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The Final Year of Psychotherapy With Foster Youth

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The Final Year of Psychotherapy With Foster Youth

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BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

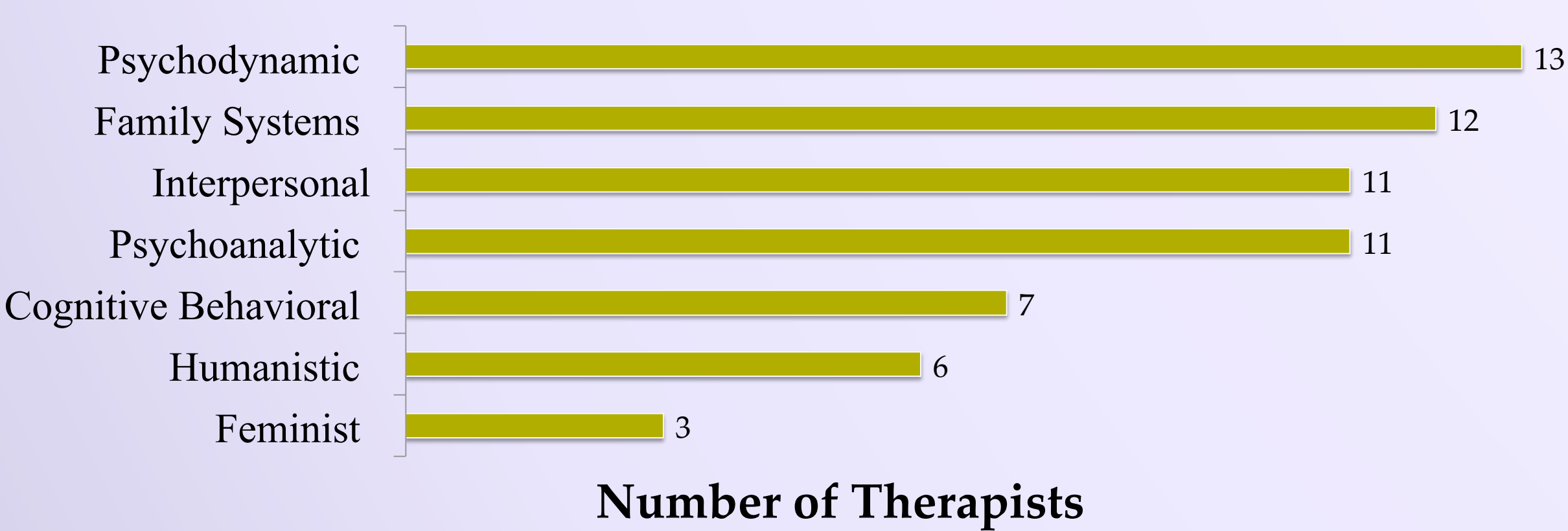
- Child maltreatment continues to be a problem in today’s society
- Children and youth in foster care, many of whom are victims of maltreatment, are more likely to experience behavioral and emotional difficulties when compared to youth in the general population
- Despite this increased risk for such difficulties, less than 1 out of 10 foster youth receive mental health care consistent with national standards
- Initial research has demonstrated that Relationship-Based Psychotherapy (RBT) reduces many mental health symptoms in foster youth
- This study examined the nature of RBT provided during the final year of therapy with foster children who were receiving pro-bono mental health treatment

METHOD

Participants

- Therapists ($N = 15$)
- 80% Female
- 86.7% White
- Mean Age = 53.12 years ($SD = 14.81$ years)
 - 47% Psychologists
 - 33% L.C.S.W.s
 - 20% L.M.F.T.s
- 15.43 years of clinical experience post licensure ($SD = 8.82$ years)

General Approach to Psychotherapy



Measures

Semi-structured telephone questionnaire about therapist and patient demographics, patient mental health status, treatment parameters, and intervention approach.

