

Assessing the Impacts of Short-Term Residential Treatment

Preliminary Findings of an In-Depth Literature Review

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Overview: Much attention has been directed toward reducing lengths of stay for youth in residential care. The purpose of this poster is to present a preliminary review of the literature regarding the impacts of lengths of stay and short-term residential treatment to assess the impact of placement duration on outcomes.

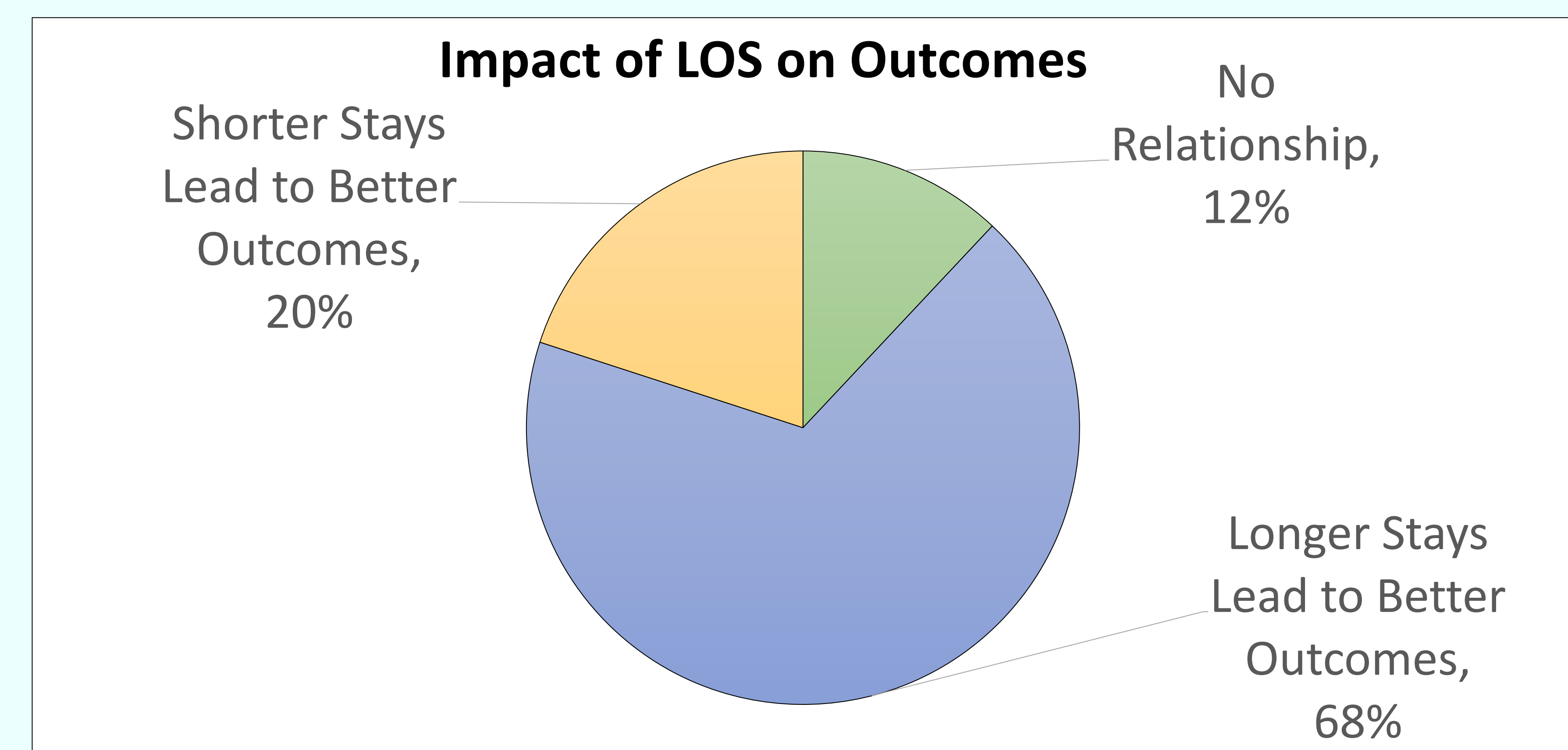
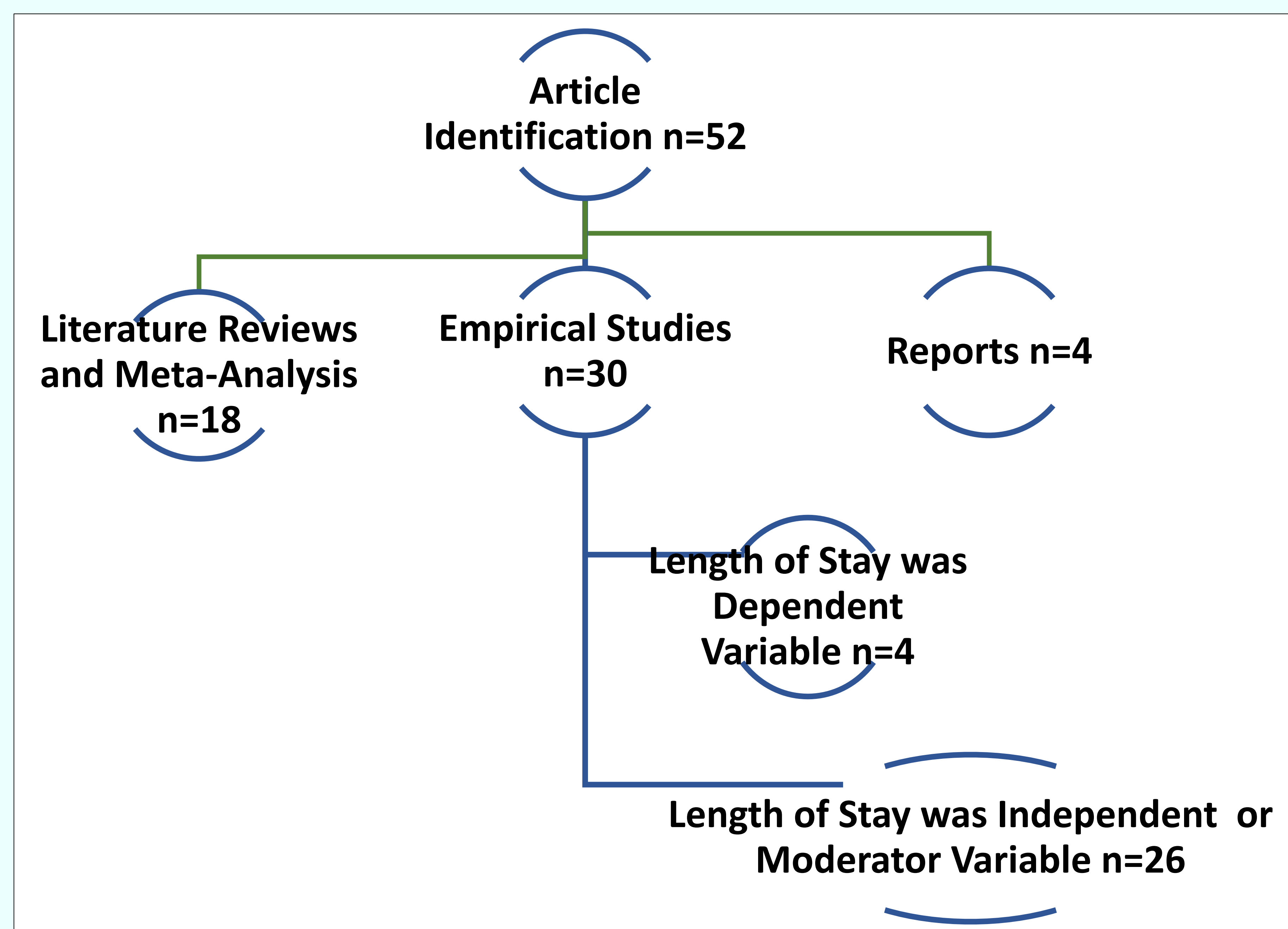
Background: Recent policies have focused on reducing the duration of out-of-home placements, but empirical literature may not support these policies. The goal of this study is to understand the empirical literature on shortened lengths of stay.

