What are the most effective strategies to help children develop protective factors?

Foster, Adoption, & Kinship Caregiver Preservice Training

A Scoping Review is a systematic approach to synthesizing the results of a sampling of a body of research. The review includes a brief assessment of the quality of the body of research and synthesis of study findings that address the scoping question. In conducting a Scoping Review, reviewers attempt to provide the following information about the sampling of research to address the stated question:

- Is there any research to inform the scoping question?
- What is the quality of the research on the topic?
- What are the research findings that inform the scoping question?

Contents

1 Research Question

What are the most effective strategies to help children develop protective factors?

2 Methodology

2.1. Finding Evidence

A team of researchers conducted a search of the following resources:

- EBSCO*host* library database- This database included the reference catalogues of *Psychology & Behavioral Sciences Collection, PsycINFO, Social Sciences Abstracts, SocIndex, and Sociological Collection*
- National Resource Center for Permanency and Family Connections
- Child Welfare Information Gateway

This review included materials that were published or developed after January of 2000 and prior to December of 2013 and were available in the English language.

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Methodology

Search terms (key words and phrases) were entered into EBSCO*host* in the exact order presented below. Results in EBSCO*host* were limited to peer reviewed journals and dissertations.

Connector	Search Terms	Location
	resilienc* OR "protective factor*"	Abstract
AND	"child welfare" OR "child protect*"	Abstract
AND	improve* OR promote* OR increase* OR strengthen* OR support*	Abstract

2.2 Article Assessment

Researchers reviewed the titles produced in from each source to determine if they answer the question and meet the pre-determined inclusion criteria. Corresponding abstracts for all titles retained during the title review were reviewed to determine if the articles still seem to answer the research question and meet the pre-determined inclusion criteria. Articles that remained were reviewed for the same purpose. Following this review, all articles that answered the research question and met the pre-determined inclusion criteria were subjected to quality assessment. The results of each review are outlined here.

Source	Titles	Abstract	Full Review	Quality Assessment
EBSCO*host*	94	30	15	
NRCPFC	1	1	0	
Child Welfare Information Gateway	9	9	0	

(Full Review total: 15, Quality Assessment total: 7)

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Methodology

Researchers recorded the following data on the Quality Assessment form:

- Study Citation
- Research Question or Hypothesis(es)
- Study Sampling Strategy
- Research Design
- Data Collection Methods
- Study Findings
- Study Limitations
- Sources of Bias

Researchers synthesized study findings and data on article quality. This synthesis is presented in the findings section.

3
Scoping Findings

3.1 Research Quality

The quality of the research included in this review varied. Research design is summarized in Table 1.

Design	Quantity
Experimental	0
Quasi-Experimental	4
Observational	1
Qualitative	2

Although this sample of research did not include any experimental research, in general several study characteristics contribute to one's ability to have some confidence in the study findings.

- Three study samples were greater than 500, thus increasing our confidence in the study findings.
- While only one sample was randomly selected, several studies used large purposive samples. This is appropriate when trying to examine a specific population of youth who experienced abuse and neglect.
- Study sampling methods support generalizability to youth and families who have similar experiences and characteristics as those included in the samples.
- Research reports for several of the studies provided enough information that study methods could be replicated.
- Four of the studies used data collection tools with established reliability and validity.
- Five of the studies provided enough information about the research design that the study could be replicated.

Some study characteristics limit one's ability to use these study findings with confidence.

- Although each study included in this scoping sample may inform the scoping question, no two study goals were alike. Thus, synthesis of study findings was challenging.
- Only four studies used comparison groups and each of these studies used a unique comparison condition.

- All studies had limitations that interfere with one's ability to know with confidence that study findings are not affected by variables not included in study analyses.

3.2 Study Findings

The quantitative research suggests that the following factors are "protective" or promote resiliency in children who have experienced child maltreatment:

- Safe, stable and nurturing relationships in adolescence and early adulthood may significantly reduce the likelihood of maltreatment perpetration (Thornberry, Henry, Smith, Ireland, Greenman & Lee, 2013).
- Being placed with their siblings when those relationships are positive can encourage child adjustment and can serve as a protective factor (Linares, Mimin, Shrout, Brody & Petit, 2007):
- Perceived family support or relationships with adults other than family or caregivers decreases the likelihood an adolescent will use substances or engage in behaviors that increase the risk of HIV infection (Hammond Oliver, 2007).
- The presence of a positive identify (self-esteem) decreased the likelihood that an adolescent will use substances or engage in behaviors that increase the risk of HIV infection (Hammond Oliver, 2007).
- Youth who were older at the time of exiting care seemed to have higher levels of resiliency (Daining & DePanfilis, 2007)
- Youth who had lower perceived levels of global life stress seemed to have higher levels of resiliency (Daining & DePanfilis, 2007)
- Youth who reported higher levels of social support from friends and family demonstrated higher levels of resiliency (Daining & DePanfilis, 2007)
- Youth who were not African American and reported having greater spiritual support seemed to have higher levels of resiliency (Daining & DePanfilis, 2007)

