

# Early Adversity on Post-Adoption Functioning

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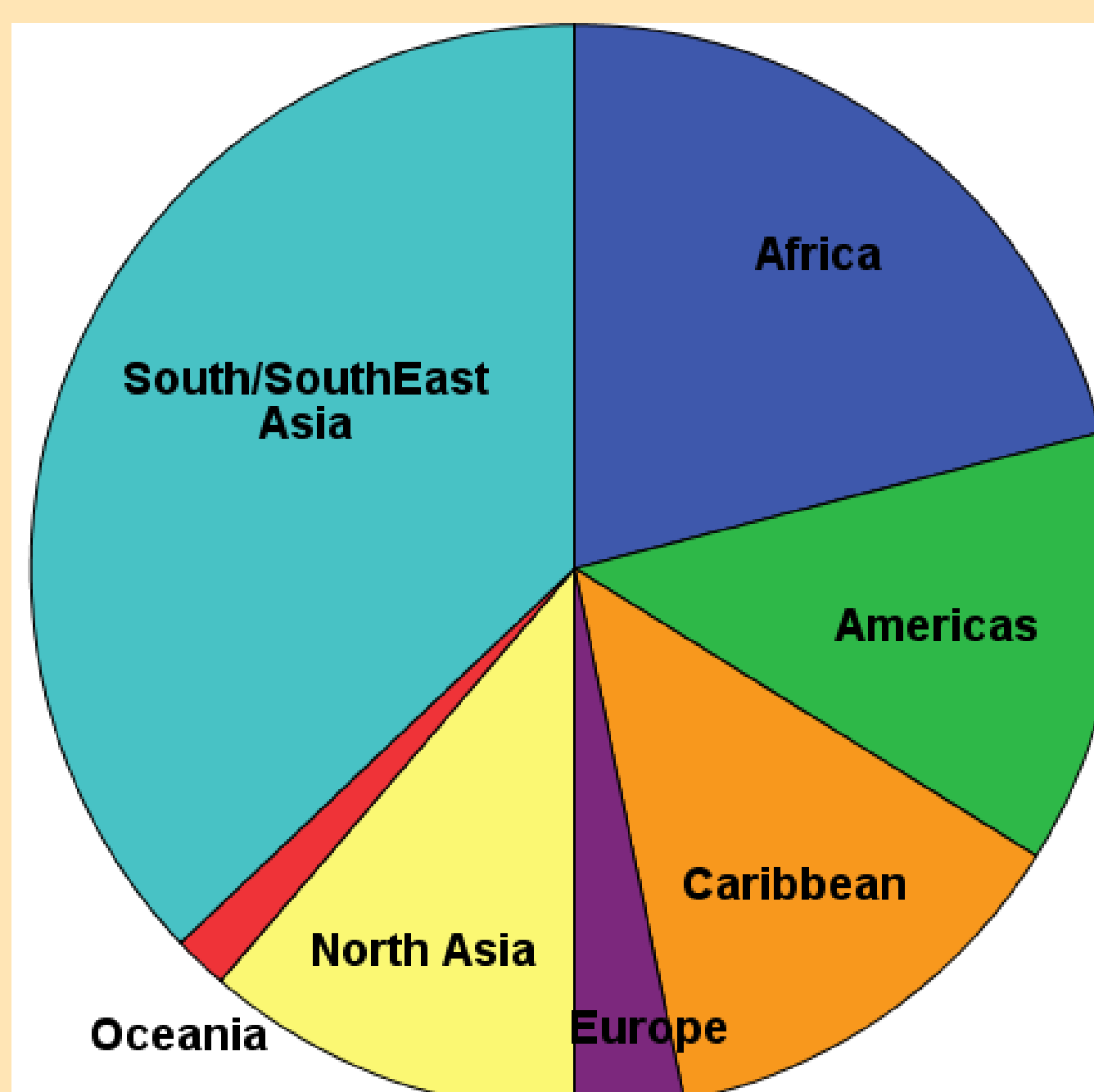
## Introduction

