# Repositório ISCTE-IUL

1                                                   **Abstract**

2    Research into the reasons that could lead community samples to become foster families

3    is sparse, as most studies focus on the reasons identified by licensed or prospective

4    foster families. The present study aims: (1) to assess the validity and reliability of the

5    Reasons for Fostering Inventory adapted for a community sample (Portuguese version);

6    and (2) to test the role of family factors and the different reasons for fostering as

7    potential predictors of willingness and behavioral intention to foster. The reliability and

8    validity of the inventory were assessed using a convenience sample of Portuguese adults

9    ($n$=441), 84% female, aged 26-74. A three-factorial structure (self-oriented reasons,

10   child-centered reasons, and family-related reasons) composed of 22 items was

11   identified. The factorial structure was tested with a holdout randomization method for

12   cross-validation. All factors were reliable, with internal consistency levels ranging from

13   .85 and .88. Being female, younger, and scoring lower on family-related reasons and

14   greater on child-centered reasons showed positive associations with both willingness

15   and intention to foster. Lower scores on self-oriented reasons were associated with

16   higher willingness to foster; while having parental experience, lower education, and

17   greater income were associated with a higher intention to foster. This study contributes

18   with additional psychometric evidence for this scale for use with community samples. It

19   also provides new insight into how individual resources may be linked with willingness

20   and intention to foster in a community sample.

21

22   *Keywords:* Reasons for Fostering Inventory; foster care, foster family, community

23   sample, psychometrics

24

25

**Introduction**

26

27      Foster families aim to provide a secure and stable family environment for young

28 people who have experienced neglect and/or abuse (Delgado et al., 2014; Delgado et al.,

29 2019; Euillet, 2020). However, in many countries, such as Portugal (2.8% children in

30 foster care; ISS, 2020) and several eastern-european countries (e.g., Estonia 6.4%

31 children in foster care, Raudkivi, 2020), residential care remains predominant compared

32 to foster care. The disproportionate number of homes that provide the majority of care

33 (i.e., Pareto Principle or Vital Few foster parents) is also recognized as a challenge, as it

34 may encompass a risk of overwhelming these families leading to burnout experiences

35 (Orme et al., 2017). Ensuring a sufficient number of foster families to ensure children's

36 physical and emotional stability and integral development is a pressing issue, but

37 recruiting, selecting, training, and retaining foster families is a markedly difficult

38 process (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018; Contreras, & Muñoz, 2016;

39 Ciarrochi et al., 2012, Sinclair & Wilson, 2003). Several child protection systems

40 worldwide have been reporting the need to recruit new families, as there are fewer

41 available foster families than the number of children in need (Raudkivi, 2020; Sebba,

42 2012), especially for older children, those from minority ethnic backgrounds, and those

43 with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties (Shuker, 2012). Furthermore, the

44 retention of foster families is described as an additional challenge, namely the high

45 turnover rates of foster families (Gouveia et al., 2021). A scarcity of foster families

46 reduces matching options and can limit placement choices and weaken the foster system

47 as a whole (Sinclair et al. 2004). Therefore, outreach efforts and recruitment campaigns

48 to raise awareness (e.g., billboards, advertisements, brochures, news, word-of-mouth,

49 incentive payments for referrals) may play an important role to increase the number of

50 prospective foster families and meet the needs of children and young people in need

51    (Berrick et al., 2011; Delfabbro et al., 2008). Randle and colleagues (2012a) considered

52    it crucial to optimize outreach efforts and recruitment campaigns using the most

53    efficient vehicles (e.g., word-of-mouth, Rodger et al., 2006) and message features (e.g.,

54    highlighting the  professional aspects of the caregiving role, Sellick et al., 2004) in

55    specific groups or settings where the most likely people to become foster carers can be

56    found (e.g., religious organizations, Cox et al., 2003). Hence, to improve outreach and

57    recruitment campaigns, it is necessary to systematically assess reasons for fostering in

58    community samples (i.e., people not currently involved in the foster care system), which

59    firstly requires developing or adapting reliable and valid assessment measures to

60    specific cultural contexts.

61

62    **Reasons for fostering: evidence from foster families and community samples**

63    Foster families identify different reasons for fostering, with most families highlighting

64    altruistic motivations (e.g., desire to care for children), available personal and family

65    resources (e.g., having adequate financial resources), and social responsibility beliefs

66    (Doyle & Melville, 2013; Gouveia et al., 2021; López & Del Valle, 2016; Howell-

67    Moroney, 2014; Metcalfe & Sanders, 2012; Migliorini et al., 2018). Self or family-

68    centered reasons are also recognized by foster families, albeit to a lesser extent, which

69    includes the desire for family expansion (Maeyer et al., 2014) or new experience and

70    family enrichment (Migliorini et al., 2018). Taking all of these different reasons into

71    account, altruistic motivations (e.g., caring for children at risk; the motivation to protect

72    children) are associated with a greater likelihood of foster parent retention (Rodger et

73    al., 2006). Child-centered reasons (e.g., helping children, providing family-based care)

74    are more strongly associated with a longer fostering experience and fostering more

75    children, and self-oriented reasons (e.g., wanting companionship, wanting to be loved

76  by a child) are more strongly associated with fewer and shorter placements, which may

77  result in higher turnovers (Rhodes et al., 2006).

78          Moreover, when considering the Resource Theory (Cox et al., 2003), some

79  authors suggest that more resources for the foster family (e.g., higher education, higher

80  income, being married, having parenting experience) may be associated with a greater

81  likelihood to begin fostering (Maeyer et al., 2014). The Resource Theory also proposes

82  that people may get different resources from significant others (e.g., love, services,

83  goods, money, information, and status). People with more resources may be in an

84  advantageous position to share these resources with others and thus address their needs

85  (Cox et al., 2003). Specifically, in the context of foster care, the authors suggested that

86  adults who have more resources will be better at dealing with parenting demands and

87  will therefore be able to continue fostering (Cox et al., 2003).