METHOD

Procedure

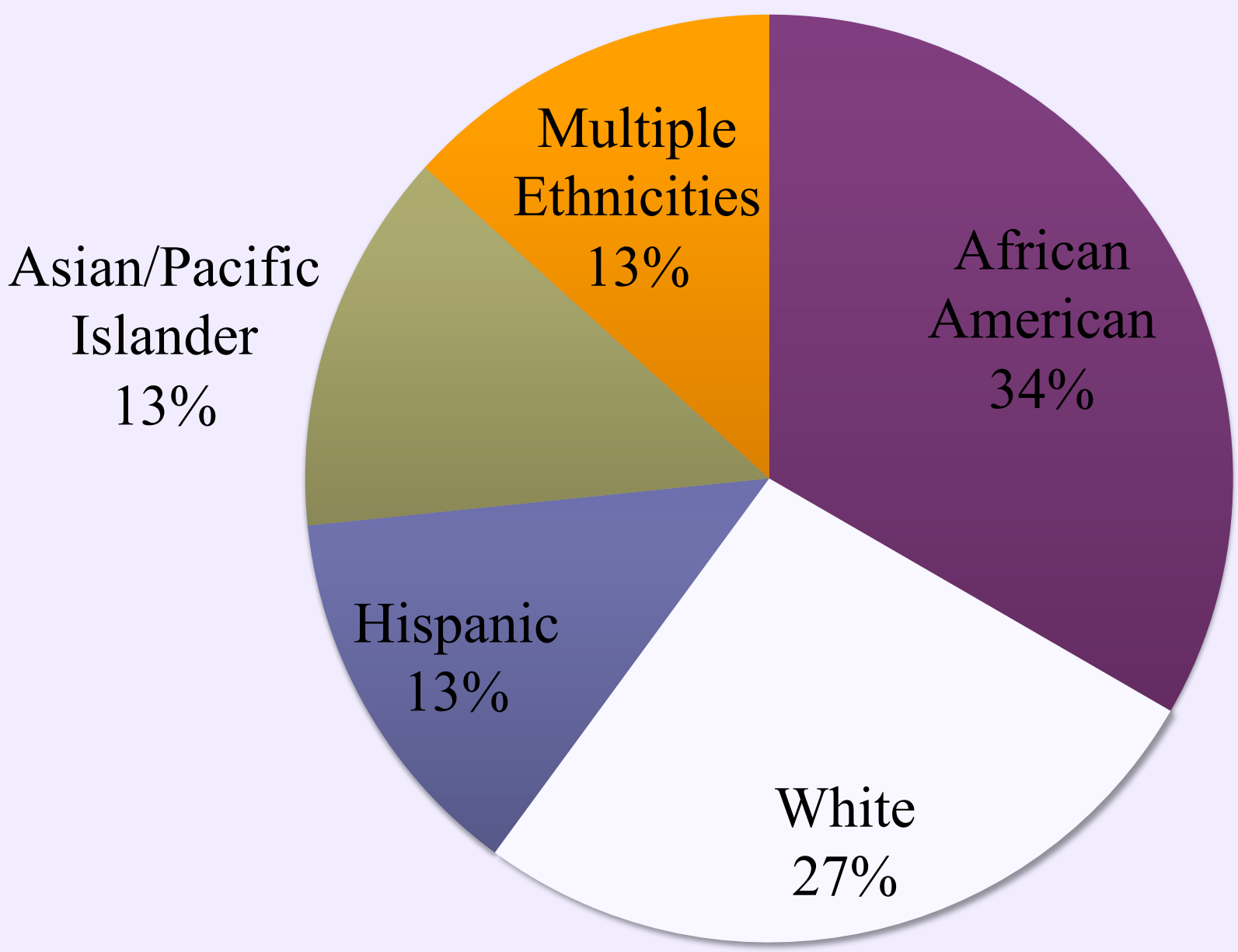
Telephone interviews conducted with therapists at the start and end of treatment with their foster child patient.