- The purpose of this study is to examine how early adversity impacts children's post-adoption behavioral functioning and attachment with their caregiver.
- Children who have experienced institutional care before adoption have higher rates of attention and social problems (Gunnar, et. al, 2007). Adopted children (AC) who received inconsistent or poor care have reduced development and social skills after adoption (Barcons, et al., 2012).
- Additionally, disinhibited and indiscriminate behaviors are common and pervasive issues in AC (Zeanah, 2000). These issue behaviors can manifest into Disinhibited Social Engagement Disorder (DSED) and/or Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD).
- We hypothesize that children who have had multiple transitions and more adversity prior to adoption, will be less appropriately attached to their caregiver post-adoption with higher risk of DSED or RAD.**
- AC are also at a higher risk of developing a disorganized attachment with their caregiver than non-AC (Londen, Juffer, & Marinus, 2007).
- However, the attachment and interactions AC have with their caregiver can buffer against early adversity and predict later social and cognitive development (Stams, Juffer, & Marinus, 2002).
- Lastly, we expect to see more parent concerns and behavior problems in AC who have experienced more adversity and are older in age when they come in to receive post-adoption services.**

## Methods

### Participants

- 62 Internationally Adopted Children seen at Fairview Clinics in Minneapolis
- 6 years old and under
- 23 females and 39 males
- Birth countries represented in pie graph



## Variables

### Pre-adoption history reported at the initial medical visit

- Age at adoption and age at initial visit
- Number of transitions (institutional, biological, foster care, or a mix in care)
- Adversity scale (number and severity of reports in physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect of social needs, and/or pre-birth exposure to alcohol/drugs)
- Parent concerns reported