These themes related to protective factors and resiliency of maltreated youth were identified in the qualitative studies:

- According to youth in an Independent Living Program in Los Angeles, these things are related to their readiness for independent living (Henderson, 2011):
  - Having a caring relationship in which high expectations are communicated
  - Making peace with past family and placement issues
  - Having the strength, motivation, and determination to conquer life.
- These youth also indicated that having active involvement and participation in meaningful activities was crucial in the process of integrating tangible life skills, work ethic, values, problem solving, decision making and learning skills (Henderson, 2011).
- Child welfare professionals and educators identified potential protective factors (Haight, Kayama, Kincaid, Evans & Kim, 2013):
  - Child engagement in school
  - Parent engagement with child welfare services
  - Cross-systems collaboration between child welfare professionals and educators

One study identified the following characteristics in a foster or kinship home environment that may contribute to children's well-being and building trusting relationships (Ford, 2007):

- Supportive
- Structured
- Addresses emotional needs
- Caregiver demonstrates desire to be a parental surrogate
- Meets children's basic needs
- Attends to educational needs
- Provides opportunities for healing
- Fosters maturity
- Provides opportunity for learning skills and behaviors
- Promotes personal competence

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4. Conclusions

Although no two studies were alike in this sampling of research, it is possible to have some confidence about some necessary elements to help youth develop protective factors. While relationships with siblings, supportive persons, fathers, and others are frequently identified as serving as a protective factor, the common element in these relationships is quality. When relationships are perceived as "supportive", "caring", or of high quality, they can promote resiliency of youth who have experienced abuse or neglect.

A youth's esteem or disposition also can contribute to resiliency. Youth with positive self-esteem, or those who have motivation or determination are more likely to be resilient and overcome challenges presented as a result of abusive experiences. In addition, a youth's involvement in rewarding activities can contribute to resiliency. These include extra-curricular activities, school, and activities that teach tangible life skills.

Caregiver strategies to support resiliency were introduced in one study about creating an environment that contributes to youth well-being and building trusting relationships. Supportive, structured environments that meet a child's emotional, basic, and academic needs may promote youth well-being and trusting relationships.

Unfortunately, this research provides minimal insight into how a caregiver can promote resiliency or "protective factors" in foster youth. Additional research is necessary to gather more information about concrete strategies that caregivers have found successful at helping foster youth overcome the challenges related to their trauma experiences.

5.1. Articles Retained After Full Review

Daining, C., & DePanfilis, D. Resilience of youth in transition from out-of-home care to adulthood. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 29(9), 1158-1178.

Ford, L.L. (2007). Familial protective factors and early indications of resilience in cases of child neglect. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from PsychINFO. UMI Number: 3267011.

Haight, W., Kayama, M., Kincaid, T., Evans, K., & Kim, N. (2013). The elementary-school functioning of children with maltreatment histories and mild cognitive or behavioral disabilities: A mixed methods inquiry. *Children And Youth Services Review*, 35(3), 420-428.

Hammond Oliver D.A. (2007). Resilience in Maltreated Youth: Support Vs. Positive Identity. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina.

Henderson, T. (2011). Tales of transition: A qualitative multiple case study inquiry on the emancipation preparation of foster care adolescents. Dissertation Abstracts International, 71.

Linares, L., MiMin, L., Shrout, P. E., Brody, G. H., & Pettit, G. S. (2007). Placement Shift, Sibling Relationship Quality, and Child Outcomes in Foster Care: A Controlled Study. *Journal Of Family Psychology*, 21(4), 736-743.

Thornberry, T.P., Henry, K.L., Smith, C.A., Ireland, T.O., Greenman, S.J. & Lee, R.D. (2013). Breaking the Cycle of Maltreatment: The Role of Safe, Stable, and Nurturing Relationships. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 53, S25-S31.

5.2. Articles Excluded After Full Review

All studies were retained after full review.