RESULTS

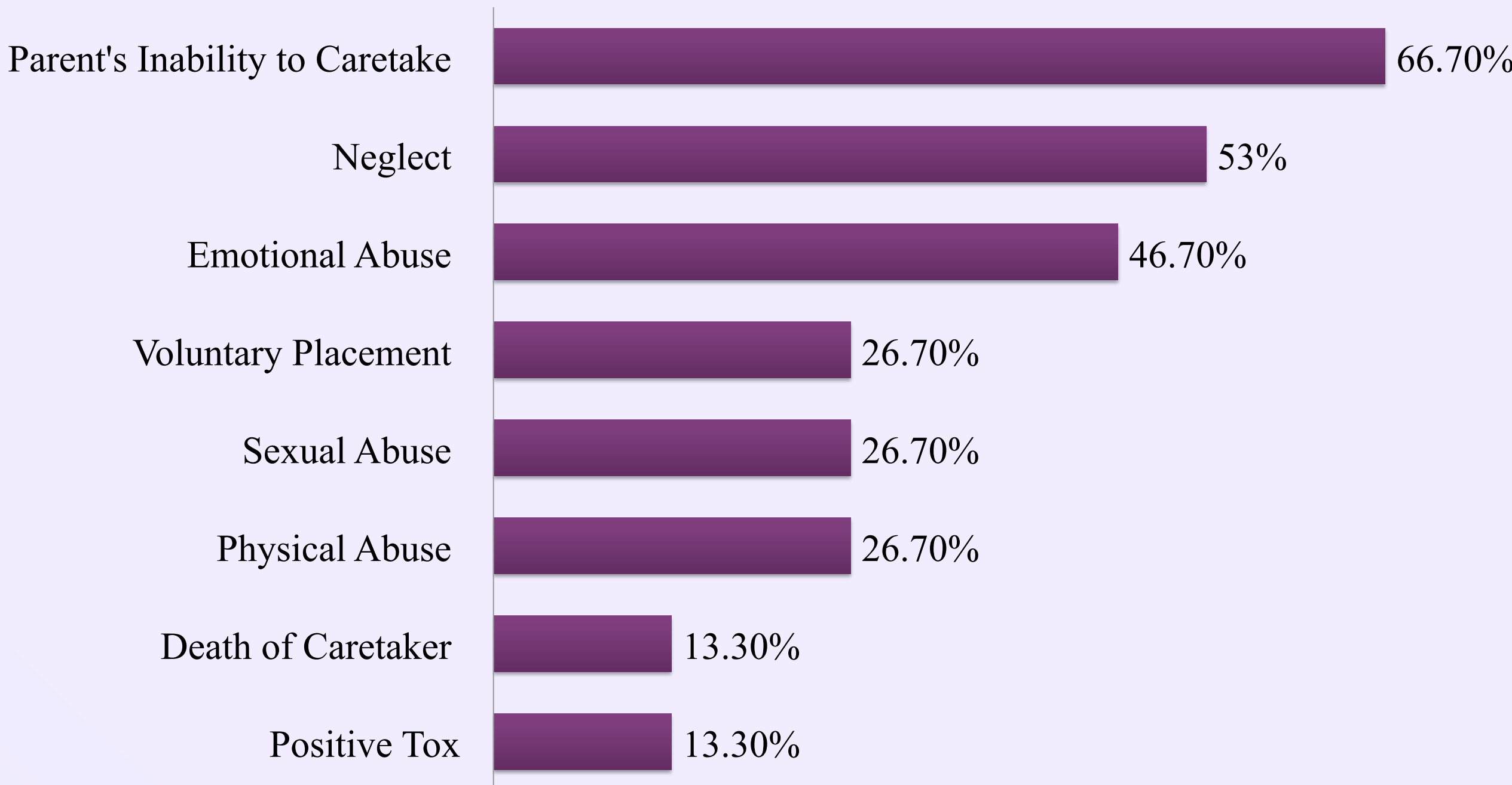
Patient Demographics

- School Aged ($M = 11.40$ years, $SD = 5.45$ years)

