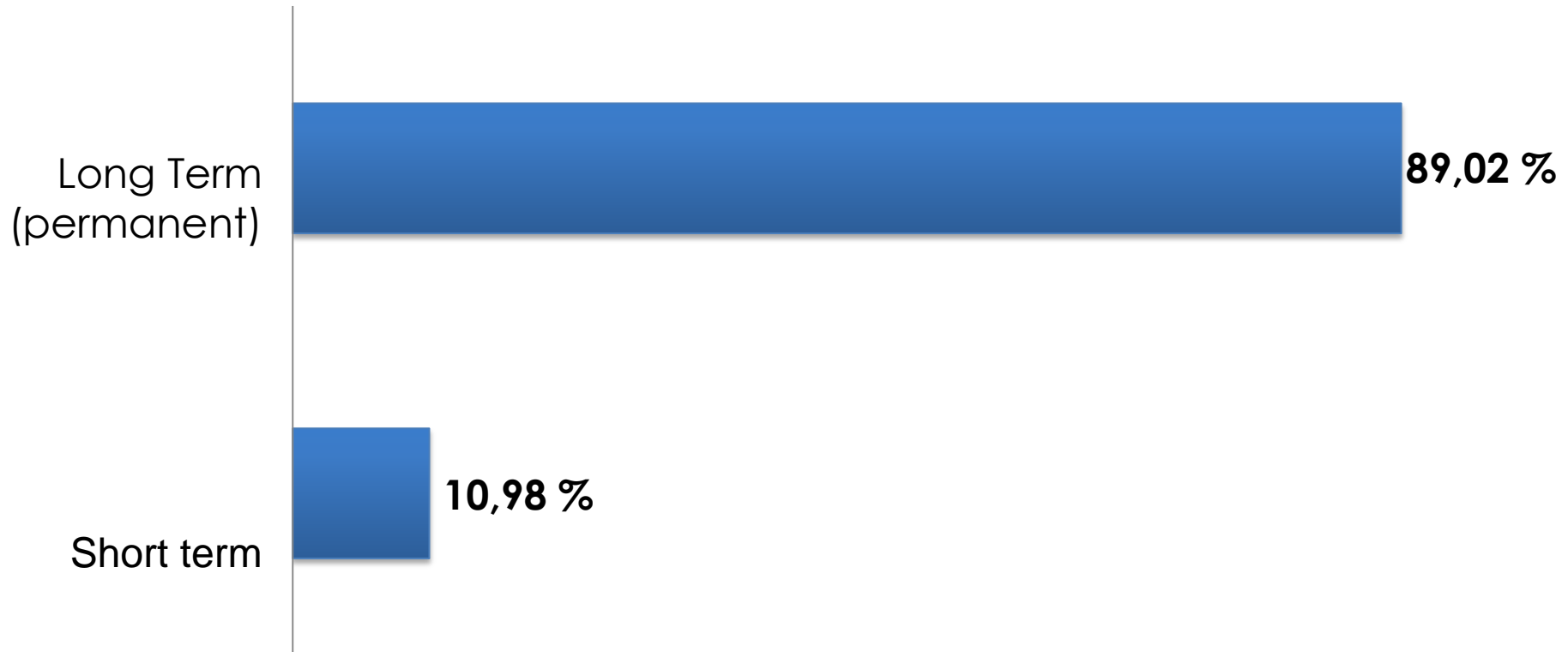**Characteristics**

Max. = 76 years old
Min. = 18 years old

50,25

Max. = 18 years old
Min. = 3 years old

12,73

Max. = 3 children
Min. = 1 children

1

62 families

Average age of carers

Average age of children

Average children per family

Sample: kinship foster families

Characteristics: Family ties

55,7 %	**35,6 %**	**4,5 %**	**1,1 %**
Grandparents	Aunts & uncles	Brother & sister	Other

Sample: kinship foster families

Characteristics: Types of foster care

Long Term (permanent): **89,02 %**

Short term: **10,98 %**

Parental development

Authoritative and permissive parental styles are the most common
   Considerable levels of affection and mutual support.

Protection factor
   Support, affection and attachment with the fostered children.
   Attachment between fostered child and foster carer strong
      and positive.

Improvement in the demands, requirements, needs maturity, rules and limit setting.

"If the changes start with us, I think that the child also adapts a little to us, if they see that you shout less and talk more, because if I shout he shouts at me… now if I don't raise my voice like I used to, he doesn't either. "

Results: Resilience in foster families

Parental development

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Results: Resilience in foster families

Family development

Improving the family dynamic and general day-to-day organisation:
> Foster carers committed to being available
> (time and emotional) to support family life.
> Stability in organised daily routines.

Strengthening the family cohesion and coherence

Communication amongst the family
> Openness in communication

Family development

"We talk a bit more between members of the family and we try to discuss and negotiate."

Formal support

The families received more formal than informal support

Families rely on a formal support network which they use regularly to make positive progress
        Psychological support and treatment
        Support at school
        Support from Social Services

Improvements stemming from PFAFE :

- Satisfaction and better knowledge of what support is on offer.
- Predisposed towards and motivated by learning and training opportunities.
- Able to seek support and solutions for problems relating to the child in care and to help adapt to changes.
- Improvement in relations and collaboration with care workers

Results: Resilience in foster families

Formal support

"[Taking part in the group] has helped me understand care workers better, sometimes I used to think "they are so annoying, why another meeting?" By the end of the program I could see that they were doing their job". (Kinship foster parent)

Results: Resilience in foster families

Informal support

The PFAFE program
The program was itself a source of informal support valued by families who had inadequate informal support.

The program acted as a forum amongst the participants encouraging the exchange of views and support.

Capacity to GIVE informal support
Increases self esteem and sense of worth.

Results: Resilience in foster families

Informal support

"The experience of getting together with everyone and learning… and you really relate to people and realise that we're all facing problems." (Kinship foster family member)

"Just seeing how it works, you know, with other families, other kids… "Yes, that happens to me..." "Yes, me too". And you say to yourself I'm not the only one. There are good moments and there are hard times but this happens to us all because, although we all wish it wasn't so, these children have been psychologically affected by what's happened." (Kinship foster family member)

Conclusions: Resilience in foster families

Key mechanisms of resilience in foster families

- **Emotional attachment** is a key mechanism of family resilience.
- **Communication** is made the priority of family development.
- **Families actively** welcome the foster care option.
- **Offer support** to biological families and other foster families.
- Show **commitment and positive attitude** towards making changes and capacity improve through learning.

Conclusions: Resilience in foster families

Program effects in family resilience

Most relevant direct learning benefits

Educational skills and communication strategies.

Understanding and using resources (Rely on formal support and know how to access it).

Indirect benefits

A closer connection to professionals and better understanding of their role.

Developing relations between the participating families.

A high level of satisfaction with the program

The support group program is an effective resource to promote family resilience

Conclusions: Resilience in foster families

Challenges:

No control group

Few foster care males involved in the groups

**Is it enough individual resilience?**

From individual resilience to family resilience

I+D - Foster care: Analysis of the resilience factors in foster care families and a new model of professional intervention
EDU2008-00340/EDUC

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Consolidated group - 2009SGR1392

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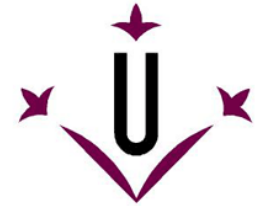
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION