

# Organizational social context of residential care settings and youth's psychopathology: The role of youth-caregiver relationship quality

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# Youth in residential care

- Higher vulnerability for the development of mental health difficulties
  - Pre-care experiences (e.g., child maltreatment)
  - Residential care experiences (e.g., caregiver turnover)



# Predictors of mental health difficulties in youth in residential care

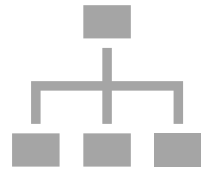
- Individual factors:
    - Age
    - Gender
    - Family history
    - Cause for placement
  - Contextual factors of the residential units
    - Organizational social context
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# Organizational social context



## **Organizational climate**

Engagement  
Functionality  
Stress



## **Organizational Structure**

Formalization  
Centralization



## **Work attitudes**

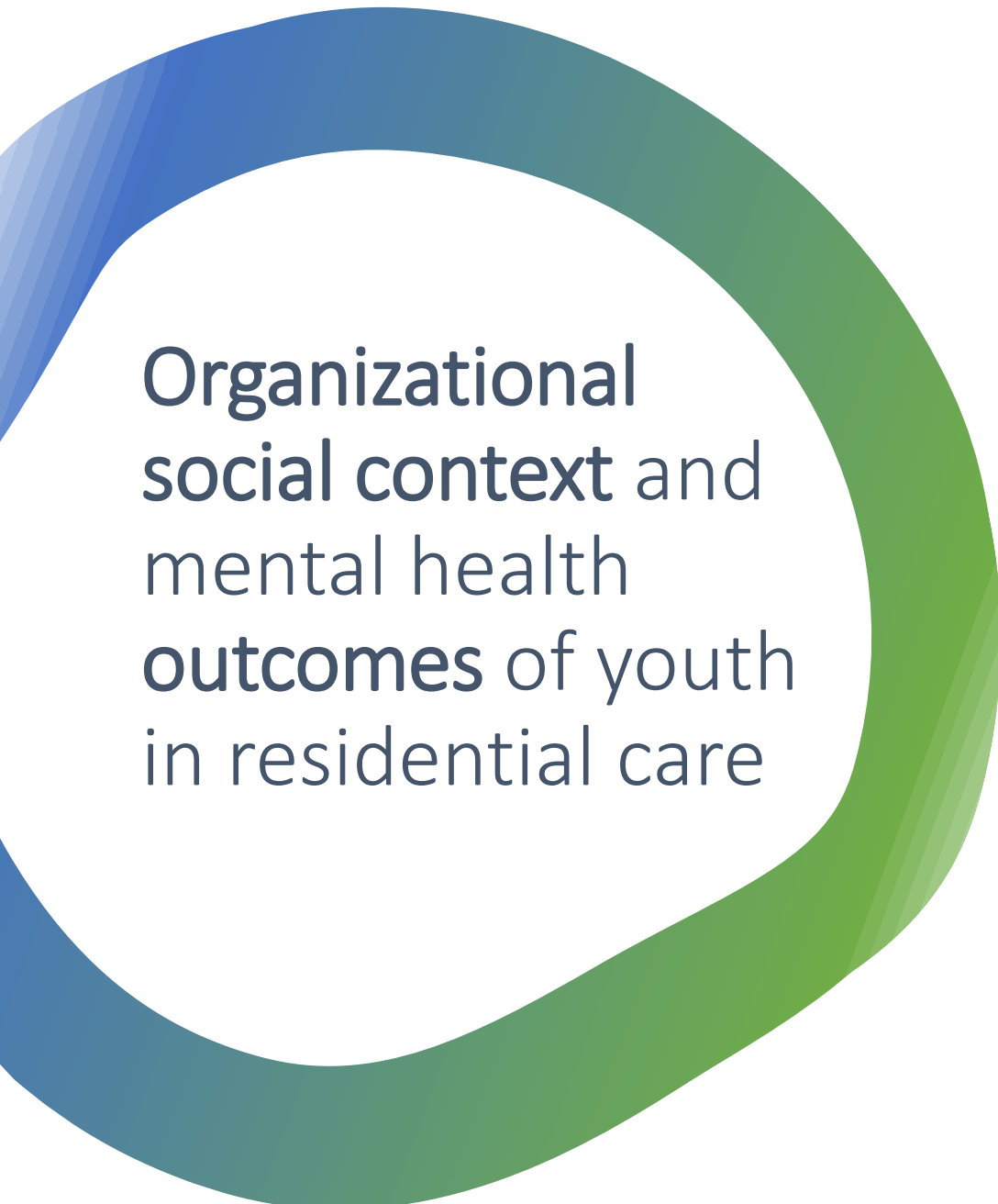
Job Satisfaction  
Commitment

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graph LR; A[Organizational social context] --> B[Quality of services delivered]; A --> C[Children's and youth's outcomes];
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Organizational social context

Quality of services delivered

Children's and youth's outcomes



**Organizational  
social context** and  
mental health  
**outcomes** of youth  
in residential care

- Evidence in different types of residential youth care:
  - Several dimensions of services' organizational social context significantly impact youth's mental health outcomes

(Goering, 2018)

# Organizational climate and youth's mental health outcomes



Organizational  
**structure** and  
youth's mental  
health outcomes

Lower rigidity (i.e.,  
centralization)



**Better outcomes**  
(Schoenwad et al., 2008)  
**Worse outcomes**  
(Silver Wolf et al., 2014)



# Work attitudes and youth's mental health outcomes

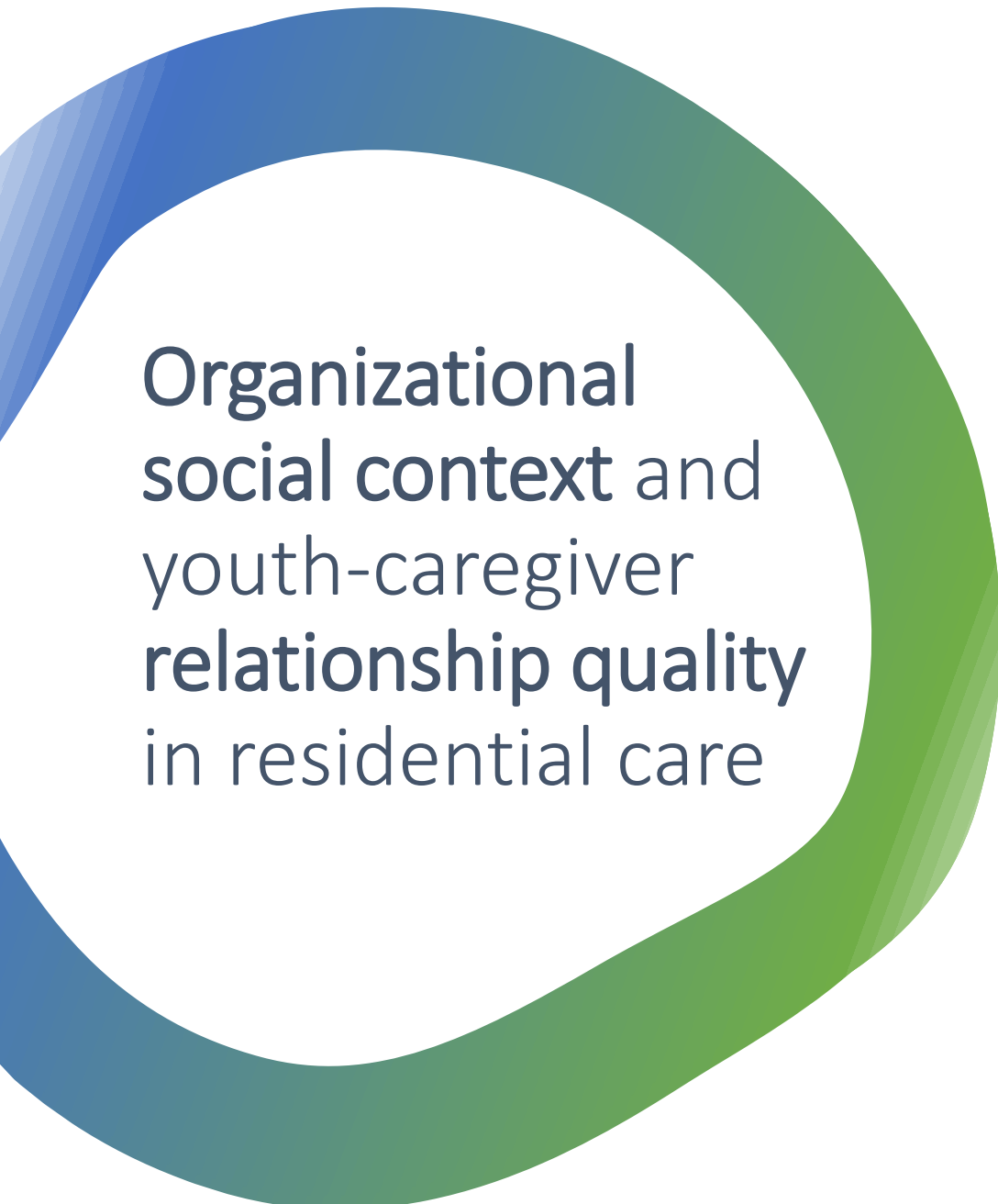
Higher job  
satisfaction,  
work motivation,  
commitment



Better quality  
services



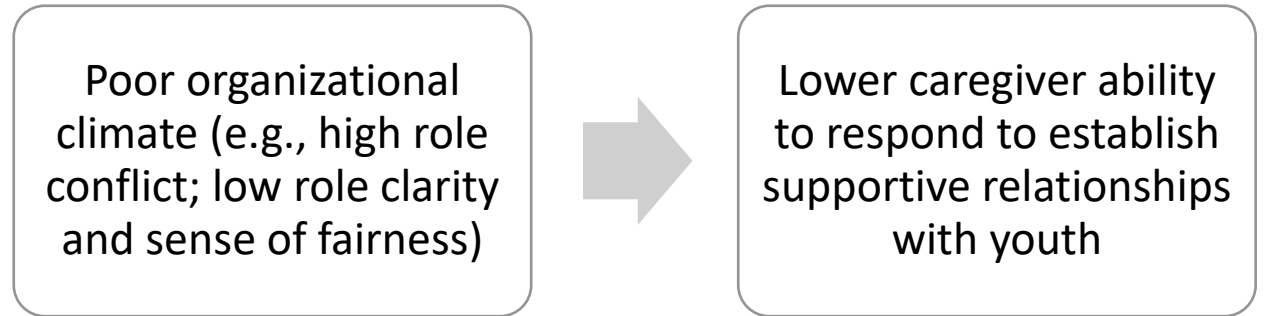
Better mental  
health outcomes  
in youth



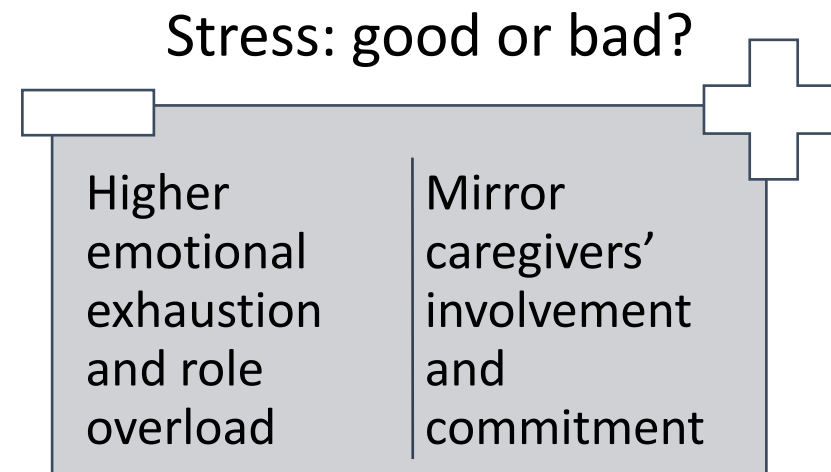
Organizational  
**social context** and  
youth-caregiver  
**relationship quality**  
in residential care

- Effectiveness of residential youth care core service depends on how well the service's organizational social context supports the goals and implementation of the organization's core service.  
(e.g., Hemmelgarn et al., 2006; Glisson et al., 2012; Green et al., 2014)

# Organizational climate and quality of youth-caregiver relationship



(Glisson et al., 2006)



Organizational  
**culture** and quality  
of youth-caregiver  
relationship

Professionals higher  
autonomy and  
participation in  
decisions



Better service

(Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998; Schmid & Bar-Nir, 2001)

but also:

Higher  
formalization and  
centralization



Better service

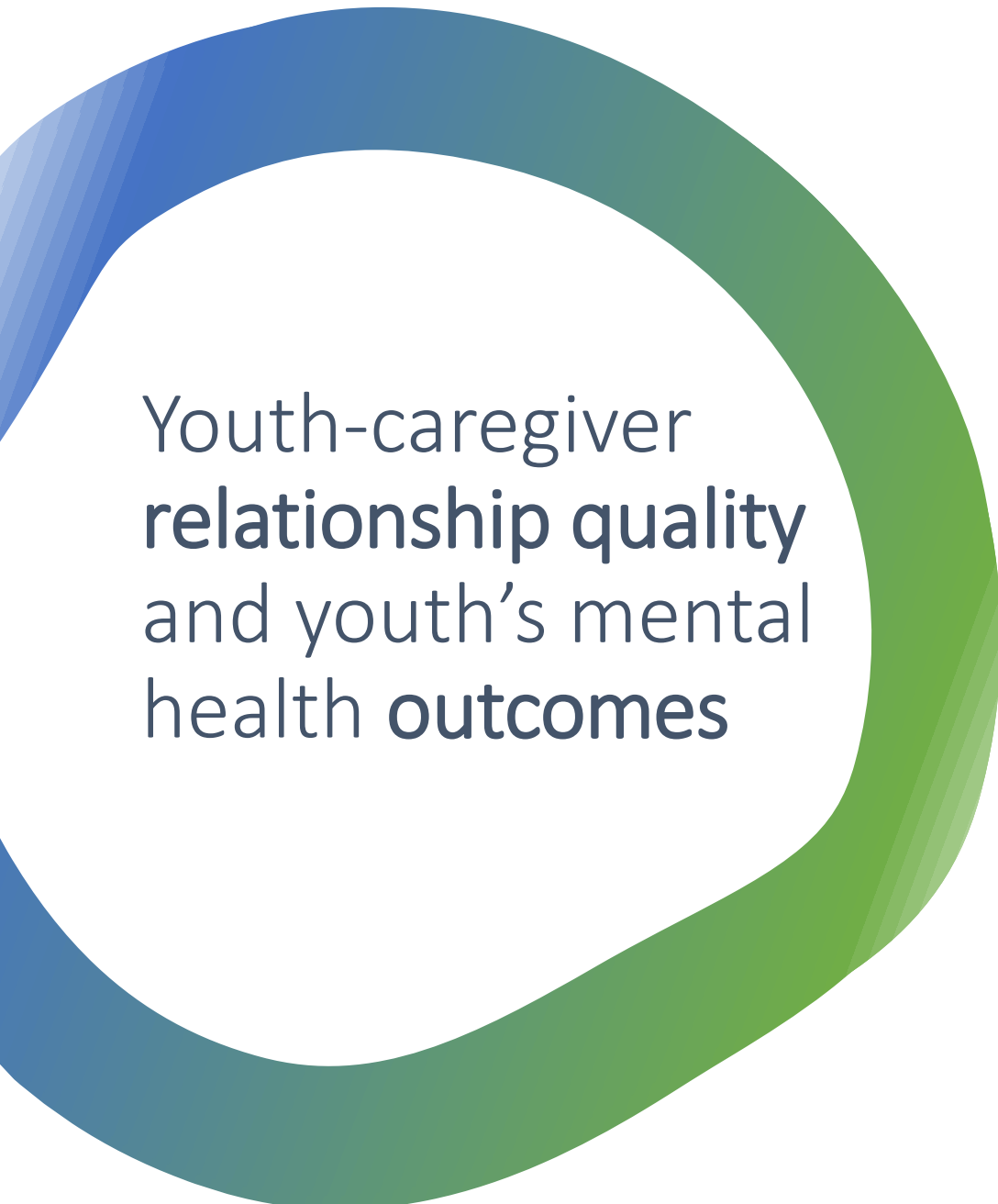
(e.g., Schmid & Bar-Nir, 2001)

**Work attitudes**  
and quality if  
youth-caregiver  
relationship

Lower job  
satisfaction  
Lower commitment



Lower warmth,  
empathy, and  
support from  
caregivers

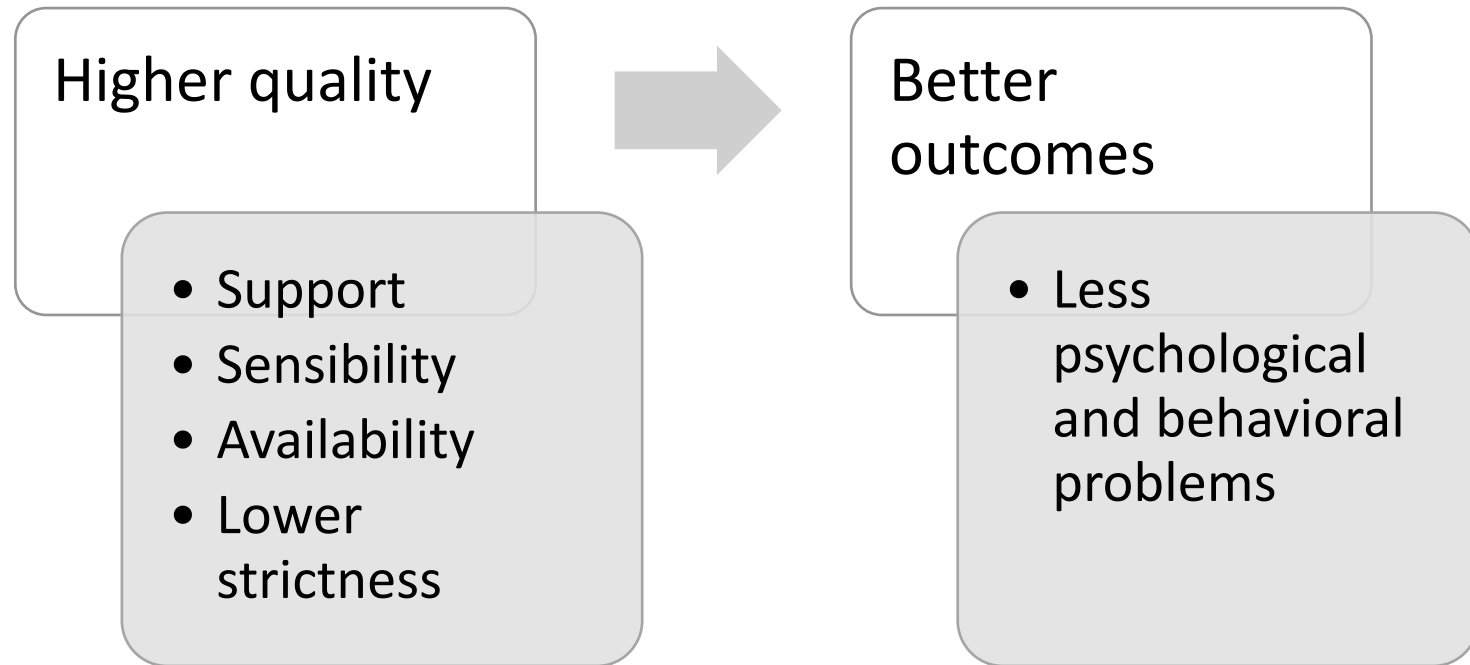


Youth-caregiver  
**relationship quality**  
and youth's mental  
health **outcomes**

One of the most important predictors of a successful adaptation to the residential care setting and developmental progress

(Assouline & Attar-Schwartz, 2020; Cahill et al., 2016; Harder et al., 2013; Sellers et al., 2020)

# Quality of youth-caregiver relationships and youth's mental health outcomes

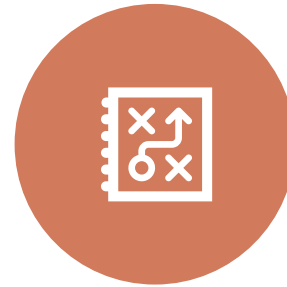


(Assouline & Attar-Schwartz, 2020; Harder et al., 2013; Izzo et al., 2020; Mota & Matos, 2015; Pinchover & Attar-Schwartz, 2014; Sekol, 2016; Sellers et al., 2020)

# In sum



Lack of research on associations between features of organizational social context and youth's outcomes in the context of residential care



Disorganized evidence establishing which features of OSC associate with which outcomes



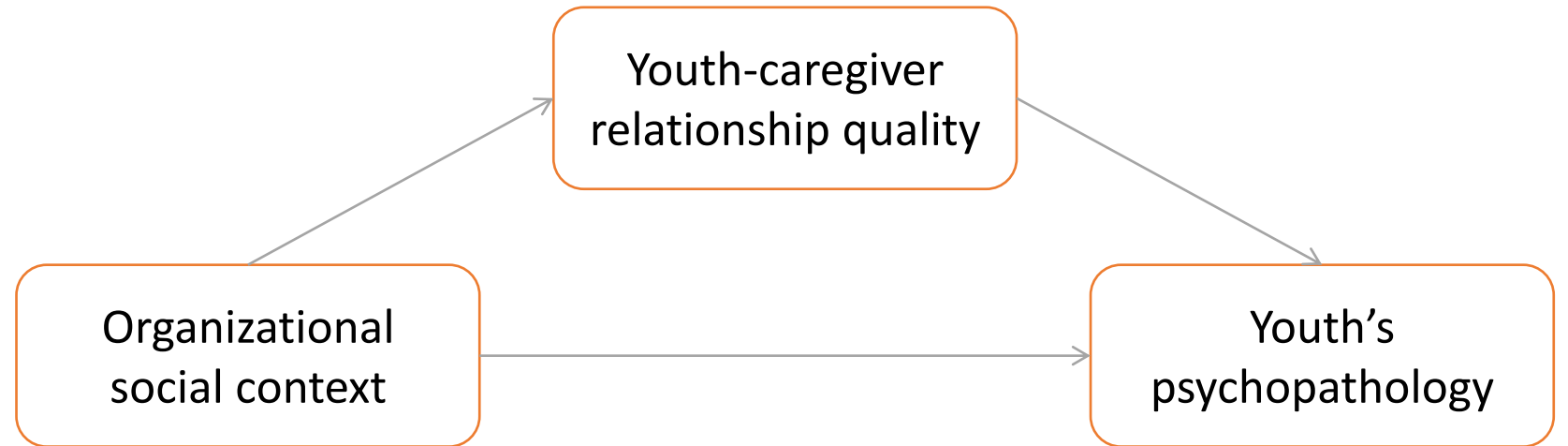
Little knowledge about the processes explaining those associations



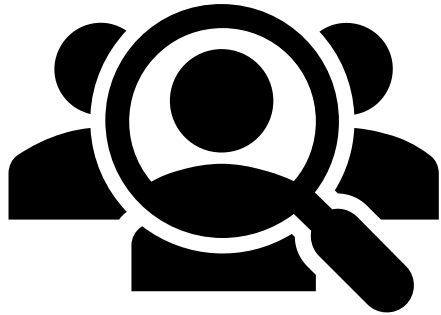
Lack of evidence on the role of youth-caregiver relationship quality as a potential explaining mechanism



# Research objective

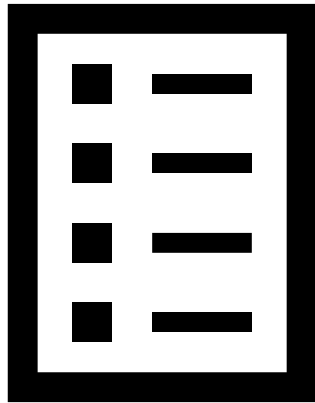


# Method - Participants

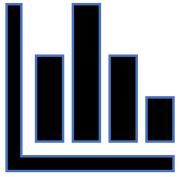


- 378 youth (59.9% ♂)
  - 12 - 25 years old ( $M_{age} = 16.2$ )
  - Length of placement in residential setting: 2 months - 20 years
- 54 residential caregivers (75.9% ♀)
  - 24 - 57 years old ( $M_{age} = 39.85$ )
  - Professional experience in residential care: 6 months – 28 years

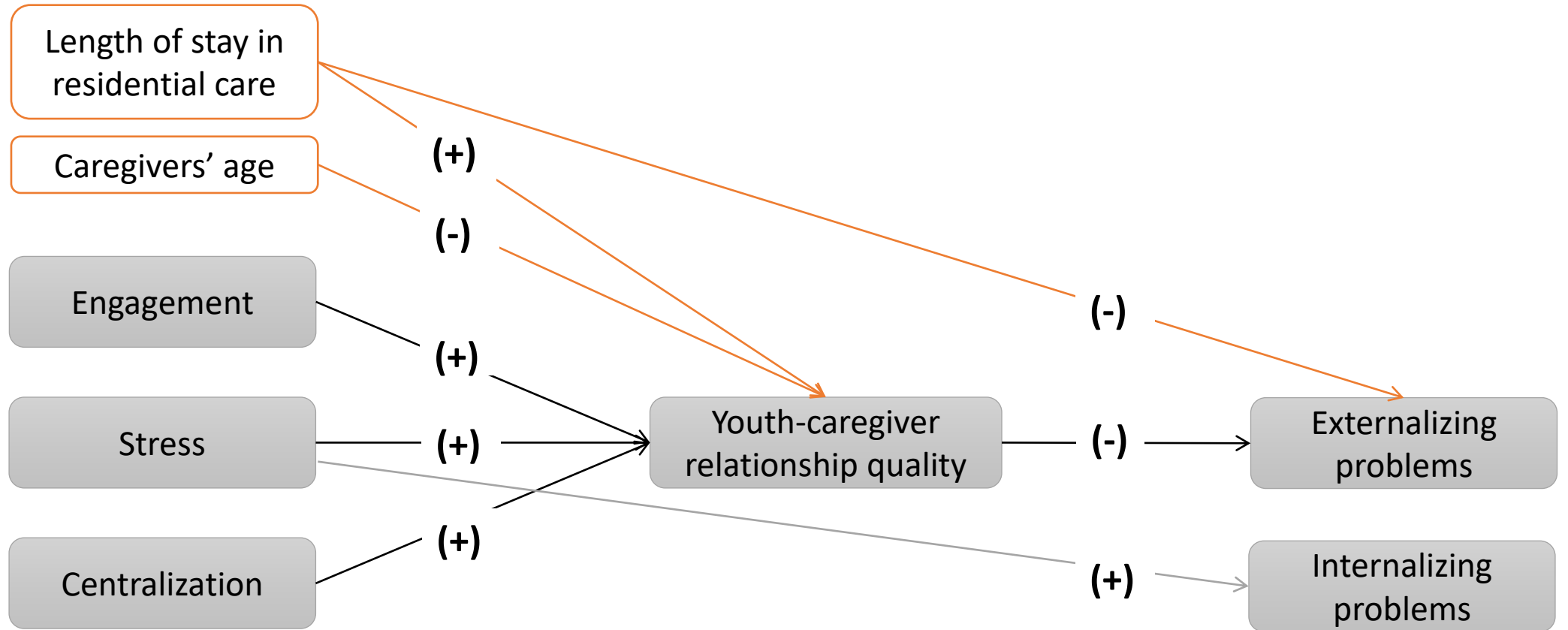
# Method - Instruments



- Caregivers
  - Organizational Social Context (OSC) measurement system (Garrido et al., 2012; Glisson et al., 2008)
  - Child Behavior Checkl (CBCL; Achenbach et al., 2014)
- Youth
  - Network of Relationship Inventory (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985)



# Results





# Discussion

- **The role of caregivers' engagement**
  - More engaged caregivers perceive that they have a higher ability to deliver a worthwhile service and remain personally involved in their work and concerned about their clients (e.g., Glisson & Hemmelgarn, 1998; Glisson et al., 2012).
  - Thus, they are more likely to form high-quality relationships with youth in care, thereby preventing youth's externalizing problems.

# Discussion

- **The role of stress perceived by caregivers**

- Somewhat surprising, but in line with existing evidence (Williams & Glisson, 2014; Wolf et al., 2014)

- Stress might reflect caregivers' higher involvement, commitment, and concern with the goals of their job and their awareness of the importance of providing high quality service to the youth in care.

- Residential care settings are inherently stressful workplaces.

- Residential caregivers face difficult dilemmas (Whittington & Burns, 2005).

- If work environment is supportive and resourceful, caregivers can be effective despite stress.

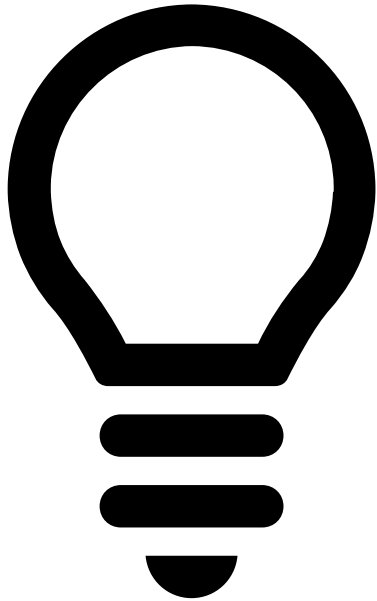
(Williams & Glisson, 2014; Baker et al., 2014; Demerouti et al., 2019)



# Discussion

- **The role of centralization (i.e., authority hierarchy) perceived by caregivers**
  - Also in line with existing evidence (e.g., Jordan et al., 2009)
    - high centralization, may be beneficial in some circumstances:
      - services with higher levels of coordination may be more effective and that youth with externalizing behavioral problems may benefit more from a highly structured environment (Leipoldt, et al. 2019, Timko et al., 2000)
      - Higher levels of centralization and formalizations may free residential caregivers from complex decision-making processes, allowing them to be more available and responsive to youth's needs

# Practice recommendations



To foster high-quality youth-caregiver relationships, and, thereby, better mental health outcomes in youth:

- Improve organizational structure of residential care settings
- Stimulate caregivers' engagement in their core service
- Support caregivers in facing work stress
- Training and supervision of residential caregivers should focus on the quality of their relationship with the youth in care



Thank you for your  
attention

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