Literature Search Technique: The researchers used a snowball sampling technique to generate a preliminary list of articles through examining landmark studies and recently published research on the topic, and assessing the references and “cited by” lists to locate new references. This was followed by a general database search.

Sample: A total of 52 articles were initially identified and were classified into three groups: Literature Reviews, Reports, and Empirical Studies. As literature reviews generally summarized some or all of the empirical studies, we solely assessed the findings and contributions of these empirical studies.

Results: Within the 30 empirical studies identified, 26 examined the impact of length of stay on outcomes. Four viewed LOS as a dependent variable and were excluded. Within the 26 studies, 25 used LOS as an independent variable and 3 were used as a moderator in analysis. In these 25 studies, analyses looked at outcomes during treatment (n=13) and post-discharge outcomes (n=12).

The manner of examining Length of Stay varied significantly from study to study. Variations included inclusion or exclusion of comparison groups and using LOS as a continuous or dichotomized variable. Studies comparing groups of 6 months or less to a longer duration only occurred in two studies.



Preliminary Findings:

- Approx. one third of studies showed no relationship or a negative relationship between longer LOS and outcomes.
- Most studies (68%) indicated longer LOS relates to positive outcomes
- Most studies did not examine LOS in the same way short term residential stay is defined (<6 months).

Future Directions: Perform an empirical study to analyze outcomes of mandated shorter length of stay in applicable states.

Implications: Current empirical support provides little support for a positive impact of stays <6 months.