88          Despite the relevance of these findings only a few studies have explored such

89  reasons with community samples (e.g., Ciarrochi et al., 2012; Contreras & Muñoz,

90  2016; Goodman et al., 2017), the vast majority of the studies focused on samples of

91  foster families who were already closer to the foster system (i.e., licensed or prospective

92  families). Studies with community samples – people not currently involved in the foster

93  care system - are important as they may clarify the the factors linked with willingness

94  and intention to become a foster family from a broader perspective, thus informing

95  campaigns potentially targeting different social groups (e.g., based on different levels of

96  willingness and awareness). The few studies conducted to date with community samples

97  revealed that factors related to individual physical and mental health, high

98  meaningfulness of life, positive social support, empathy, hope, and positive problem-

99  solving orientation, were all associated with the intention and/or willingness to foster

100 children at risk (Ciarrochi et al., 2012; Goodman et al., 2017). However, non-familiarity

101 with the foster care system, high workload/other commitments, and negative beliefs and

102 misconceptions about foster care appeared to push people away from becoming a foster

103 family (Contreras & Muñoz, 2016; Randle et al., 2012). Finally, some studies suggested

104 that demographic variables, such as gender and age could be associated with a greater or

105 lower predisposition to foster. However, these findings were relatively inconsistent,

106 with some studies indicating that female and older people may be more predisposed to

107 foster (Contreras & Muñoz, 2016), while others suggested that younger people may be

108 more willing to foster (Ciarrochi et al., 2012).

109

110 **Measurement challenges on the assessment of reasons for fostering**

111 Valid and reliable measures that focus on fostering are necessary to ensure the quality

112 and stability of selection procedures and foster care placement (Diogo & Branco, 2017;

113 Luke & Sebba, 2013). These measures are important to enable professionals to conduct

114 thorough assessments and thus inform more objective and less biased decisions (Luke &

115 Sebba, 2013). The evaluation processes should combine strategies for gathering

116 information, including both interviews and self-reported standardized tools, given that

117 using only interviews can pose critical challenges. Social desirability may be greater in

118 interviews, and families/individuals may not always spontaneously acknowledge all

119 relevant reasons and motivations for fostering. As such, standardized and properly

120 validated instruments are needed to complement the evaluation process (Rhodes et al.,

121 2006).

122 The Casey Family Program, in collaboration with the University of Tennessee

123 (Family Foster Care Project), has developed a battery of measures with evidence of

124 reliability and validity (i.e., Casey Foster Family Assessments - CFFA) to inform the

125 recruitment and selection of foster families (Buehler et al., 2006; Orme et al., 2006).

126    The main objective of these measures is to identify potential applicants and assess the

127    training needs and professional support required to ensure the quality of foster

128    placement. One of the protocols included in the battery of measurements (i.e., Casey

129    Home Assessment Protocol, Orme et al., 2006) includes a set of 19 scales, including the

130    Reasons for Fostering Inventory, which assesses the motives for fostering children.

131    Given that preliminary analyses did not permit the identification of a meaningful

132    underlying factorial structure (Orme et al., 2006), this inventory was mainly used as a

133    checklist. According to licensed foster parents, the top reasons for fostering were related

134    specifically to the child (e.g., to provide a child with love; to provide a good home to a

135    child), and the least reported reasons were related to individual/family needs (e.g.,

136    wanting a child to help with chores or work in the family business; thinking that a child

137    might help the marriage) (Rhodes et al., 2006).

138          Further efforts have been made to identify a meaningful factorial structure for

139    the Reasons for Fostering Inventory with foster parents' samples. In particular, Maeyer

140    et al. (2014) found a 12 item-structure composed of three factors (explaining 30.6% of

141    the variance): child-centered reasons (3 items, e.g., "I want to provide a good home for

142    a child"; $\alpha= 0.57$), self-oriented reasons (7 items, e.g., "I cannot have any, or any more,

143    children of my own"; $\alpha= 0.63$) and society-oriented reasons (2 items, e.g., "I want to do

144    something for the community/society"; $\alpha= 0.53$) (Maeyer et al., 2014). The low internal

145    consistency values obtained by Maeyer and colleagues (2014) reinforce the need for

146    further evidence regarding the reliability and validity of the Reasons for Fostering

147    Inventory. These low values may be related to the small number of items found per

148    dimension. Moreover, a set of family characteristics were also tested as predictors for

149    these three types of reasons (age, gender, educational level, available time, number of

150 children, number of foster children), but only available time positively predicted self-

151 oriented reasons (Maeyer et al., 2014).

152     These measurement developments offer important steps to advance knowledge

153 on (and the assessment of) reasons for fostering with foster families. However, there is

154 still a lack of studies that use this measure with community samples. This is a limitation

155 because efforts to recruit prospective foster families in community samples should be

156 informed by evidence on the motivations for fostering. Furthermore, research focusing

157 on the psychometric properties of the Reasons for Fostering Inventory has revealed

158 some problems in terms of validity and reliability. Both the work from the authors who

159 developed the Reasons for Fostering Inventory (Orme et al., 2006) and further

160 international adaptations (Maeyer et al., 2014) have also shown limitations when

161 looking for a theoretically valid factorial structure for these items. As such, the current

162 study may provide additional psychometric evidence for the Reasons for Fostering

163 Inventory and provide new insights on how the reasons for fostering may predict the

164 willingness and intention to foster using a community sample. As a first step toward

165 addressing this need, the aims of the current study are twofold: 1) to assess the validity

166 and reliability of the Reasons for Fostering Inventory adapted for a community sample

167 (Portuguese version); and 2) to test the role of these reasons for fostering and family

168 factors as predictors of willingness and behavioral intention to foster.

169                                    **Method**

170 **Participants and procedure**

171 This study belongs to a project approved by the Ethical Committee of the [*blinded for*

172 *review*] (Ref. 92/2019). Data collection was performed via *Qualtrics.com* and

173 disseminated on social media between December 2020 and May 2021. Facebook

174 personal profiles and advertisements targeting adults who met the inclusion criteria

175    were used to recruit a sample of adults who were not involved in the foster care system

176    as foster parents. A convenience sample of 441 adults met the inclusion criteria: (1) not

177    being currently a foster family, (2) understanding the Portuguese language; and (3)

178    being older than 25 years old (i.e., the age criterion to be foster parents in Portugal).