Patient Ethnicity



Reasons for Entry Into Foster Care

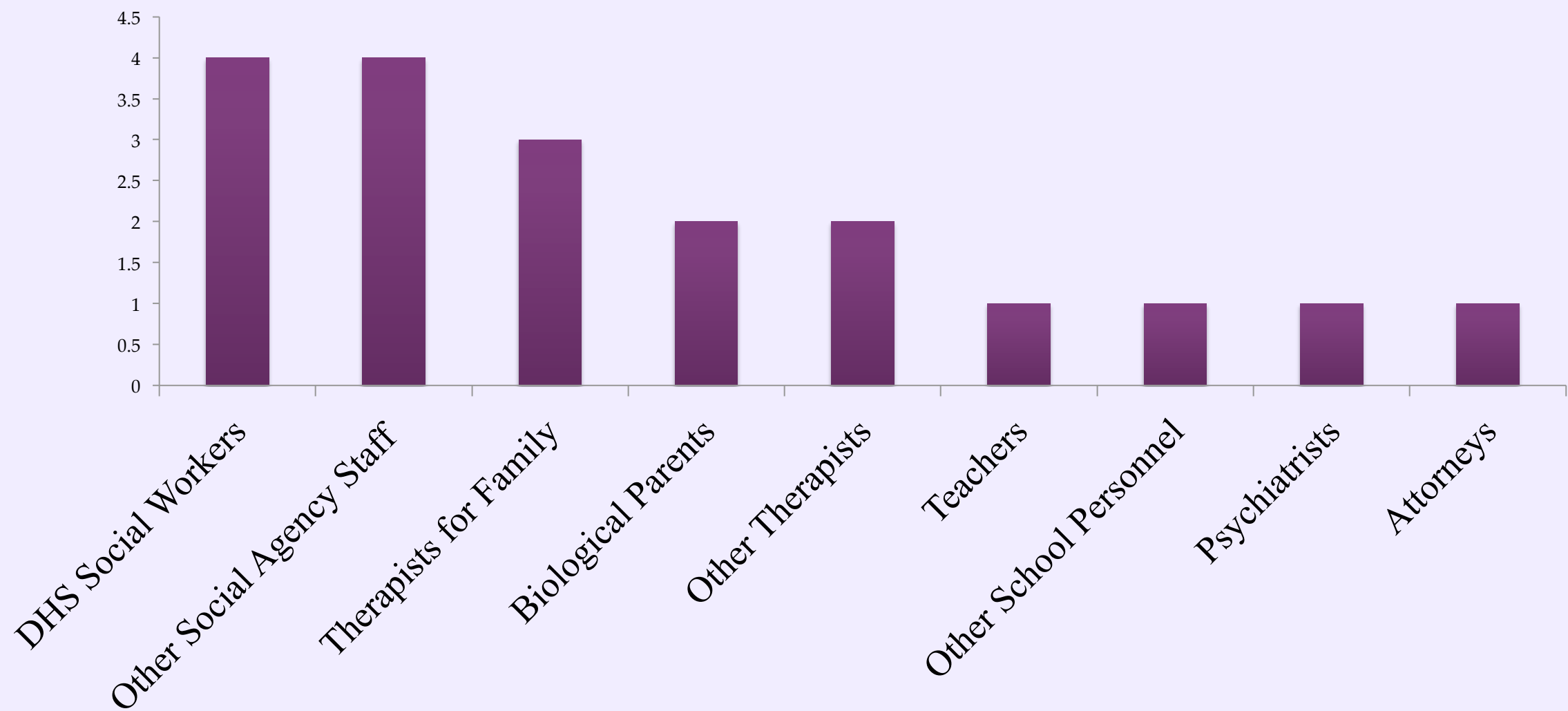


Treatment Parameters

