

ABSTRACT

COMPASSION FATIGUE IN FOSTER PARENTS

Objective: The purpose of this exploratory study is to examine the concept of compassion fatigue in foster parents. In the past this concept has been applied to helping professionals such as social workers and therapists; however, little attention has been paid to the effect that a child's trauma has on foster parents.

Method: This study takes a quantitative approach using the Professional Quality of Life Scale, Version IV to measure the concepts of compassion fatigue, compassion satisfaction, and burnout. A short demographic survey was also administered that documented respondents' training, support, and experience related to their foster care role. Convenience sampling was utilized and participants (N = 35) were accessed through two foster parent associations.

Results: The findings suggest that foster parents may be at greater risk for experiencing compassion fatigue than helping professionals, particularly foster parents who have more experience. Further, burnout was found to have a positive relationship with compassion fatigue and a negative relationship with compassion satisfaction. The variables of support and training were not found to have a significant relationship with any of the ProQOL-IV constructs. This study supports the need to further examine this phenomenon in foster parents. In particular research should focus on what variables serve to mediate or enhance one's risk for compassion fatigue and what are the implications for being both at risk for compassion fatigue and burnout simultaneously.

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