179    Participants did not receive financial or material rewards, and their participation was

180    voluntary. Informed consent was obtained before participants were asked to fill out the

181    questionnaires. A description of the study's objectives, instructions, and conditions for

182    participating was provided, alongside the research team's contact details for further

183    questions or clarification. A total of 441 adults aged 26 to 74 ($M_{age}$= 41.86; $SD$= 10.64)

184    participated in this study (see Table 1). Most were female (n= 370, 84%), married

185    (n=199, 45%) and had children (n= 296, 67%). Most participants had completed a

186    higher education degree (n= 296, 67%), were employed (n= 375, 85%) and did not have

187    any contact with the child protection system (n=236; 54%).

188                                    TABLE 1

189    **Instruments**

190    ***Sociodemographic questionnaire.*** The study included a questionnaire on demographic

191    variables, which was designed to capture the sample characteristics in terms of age,

192    gender, marital status, education, income, and employment status.

193    ***Reasons for fostering inventory (Orme et al., 2006).*** This measure was taken from the

194    Casey Home Assessment Protocol and included 32 statements with different reasons for

195    fostering ("How true is each of the following statements for you if you consider or were

196    to consider being a foster family?" e.g., "I want to provide a good home for a child"),

197    using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all true for me) to 5 (very true for me).

198    The translation and adaptation of the items to Portuguese involved a set of sequential

199    steps. The first step included asking the author's permission to translate and adapt the

200    inventory's original version. Following international guidelines for adapting and

201    validating questionnaires (Beaton et al., 2000), one researcher developed the first

202    translation, which was reviewed by another independent researcher. A follow-up

203    discussion  took place to resolve incongruencies and achieve the final version. The

204    translated version was back-translated by a bilingual speaker with knowledge and

205    experience in foster care. This back-translated version was then compared to the

206    original version, resulting in the final Portuguese version.

207    ***Willingness and Intention to foster.*** Willingness to foster was measured using a single

208    item: "I would like to become a foster family". Intention to foster was measured using

209    three items taken from Ru et al. (2019) and adapted to the context of foster care (i.e., I

210    am willing to be a foster family shortly; I plan to be a foster family shortly; I will make

211    an effort to become a foster family shortly). An excellent internal consistency was found

212    in the current sample ($\alpha$=.94). All these items were answered using a Likert-type scale

213    ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree).

214

215    **Analytical approach**

216    The Reasons for Fostering Inventory's factorial structure was tested with a

217    holdout randomization method for cross-validation by splitting the full sample into two

218    subsamples of 229 participants (Exploratory Factor Analysis - EFA) and 212

219    participants (Confirmatory Factor Analysis - CFA). Data analyses were performed using

220    *IBM SPSS® for Windows* (Version 26.0), *IBM AMOS® for Windows* (Version 21.0),

221    *jamovi* software (Version 1.0), and the statistical program R through RStudio using the

222    *parameters* package. Before conducting the EFA, we explored different strategies to

223    decide the number of factors to extract. The unidimensional solution was supported by

224    five (28%) methods out of 18 (t, p, Acceleration factor, TLI, RMSEA). The second

225    most voted solution was the seven-dimension solution with seven (17%) methods out of

226    18 (Optimal coordinates, Parallel analysis, Kaiser criterion). However, considering

227    these two structure solutions and the theoretical framework and previous empirical

228    evidence (e.g., Maeyer et al., 2014), we decided to consider the three-dimension

229    solution. For the EFA, we used Principal Axis Factoring (PAF), a reflective model that

230    captures latent variables. The oblique rotation method oblimin was applied since the

231    latent variables were expected to be correlated. This solution from EFA was then tested

232    with a CFA. There were less than 1% of missing values for each item, thus we used

233    mean imputation to handle missing values (Hair et al., 2010). Although factor loadings

234    greater than .50 are generally considered necessary for practical significance, a cut-off

235    .30 is also considered as a minimally acceptable value (Costello & Osborne, 2005; Hair

236    et al., 2010). The goodness of fit of the models was assessed through the following

237    criteria: a $\chi 2$/df below 3, the CFI approaching 1 (Bentler, 1990), and the RMSEA below

238    .08 (MacCallum et al., 1996). Reliability evidence was obtained by calculating the

239    *Cronbach*'s Alpha and the McDonald's $\omega$.

240        Based on the Resources theory and previous studies (e.g., Maeyer et al., 2014), a

241    linear regression analysis was performed regarding willingness and intention to foster,

242    with the first block highlighting resources (i.e., education, income, marital status,

243    intimate relationship status, having parenting experience), and a second block focusing

244    on the reasons for fostering as predictors. Hierarchical Linear Regressions were

245    performed to find if reasons for fostering (Model 2) are associated with willingness and

246    intention after accounting for participants' resources (i.e., income, parenting experience,

247    intimate relationships, marital status, education) (Model 1).

248

249                                    **Results**

250 **Descriptive statistics on reasons for fostering**

251 By analyzing the frequency of different reasons, which were marked with "Somewhat

252 true for me" or "Very true for me", we found that the reasons most identified by

253 participants (i.e., for more than 50% of the sample) were: "I want to help a child who is

254 less fortunate" (74%), "I want to provide a child with love" (74%), "I want to provide a

255 good home for a child" (70%), "I want to provide a home so a child won't have to be

256 put in an institution" (67%), and "I want to do something for the community/society"

257 (62%). The reasons less identified by the participants (for less than 4% of the sample)

258 were: "I want a child to help with chores or work in family business" (1%), "I feel

259 obligated to take a particular child" (1%), "I think a child might help my marriage"

260 (3%),"I was a foster child myself" (3%), "I was abused or neglected myself" (4%), "My

261 spouse wants to be a foster parent, so I agreed" (4%).

