

Response to Reviewers' Comments

Manuscript Title: *Mental Health Service Access for Youth Aging Out of Foster Care*

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We sincerely thank the reviewers for their thoughtful and constructive feedback. We have carefully revised the manuscript to address all comments. We appreciate the reviewer's recognition of the manuscript's relevance, particularly its focus on transition-age youth, systemic barriers, and implications for equity-focused practice. The manuscript has undergone comprehensive revisions for clarity, tone, and scholarly rigor, including:

- Professional editing for grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure
- Removal and reframing of informal language (e.g., "adulthood")
- Improved consistency in terminology and tone throughout the manuscript

Abstract

- Condensed the abstract to align with journal expectations (300 words or less).
- Resolved inconsistencies by aligning terminology across sections:
 - Clarified the methodological approach consistently (removed discrepancy between "narrative review" and "machine learning/content analysis").
- Added key methodological details:
 - Final sample size (n = 13 studies)
 - Inclusion criteria (e.g., publication timeframe and study scope)

Introduction

- Revised to improve formal academic tone and eliminate informal phrasing.
- Strengthened alignment with the research purpose by:
 - Refining problem statement
 - Enhancing clarity regarding the significance of mental health service disparities among foster youth

Theoretical Framework

- Expanded discussion of Ecological Systems Theory and Trauma-Informed Care to more explicitly address:
 - Their influence on youth experiences and outcomes
 - Their role in shaping intervention strategies and service delivery
- Strengthened integration by:
 - Explicitly linking theoretical constructs to findings in the Results and Discussion sections

Methodology

- Clarified and refined the methodological description to ensure transparency and rigor:
 - Provided a consistent description of the review approach
 - Removed ambiguity regarding the use of machine learning (not used in current study but may be an implication for future research).
- Added detailed information on:
 - Inclusion and exclusion criteria
 - Screening and selection procedures
 - Coding and analytic strategies
- Enhanced reproducibility by clearly documenting the review process and decision points

Results

- Expanded beyond descriptive summaries to include deeper synthesis of findings.
- Strengthened connections between themes and the literature by:
 - Incorporating comparative insights across studies
 - Highlighting patterns related to structural, relational, and systemic barriers
- Improved clarity by linking findings to the theoretical framework

Discussion

- Substantially strengthened analytical depth by:
 - Integrating more scholarly evidence to support interpretations
 - Expanding discussion of implications for practice and policy
- Addressed limitations more explicitly, including:
 - Small sample size (n = 13 studies)
 - Potential selection bias
- Expanded future research directions, emphasizing:
 - Need for more rigorous studies in the future
 - Greater inclusion of diverse populations
 - Cross-system collaboration research

References

- Updated the reference list to ensure:
 - Inclusion of more recent empirical studies (post-2022)
 - Removal of outdated or redundant sources
- Corrected all APA formatting inconsistencies, including:
 - Author formatting
 - Elimination of duplicates

Writing Quality and Formatting

- Conducted a full manuscript edit to address:
 - Grammatical errors
 - Punctuation inconsistencies
 - Spacing and formatting issues
- Improved overall readability, coherence, and scholarly tone

Note from Author:

We have addressed reviewer comments and believe these revisions have significantly strengthened the manuscript in terms of clarity, methodological rigor, and scholarly contribution.

We appreciate the reviewer's valuable feedback and the opportunity to improve this work.