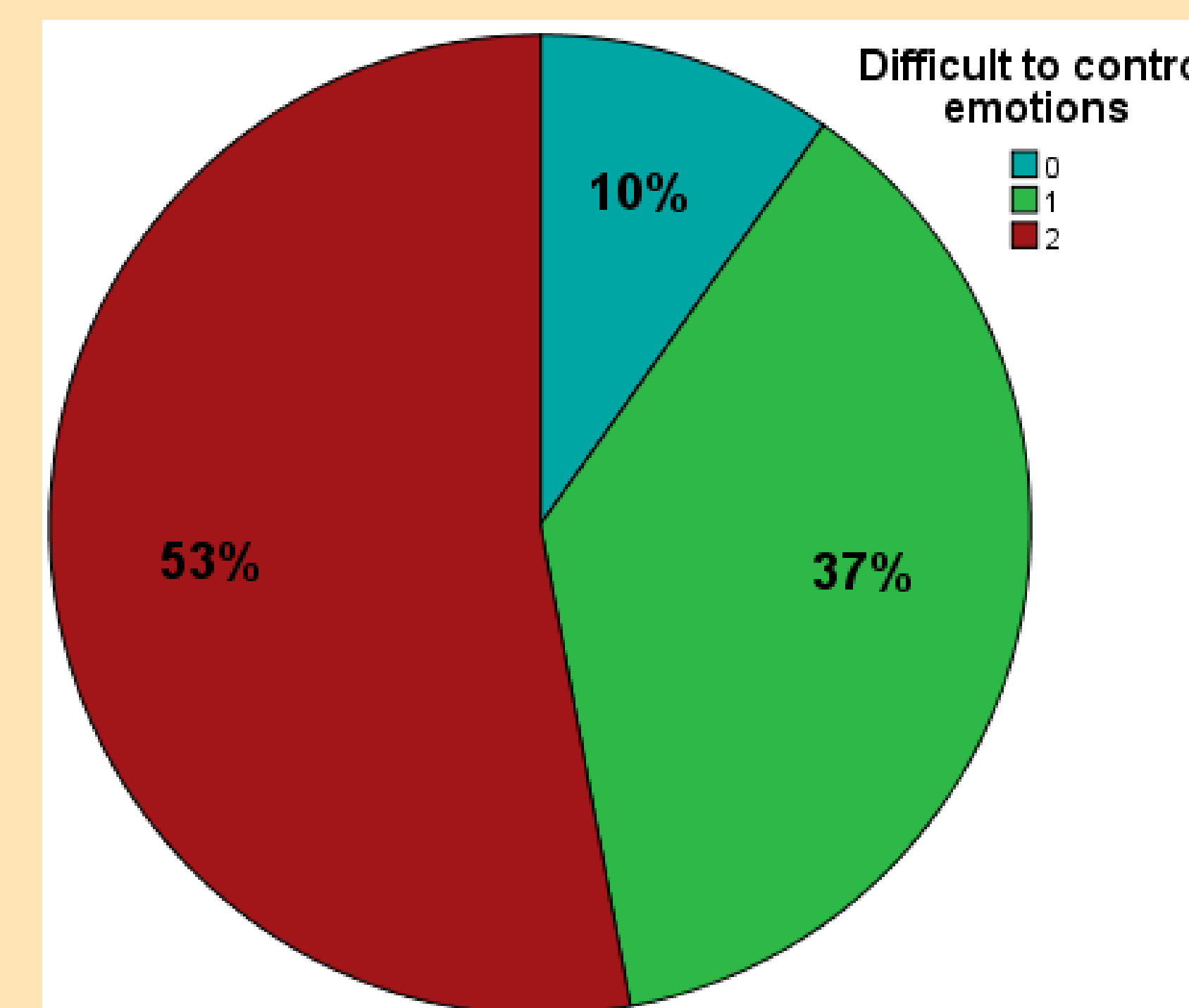
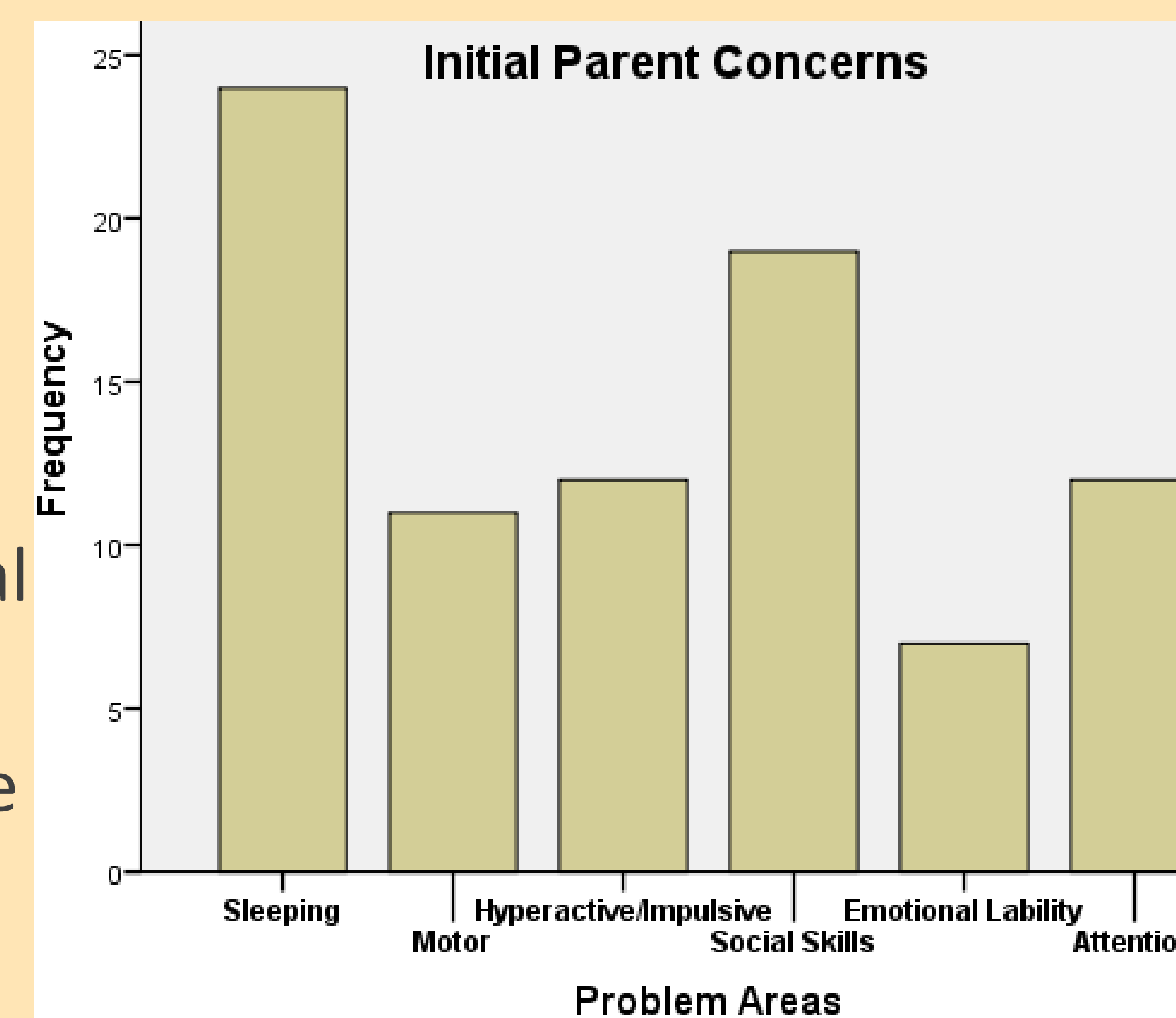
### Mental Health Assessment