262

263 **Factor Analyses (EFA and CFA)**

264 First, a descriptive analysis of the 32 items was performed to analyze the items'

265 distribution. Two items (25 and 26) showed a Skewness value higher than three and/or a

266 Kurtosis value higher than eight, and for this reason, following recommendations in the

267 literature (Costello & Osborne, 2005) they were removed from any further analyses

268 (Table 2).

269                                   TABLE 2

270 The EFA, three factors solution, accounted for 43% of the variance, but two items

271 showed loadings lower than .30 (19 and 20). A new EFA was performed without these

272 items, and the new factorial model accounted for 45% of the total variance. The

273 measures of the appropriateness of factor analysis were checked, including KMO = .861

274 and Bartlett's test ($\chi 2(378) = 3354$, p <.001).

275           TABLE 3

276     A CFA (maximum likelihood estimation) was performed for the model provided by the

277     EFA. The first model was tested (Model 1), and all latent factors were correlated. The

278     overall fit of Model 1 revealed poor fit statistics ($\chi^2$=860, p<.001; $\chi^2$/df=2.480; CFI =

279     .81; RMSEA = .084; CI90% [.077; .091]). One item revealed a loading lower than .30

280     (item 3), and five items showed high modification indices with different factors (10, 12,

281     14, 18, 29). A second model was tested without these items and acceptable fit statistics

282     were reached ($\chi^2$=388.171, p<.001; $\chi^2$/df=1.894; CFI = .92; RMSEA = .065; CI90%

283     [.055; .075]), when correlating one pair of errors (11-13). Standardized Regression

284     Weights for each item are presented in Table 4 (all loadings were significant at p-value

285     <.001).

286           Factor 1 - Self-oriented reasons – refers to the fulfillment of individual needs

287     (e.g., "I want to have company for myself"). Factor 2 - Child-centered reasons –

288     includes motivations focused on the child welfare and needs, and how becoming a

289     foster parent may help a child in need to develop (e.g., "I want to help a child who is

290     less fortunate"). Factor 3 - Family-related reasons – refers to reasons focused on the

291     perceived familiarity with the foster child (e.g., "I want to provide a home for a child I

292     know"), as well as factors related to their own family (e.g., "My spouse wants to be a

293     foster parent, so I agreed").

294           TABLE 4

295     **Reliability**

296     Reliability with the whole sample was checked with *Cronbach* α *and* McDonald's ω.

297     Adequate reliability evidence was found for all factors: Self-oriented reasons (α=.85;

298     ω=.86), Child-centered reasons (α=.88; ω=.88) and Family-related reasons (α=.86;

299     ω=.87).

**The association between sociodemographic factors, reasons for fostering and**

**willingness and behavioral intention**

Hierarchical linear regressions were performed regarding willingness (Model A) and

behavioral intention (Model B) to foster, with the whole sample. The non-

multicollinearity assumptions were ensured in both models, with Variance inflation

factors (VIF) <3.0 for all predictors.

Model A identified gender, age, self-oriented, family-related, and child-centered

reasons as significantly related to willingness to foster. However, the gender effect was

no longer significant when the second block was introduced. Being female, younger,

and scoring lower on family and self-related reasons and greater on child-centered

reasons were positively associated with willingness to foster. Model B identified

gender, age, income, parental experience, education, and family and child-centered

reasons as significantly related to the intention to foster (Table 5). Being female is

associated with greater intention in the first block, but this effect was no longer

significant when the second block was introduced. Greater income was only associated

with intention when the second block was introduced. Being female, younger, having

parental experience, lower education, greater income and scoring lower on family, and

greater on child-centered reasons were positively related to intention to foster.

Hierarchical linear regressions were also performed with a subsample of

participants (n=298), excluding participants who responded negatively to the question "I

would like to become a foster family" (i.e., points 1 to 4 in the response scale ranging

from 1-Strongly disagree to 7-Strongly agree). The non-multicollinearity assumptions

were ensured in both models, with Variance inflation factors (VIF) <3.0 for all

predictors. Model A (willingness) identified gender, education, family-related, and

child-centered reasons as significantly related to willingness to foster. However, the

325     gender effect was no longer significant when the second block was introduced. Being

326     female, lower education, and scoring lower on family-related reasons and greater on

327     child-centered reasons were positively associated with willingness to foster. Model B

328     identified education and child-centered reasons as significantly related to the intention

329     to foster (Table 6). Lower education and scoring greater on child-centered reasons were

330     positively related to intention to foster.

331                       TABLE 6

332                      **Discussion**

333     The aims of the current study were twofold: (1) to assess the validity and reliability of

334     the Reasons for Fostering Inventory adapted for a community sample; and (2) to test the

335     role of family resources and the different reasons as associated with willingness and

336     behavioral intention to foster. Research on the factors that motivate community samples

337     to become foster families is sparse (e.g., Ciarrochi et al., 2012; Contreras & Muñoz,

338     2016), with the vast majority of studies focusing on the reasons identified by licensed or

339     prospective foster families (Howell-Moroney, 2014; López & Del Valle, 2016; Maeyer

340     et al., 2014; Metcalfe & Sanders, 2012; Migliorini et al., 2018; Rhodes et al., 2006).

341     However, to inform outreach efforts and strategies  to recruit new foster families, there

342     is a need for evidence obtained with valid and reliable measures adapted to audiences

343     outside of the foster system (i.e., community samples). In this study, we adapted the

344     Reasons for Fostering Inventory (Orme et al., 2006) to be used with a community

345     sample of adults.

346         The current findings revealed a three-factorial structure composed of 22 items:

347     self-oriented reasons (10 items), child-centered reasons (6 items) and family-related

348     reasons (6 items). Self-oriented reasons included motives focused on addressing

349     individual's needs (e.g., "I want to have company for myself"; "I want to fill time").