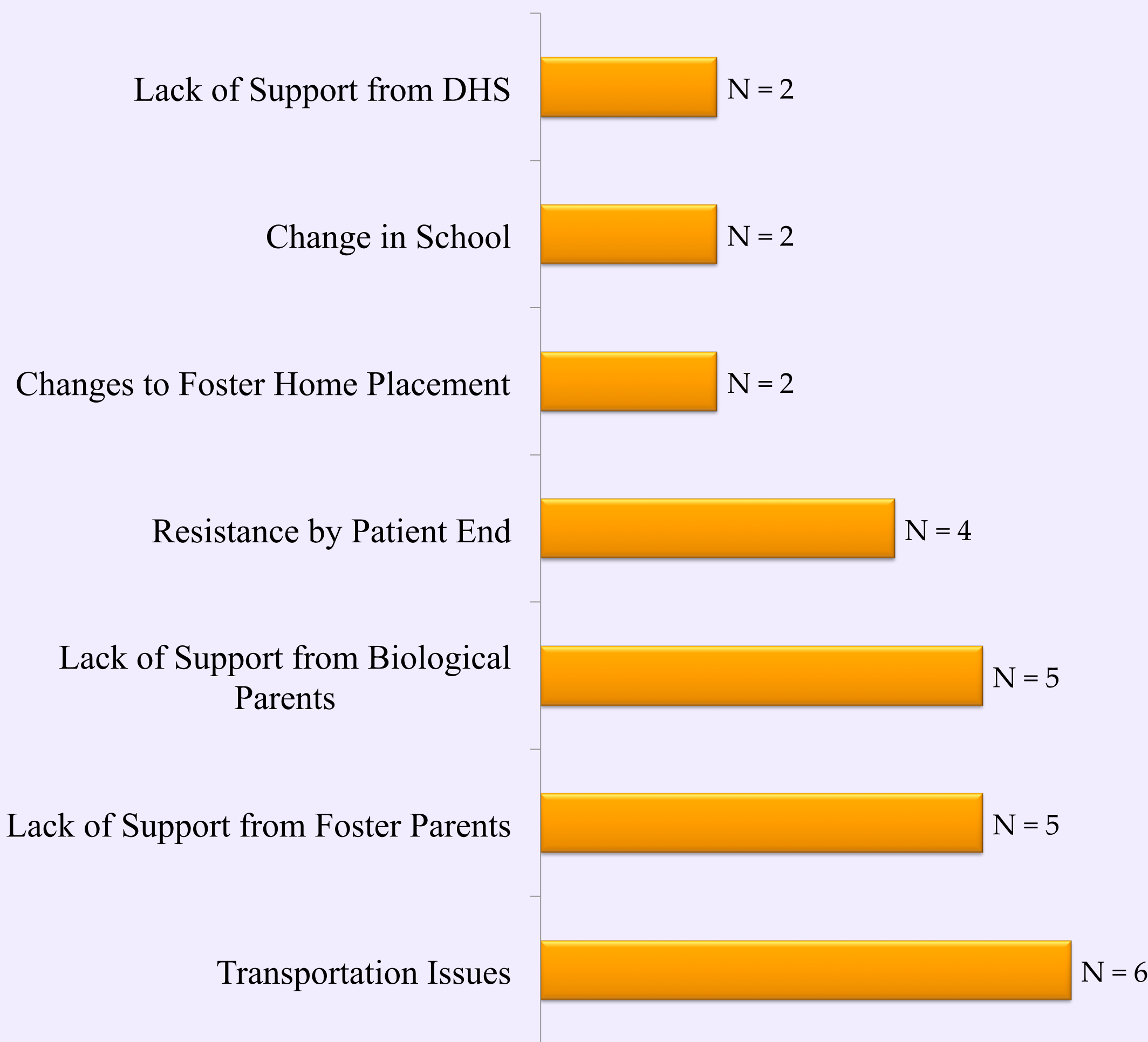
- Treatment Frequency: Once Weekly (100%)
- Mean Treatment Length: 2.39 years ($SD = 1.97$ years)