350     Child-centered reasons included reasons related to caring for a child and the importance

351     of addressing the child's needs (e.g., "I want to provide a child with love"; "I want to

352     help a child with special problems"). Finally, family-related reasons included mostly

353     motives related to familiarity with the fostered child (e.g., "I want to provide a home for

354     a child I know"), and with existing family relationships that would contribute to the

355     decision to become a foster family (e.g., "I know a foster child or a foster child's family

356     and want to help"). Comparing our factorial structure with previous evidence (Maeyer

357     et al., 2014), we found two remarkably similar dimensions: child-centered reasons and

358     self-oriented reasons. However, items related to social responsibility were not retained

359     in our study on a specific factor, despite Maeyer et al. (2014) finding a dimension

360     related to society oriented reasons. In our study, the item "I want to do something for

361     the community/society" loaded in the child-centered reasons, which might suggest that,

362     in our context and with the current sample, doing something for children in need was

363     seen as doing something for the society as a whole. Conversely, we identified a factor

364     focused on family-related reasons that was not found by Maeyer et al. (2014), who used

365     a Dutch version that was slightly modified and applied to a sample of non-kinship foster

366     parents, which may also justify these discrepancies. All our factors were reliable, with

367     internal consistency levels ranging from .85 and .88, higher than those found by Maeyer

368     et al. (2014); .57 for child-centered reasons and .63 for self-oriented reasons).

369        The second aim of this study was to provide evidence about the role of family

370     resources, demographic variables, and the different reasons for fostering on willingness

371     and behavioral intention to foster. Our findings suggest that being female, younger, as

372     well as scoring lower on family-related reasons and greater on child-centered reasons

373     were positively associated with both willingness and intention to foster. Furthermore,

374     lower scores on self-oriented reasons were associated with higher willingness (but not

375    intention), while having parental experience, lower education, and greater income were

376    positively associated with intention to foster. When excluding participants who were not

377    willing to foster, the findings reinforced that gender, child and family related reasons

378    were associated with willingness to foster, and education and child-centred reasons were

379    associated with intention to foster.

380         Consistently with the current study, previous findings have shown that women

381    tend to be more willing to foster than men, both as a single foster parent and with a

382    partner. In turn, men tend to consider becoming a foster parent mostly when there is no

383    possibility of having biological children (e.g., Contreras & Muñoz, 2016). These

384    differences can be explained by sociocultural factors, such as patriarchal culture, gender

385    social roles, and social expectations. Gender socialization is well-described in the

386    literature, as children grow up, they learn about gender roles and expectations related to

387    each gender (Stockard, 2006). Also, women tend to be more involved in household

388    chores than men, and traditional gender roles can shape how family-work relations are

389    managed (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018).

390         In this study, younger individuals also seemed to be more prone to foster, which

391    is consistent with the developmental and systemic perspective of family functioning, as

392    parenting can be an important developmental task for young adults (McGoldrick &

393    Carter, 2003). On the other hand, adults who were inclined to provide support to a child

394    they already had a relationship with were less willing to become a foster family,

395    presumably because this would involve fostering children that they or their families did

396    not know. This may suggest that  being a foster family would be perceived by these

397    participants as a threat to the stability and homeostasis of their family system

398    (Bertalanffy, 1969). Given that foster care in the Portuguese context is limited to non-

399    kinship care, these participants may have a lower willingness and intention to foster

400 because the likelihood of them knowing the fostered child would be almost non-

401 existent.

402        Interestingly, female participants showed greater willingness and intention to

403 foster, but this effect was no longer significant when the different reasons for fostering

404 were included as predictors in the model. Only child-centered reasons were positively

405 related with both willingness and intention to foster. The more people reflected on the

406 right of all children to grow up in a family, to receive love, and the importance of

407 children in need to have equal opportunities, the more they mentioned they were

408 available to become a foster family. Furthermore, the more people thought about

409 fostering to address their own needs, the less they were willing to be a foster parent.

410 Previous research has shown that families with child-centered reasons are the most

411 likely to remain in the system, foster more children, and have longer fostering

412 experiences (Rhodes et al., 2006; Rodger et al., 2006). Our findings support the

413 hypothesis that child-centered reasons can be used as the main leverage for efforts to

414 recruit new prospective foster families in community samples.

415        Moreover, although greater family resources such as income or having parental

416 experience positively predicted fostering intention, we observed an unexpected finding

417 for education. We expected that participants with higher education levels would have

418 wider access to information or more capability to ask for other resources. However,

419 education appeared to be less important when other resources were available (e.g.,

420 income, having parenting experience). In line with the Resource Theory (Cox et al.,

421 2003), family resources such as having a higher income and parenting experience may

422 be associated with a greater likelihood to become a foster family (Maeyer et al., 2014).

423 In turn, highly educated individuals may experience more work-family conflicts related

424 to their professional roles and responsibilities (Schieman & Glavin, 2011). As such,

425  given that some working conditions (e.g., long hours, work pressures) are associated

426  with greater work-family conflict (Schieman & Glavin, 2011), this may explain the

427  lower willingness and intention for fostering among highly educated people in our

428  sample.

429  To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to test a factorial structure of

430  the Reasons for Fostering Inventory with a community sample of adults. However,

431  several limitations should be acknowledged and addressed in future research. The

432  current study was cross-sectional and relied on an online convenience sample, mostly

433  composed of female participants, therefore the results cannot be generalized to the

434  general population and no causal relationships can be established. Future studies should

435  include more diverse, probabilistic samples and gather additional evidence regarding the

436  validity and reliability of the Reasons for Fostering Inventory, focusing on participants

437  who intend to become foster families. We found a CFI model fit lower than 0.95, and

438  even though it can be considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2010), further evidence is

439  needed to provide robust data regarding the validity of this scale. Large-scale

440  longitudinal studies are also warranted to follow trajectories of adults who effectively

441  become foster families and adults who have not applied to be a family, and

442  systematically analyze barriers and facilitators to becoming a foster parent.

443  Another issue thas was not addressed in the current study and should be a

444  priority for future research is the challenge of retaining foster parents throughout the

445  recruitment cycle (i.e., low conversion rate of those who express interest in becoming

446  foster parents vs. those who actually become foster parents). For example, a recruitment

447  campaign targeting the general population in Australia attracted a large number of

448  enquires but fewer than 2% of these ended up registering as foster carers (Delfabbro et

449  al., 2008), and available data from England showed that only 36% from the total

450   number of applications to perform the role of foster carers were approved (McDermid et

451   al., 2012). It is necessary to investigate how to optimize the success rates of recruitment

452   campaigns in terms of raising interest and awareness, but also in converting interested

453   applicants into skilled and commited foster families – who support the children's

454   individual needs, their relationship with the biological family, work alongside social

455   workers and other professionals, and follow the overall guidance and regulations set by

456   the child protection services (Berrick et al., 2011; Berrick & Skivenes, 2012; Pinto &

457   Luke, 2022). This is critical to buffer the negative impact of potentially traumatic

458   experiences of foster children (e.g., child abuse and neglect, placement disruptions) and

459   enable positive developmental outcomes (Dorsey et al., 2012).

460   Notwithstanding the limitations of this study and the challenges of the field as a

461   whole, the current work followed established international guidelines (Beaton et al.,

462   2000) to translate, adapt, and validate the scale of reasons for fostering and provides a

463   set of potential implications for future research and practice. First, our findings suggest

464   that the Reasons for Fostering Inventory may be a useful measure to be used in

465   community studies. Considering the shortage of foster homes across countries, there is a

466   pressing need for measurement instruments  to inform research that identifies

467   characteristics and profiles of prospective foster parents, as well as foster families that

468   remain in the system (Sinclair & Wilson, 2003). For instance, in the context where this

469   study took place (i.e., Portugal), data from 2020 showed that more than 90% of all out-

470   of-home children in the country were placed in residential care, including infants and

471   children with less than three years old, partly due to the lack of available foster families

472   (ISS, 2020). Knowledge about motivations for fostering and other individual (e.g., age,

473   sex, income) and family (e.g., family functioning) correlates of willingness and

474   intention to foster children  can inform targeted efforts to recruit prospective foster

475     families. Motivations for fostering can also affect the caregiving relationship, and, in

476     turn, the emotional development trajectories of children in care (e.g., Cole, 2005).

477     Therefore, brief, valid, and reliable assessment measures such as appears the Reasons

478     for Fostering Inventory may also ultimately assist child welfare agencies in screening

479     for suitable foster family applicants, allowing a more comprehensive evaluation of the

480     reasons for fostering (Maeyer et al., 2014; Rhodes et al., 2006) and the identification of

481     training needs to help prevent discontinuities.

482

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645    **Table 1**

646    *Sample characteristics*

| Variable | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Marital status | | |
|   Single | 172 | 39 |
|   Married | 199 | 45 |
|   Divorced | 66 | 15 |
|   Widowed | 4 | 1 |
| Completed education | | |
|   Higher Education | 298 | 67 |
|   Secondary Education | 101 | 23 |
|   Primary Education | 22 | 5 |
| Household monthly income (€) | | |
|   $\leq 1000$ | 66 | 15 |
|   1001-2000 | 176 | 40 |
|   2001-4000 | 146 | 33 |
|   $\geq 4000$ | 35 | 8 |
| Employment | | |
|   Employed | 375 | 85 |
|   Employed/student | 22 | 5 |
|   Unemployed | 22 | 5 |
|   Retired | 18 | 4 |
|   Student | 4 | 1 |
| Contact with the Child Protection System | | |
|   No contact | 236 | 54 |
|   I know people who have had and/or whose children have had a CPS case | 84 | 19 |
|   I know people who lived in a residential care home | 56 | 13 |
|   I lived with a foster family | 1 | 0.2 |
|   I fostered a child in the past | 1 | 0.2 |
|   I know people who were or are currently foster families | 34 | 8 |
|   I lived in a residential care home | 2 | 0.5 |
|   I am a professional in the CPS | 35 | 8 |
|   I was a professional working in the CPS | 19 | 4 |
|   I know professionals working in the CPS | 5 | 1.1 |
|   I have contact related with my profession (e.g., physician, teacher) | 14 | 3 |
|   I have contact through research/academia | 7 | 2 |
|   I had a CPS case | 18 | 4 |

647    Note. Due to missings, the total percentage is not always 100%.

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651     **Table 2**

652     *Descriptive statistics: skewness and kurtosis of all items*

| Item | Mean | Standard Deviation | Skewness | | Kurtosis | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Std. Error |
| 1 | 2.07 | 1.410 | .981 | .116 | -.479 | .232 |
| 2 | 1.64 | 1.066 | 1.470 | .118 | .892 | .235 |
| 3 | 1.77 | 1.142 | 1.383 | .117 | .885 | .234 |
| 4 | 1.88 | 1.147 | .949 | .117 | -.355 | .234 |
| 5 | 2.16 | 1.250 | .583 | .117 | -1.053 | .233 |
| 6 | 1.57 | .883 | 1.329 | .117 | .538 | .234 |
| 7 | 1.32 | .759 | 2.545 | .117 | 6.204 | .234 |
| 8 | 1.56 | .976 | 1.676 | .117 | 1.866 | .234 |
| 9 | 1.82 | 1.146 | 1.127 | .117 | .013 | .234 |
| 10 | 2.25 | 1.247 | .430 | .117 | -1.159 | .234 |
| 11 | 3.84 | 1.241 | -1.125 | .117 | .349 | .233 |
| 12 | 2.80 | 1.286 | -.088 | .117 | -1.091 | .234 |
| 13 | 3.72 | 1.196 | -1.030 | .117 | .294 | .234 |
| 14 | 1.34 | .877 | 2.707 | .117 | 6.536 | .234 |
| 15 | 2.78 | 1.081 | -.199 | .117 | -.639 | .233 |
| 16 | 1.81 | 1.055 | 1.000 | .116 | -.247 | .232 |
| 17 | 3.64 | 1.180 | -.927 | .116 | .098 | .232 |
| 18 | 1.27 | .604 | 2.348 | .116 | 5.037 | .232 |
| 19 | 1.50 | .945 | 1.893 | .116 | 2.683 | .232 |
| 20 | 1.69 | .943 | 1.096 | .117 | .184 | .233 |
| 21 | 3.51 | 1.154 | -.912 | .116 | .157 | .232 |
| 22 | 1.75 | .989 | 1.024 | .116 | -.072 | .232 |
| 23 | 1.87 | 1.192 | 1.095 | .116 | -.077 | .232 |
| 24 | 1.50 | 1.000 | 1.995 | .116 | 2.927 | .232 |
| 25 | 1.23 | .693 | 3.507 | .116 | 12.465 | .232 |
| 26 | 1.28 | .763 | 2.934 | .116 | 8.254 | .232 |
| 27 | 3.77 | 1.111 | -1.200 | .116 | .979 | .232 |
| 28 | 1.86 | 1.141 | 1.033 | .116 | -.116 | .232 |
| 29 | 1.70 | 1.006 | 1.137 | .116 | .133 | .232 |
| 30 | 1.37 | .721 | 1.954 | .116 | 3.202 | .232 |
| 31 | 1.46 | .873 | 1.929 | .116 | 3.017 | .232 |
| 32 | 1.56 | .898 | 1.368 | .116 | .662 | .232 |