RESULTS

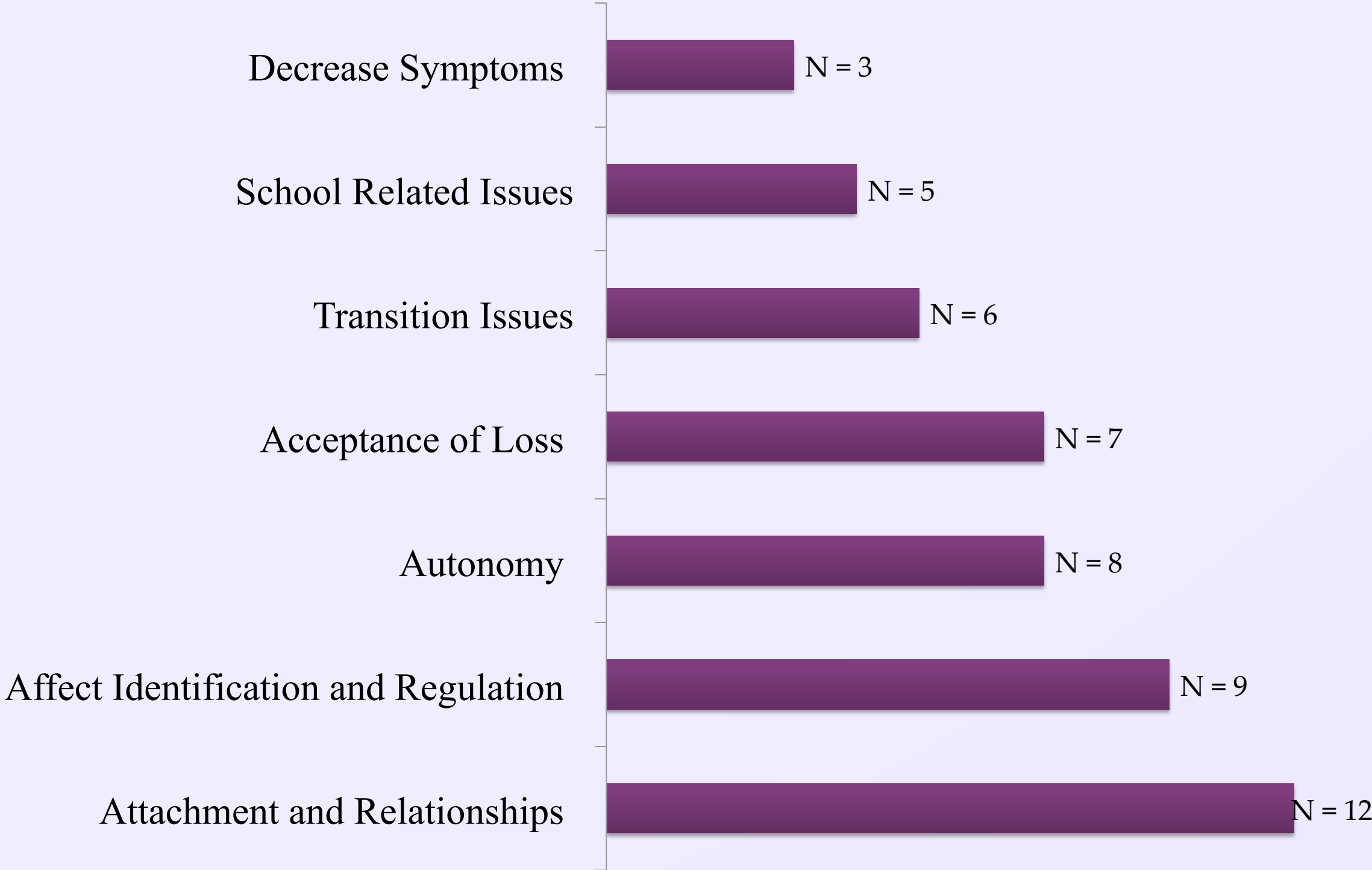
Collaborative Work



Obstacles to Treatment



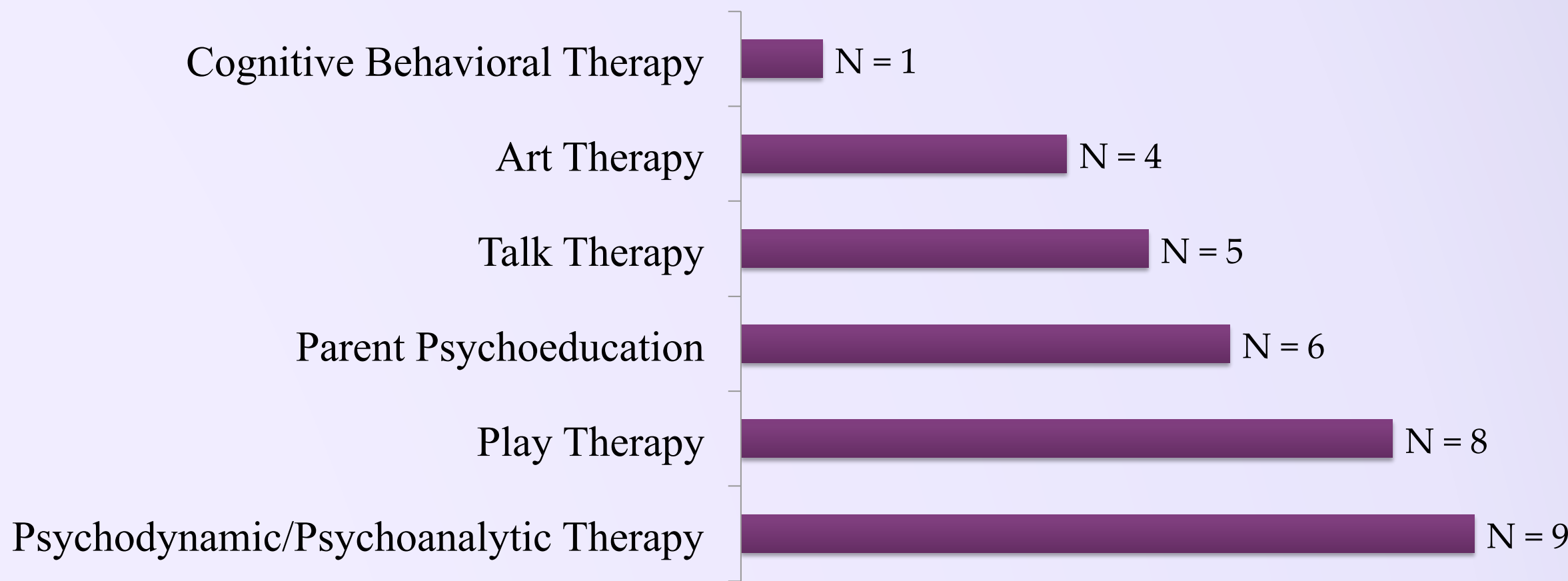
Treatment Targets



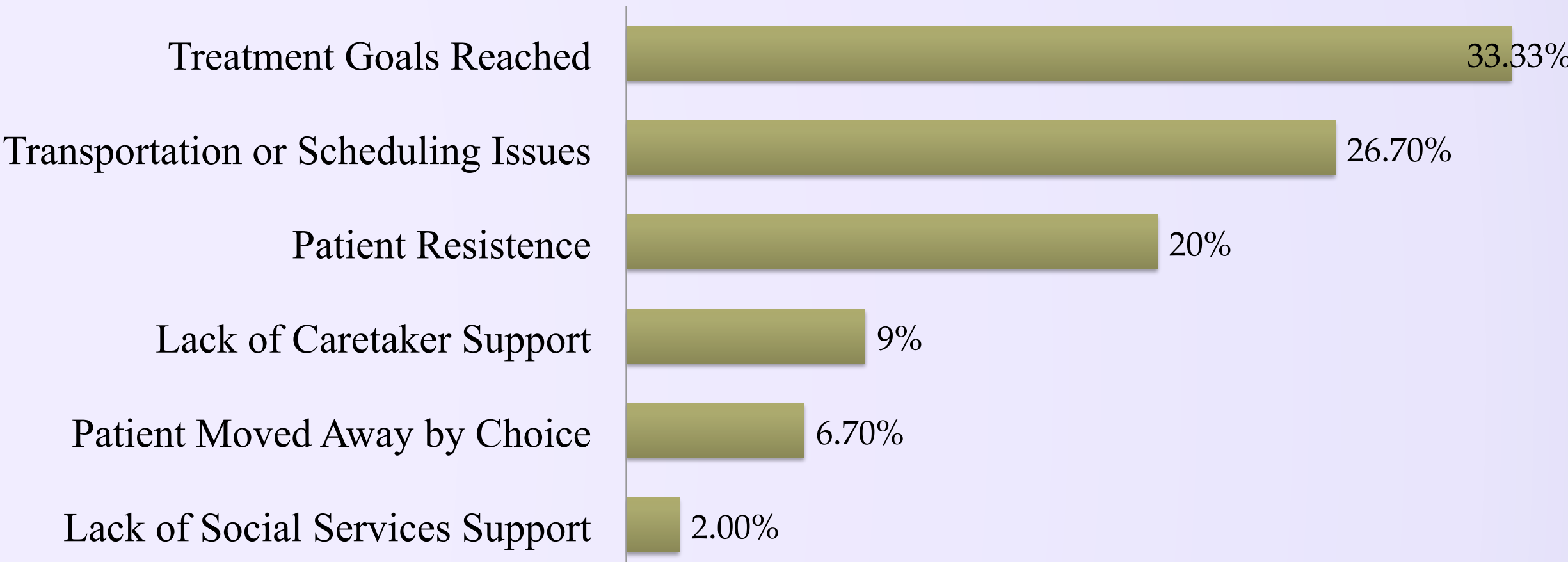
RESULTS

Nature of Treatment

Clinical Techniques



Reasons for Treatment Termination



DISCUSSION

- Consistent with their reported general approach to therapy, therapists typically employed psychodynamic and psychoanalytic techniques to target healthy attachment, emotional understanding, autonomy, and loss in their treatment with foster youth
- The last year of therapy with foster youth is characterized by obstacles both clinical and practical in nature that may contribute to a premature conclusion to treatment
- Limitations include a small sample size, reliance on therapist report, and lack of a comparison group
- Future studies should analyze the effectiveness of specific approaches in treatment of foster youth, and include reports of the foster youth patients about the nature of treatment

Contact Information

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