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**Table 3**

*Exploratory Factor Loadings – Principal Axis Factoring*

| Item | Self-oriented reasons | Child-centered reasons | Family-related reasons |
|---|---|---|---|
| I want to have company for myself | **.767** | -.018 | -.021 |
| I want a larger family | **.722** | .040 | .011 |
| I want to have company for my own child | **.699** | .191 | -.113 |
| I cannot have any, or any more, children of my own | **.584** | -.061 | -.061 |
| I want to adopt but cannot get a child or wanted to adopt but can't | **.566** | .041 | .074 |
| I am single and want a child | **.531** | -.150 | .186 |
| I think a child might help my marriage | **.527** | -.085 | .172 |
| I thought about adopting and thought foster parenting was a good way to start | **.523** | .326 | -.064 |
| I want to be loved by a child | **.497** | .227 | .096 |
| I want a certain kind of child (e.g., a girl or a five-year old) | **.439** | -.034 | .162 |
| I want to fill time | **.411** | -.051 | .211 |
| My own children were grown and I want children in the house | **.300** | .002 | .234 |
| I want to help a child who is less fortunate | .048 | **.869** | .052 |
| I want to provide a home so a child won't have to be put in an institution | -.006 | **.808** | .114 |
| I want to provide a good home for a child | .247 | **.748** | -.160 |
| I want to provide a child with love | .225 | **.744** | -.149 |
| I want to do something for the community/society | .060 | **.629** | .012 |
| I want to help a child with special problems | -.046 | **.524** | .288 |
| I do not want to care for an infant* | .146 | **.330** | .008 |
| I am attached to a particular child | -.025 | -.057 | **.766** |
| I am related to a child I want to foster | .021 | .045 | **.763** |
| I know a foster child or a foster child's family and want to help | -.100 | .167 | **.738** |
| I want to provide a home for a child I know | .043 | .138 | **.723** |
| I feel obligated to take a particular child | .125 | -.119 | **.687** |
| My spouse wants to be a foster parent, so I agreed | .082 | .067 | **.657** |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| I want a child to help with chores or work in family business | .109 | -.197 | **.577** |
| I had a child who died | .282 | -.071 | **.398** |
| I want to fulfill my religious beliefs by caring for a child | .270 | .046 | **.340** |
| Eigenvalues | 7.40 | 3.31 | 1.67 |
| % of Variance | 26.4 | 12.9 | 5.97 |
| Cronbach's α | 0.859 | 0.853 | 0.875 |
| McDonald's ω | 0.867 | 0.864 | 0.884 |

*reversed scale

**Table 4**

*Standardized Regression Weights (SRW) and Standard Errors (SE) from the Confirmatory Factor Analysis*

| Factor | Item | SRW | SE |
|---|---|---|---|
| F1 – Self-oriented reasons α=0.856; ω=0.869 | I cannot have any, or any more, children of my own. | .480 | |
| | I am single and want a child. | .603 | .162 |
| | I want to adopt but cannot get a child or wanted to adopt but can't. | .634 | .175 |
| | I thought about adopting and thought foster parenting was a good way to start. | .536 | .177 |
| | I want a certain kind of child (e.g., a girl or a five-year old). | .717 | .145 |
| | I think a child might help my marriage. | .752 | .137 |
| | I want to have company for myself. | .793 | .170 |
| | I want to have company for my own child. | .516 | .162 |
| | My own children are grown and I want children in the house. | .657 | .164 |
| | I want to fill time. | .575 | .141 |
| F2 – Child-centered reasons α=0.872; ω=0.881 | I want to provide a child with love. | .779 | |
| | I want to provide a good home for a child. | .725 | .058 |
| | I want to help a child with special problems. | .458 | .086 |
| | I want to provide a home so a child won't have to be put in an institution. | .892 | .079 |
| | I want to do something for the community/society. | .604 | .089 |
| | I want to help a child who is less fortunate. | .878 | .073 |
| F3 – Family-related reasons α=0.851; ω=0.861 | I know a foster child or a foster child's family and want to help. | .607 | |
| | I am related to a child I want to foster. | .752 | .116 |
| | I want to provide a home for a child I know. | .812 | .139 |
| | I feel obligated to take a particular child. | .664 | .083 |
| | I am attached to a particular child. | .788 | .104 |
| | My spouse wants to be a foster parent, so I agreed. | .645 | .101 |

**Table 5**

*Multiple linear regressions for willingness and intention for fostering children (n=441)*

| Model 1 | | Model A – Willingness | | | | | Model B – Behavioral Intention | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | β | t | p-value | Tolerance | VIF | β | t | p-value | Tolerance | VIF |
| | *Demographics* | $R^2$ =.079, F=4.371 [7,362], p<.001 | | | | | $R^2$ =.073, F=3.997 [7,362], p<.001 | | | | |
| | Gender | -.220 | -4.234 | **<.001** | .962 | 1.040 | -.104 | -1.998 | **.047** | .962 | 1.040 |
| | Age | -.195 | -3.179 | **.002** | .691 | 1.448 | -.147 | -2.392 | **.017** | .691 | 1.448 |
| | Income | -.023 | -.449 | .654 | .982 | 1.018 | .070 | 1.350 | .178 | .982 | 1.018 |
| | Parental Experience | .108 | 1.716 | .087 | .656 | 1.524 | .177 | 2.814 | **.005** | .656 | 1.524 |
| | Education | -.010 | -.180 | .857 | .909 | 1.100 | -.187 | -3.487 | **.001** | .909 | 1.100 |
| | Marital status | .029 | .468 | .640 | .652 | 1.533 | -.050 | -.798 | .425 | .652 | 1.533 |
| | Intimate relationship | -.005 | -.089 | .929 | .764 | 1.309 | .010 | .178 | .859 | .764 | 1.309 |
| Model 2 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | *Reasons for fostering* | $R^2$=.408; $\Delta R^2$= .329; F=24.223 [10,362], p<.001 | | | | | $R^2$=.237; $\Delta R^2$= .164; F=10.946 [10,362], p<.001 | | | | |
| | Gender | -.041 | -.921 | .358 | .848 | 1.180 | -.002 | -.039 | .969 | .848 | 1.180 |
| | Age | -.115 | -2.291 | **.023** | .668 | 1.498 | -.095 | -1.667 | .096 | .668 | 1.498 |
| | Income | .036 | .848 | .397 | .958 | 1.044 | .098 | 2.061 | **.040** | .958 | 1.044 |
| | Parental Experience | .088 | 1.744 | .082 | .654 | 1.528 | .170 | 2.946 | **.003** | .654 | 1.528 |
| | Education | -.050 | -1.142 | .254 | .892 | 1.121 | -.206 | -4.172 | **<.001** | .892 | 1.121 |
| | Marital status | -.020 | -.389 | .697 | .637 | 1.569 | -.071 | -1.218 | .224 | .637 | 1.569 |
| | Intimate relationship | .015 | .317 | .751 | .762 | 1.313 | .023 | .432 | .666 | .762 | 1.313 |
| | Family-related reasons | -.190 | -3.813 | **<.001** | .681 | 1.468 | -.118 | -2.090 | **.037** | .681 | 1.468 |
| | Self-oriented reasons | -.128 | -2.460 | **.014** | .622 | 1.607 | .006 | .101 | .920 | .622 | 1.607 |
| | Child-centered reasons | .597 | 13.500 | **<.001** | .860 | 1.162 | .422 | 8.404 | **<.001** | .860 | 1.162 |

*Note.* Gender: Female (0), Male (1); Parental Experience: not have parenting experience (0), Having parenting experience (1); Education: Basic and Secondary (0), Higher Education (1); Intimate relationship status: without intimate relationship (0), with an intimate relationship (1); Marital status: Single/divorced/widowed (0), Married (1).

**Table 6**

*Multiple linear regressions for willingness and intention for fostering children (n=298)*

| Model 1 | | Model A – Willingness | | | | | Model B – Behavioral Intention | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | β | t | p-value | Tolerance | VIF | β | t | p-value | Tolerance | VIF |
| | *Demographics* | $R^2$=.079; F=2.947 [7, 239], p<.006 | | | | | $R^2$=.115; F=4.433 [7, 239], p<.001 | | | | |
| | Gender | -.235 | -3.705 | **<.001** | .958 | 1.043 | -.020 | -.324 | .746 | .958 | 1.043 |
| | Age | -.027 | -.356 | .722 | .647 | 1.546 | -.018 | -.234 | .815 | .647 | 1.546 |
| | Income | -.087 | -1.385 | .167 | .974 | 1.026 | .074 | 1.201 | .231 | .974 | 1.026 |
| | Parental Experience | .076 | .914 | .362 | .562 | 1.778 | .141 | 1.740 | .083 | .562 | 1.778 |
| | Education | -.080 | -1.210 | .228 | .880 | 1.137 | -.286 | -4.406 | **<.001** | .880 | 1.137 |
| | Marital status | .017 | .213 | .832 | .630 | 1.587 | -.084 | -1.101 | .272 | .630 | 1.587 |
| | Intimate relationship | .047 | .656 | .513 | .765 | 1.307 | .035 | .501 | .617 | .765 | 1.307 |
| Model 2 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | *Reasons for fostering* | $R^2$= .257; $\Delta R^2$= .178; F= 8.151 [10, 236], p<.001 | | | | | $R^2$=.164; $\Delta R^2$= .049; F=4.641 [10, 236], p<.001 | | | | |
| | Gender | -.083 | -1.360 | .175 | .851 | 1.175 | .029 | .450 | .653 | .851 | 1.175 |
| | Age | -.005 | -.065 | .949 | .621 | 1.609 | -.019 | -.256 | .798 | .621 | 1.609 |
| | Income | -.005 | -.083 | .934 | .931 | 1.074 | .087 | 1.408 | .160 | .931 | 1.074 |
| | Parental Experience | .028 | .368 | .713 | .553 | 1.808 | .132 | 1.653 | .100 | .553 | 1.808 |
| | Education | -.129 | -2.125 | **.035** | .858 | 1.165 | -.286 | -4.446 | **<.001** | .858 | 1.165 |
| | Marital status | .003 | .043 | .966 | .605 | 1.652 | -.048 | -.626 | .532 | .605 | 1.652 |
| | Intimate relationship | .061 | .951 | .343 | .760 | 1.315 | .051 | .751 | .453 | .760 | 1.315 |
| | Family-related reasons | -.201 | -3.051 | **.003** | .724 | 1.380 | -.090 | -1.286 | .200 | .724 | 1.380 |
| | Self-oriented reasons | -.118 | -1.728 | .085 | .673 | 1.486 | .127 | 1.745 | .082 | .673 | 1.486 |
| | Child-centered reasons | .368 | 6.206 | **<.001** | .897 | 1.115 | .198 | 3.146 | **.002** | .897 | 1.115 |

*Note.* Gender: Female (0), Male (1); Parental Experience: not have parenting experience (0), Having parenting experience (1); Education: Basic and Secondary (0), Higher Education (1); Intimate relationship status: without intimate relationship (0), with an intimate relationship (1); Marital status: Single/divorced/widowed (0), Married (1).