- DSED and RAD problem domains from the scores in the Disturbances of Attachment Interview with the caregiver given at the mental health visit

## Analysis

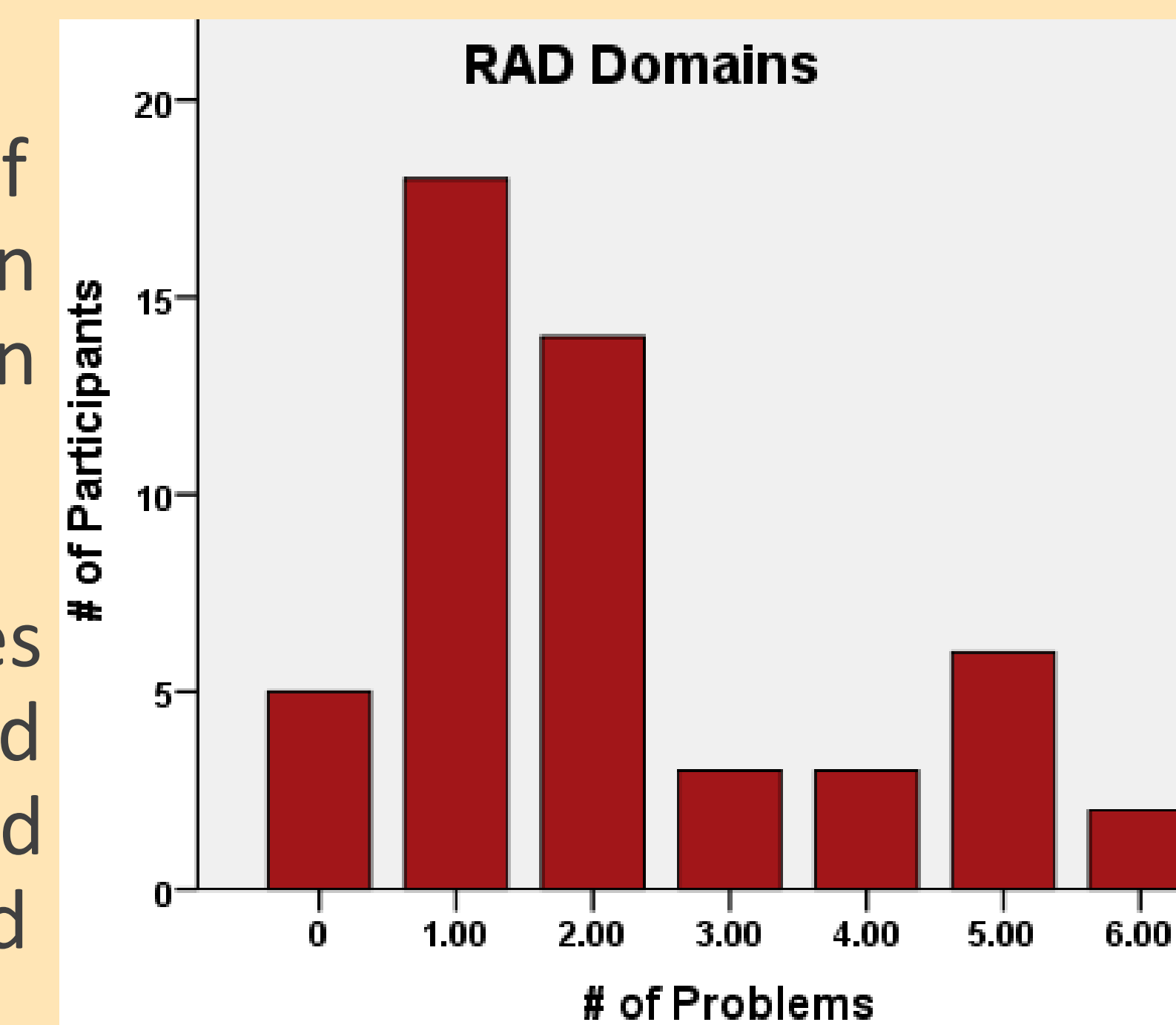
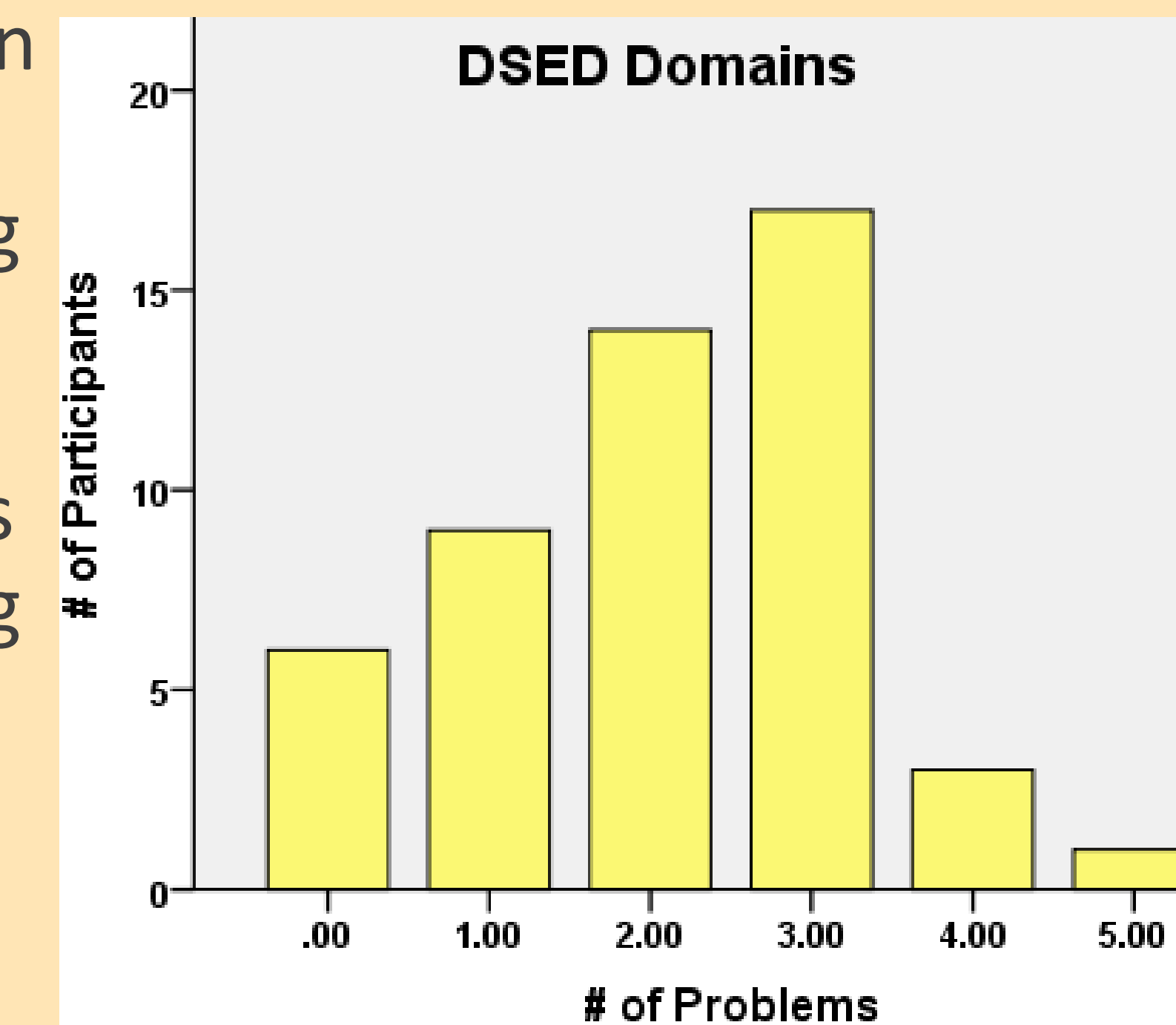
### Tests used: Bivariate correlates and linear regression

- The most common parent concern was sleep problems. Anxiety and meltdowns were the most reported emotional lability problem.
- Children with more transitions pre-adoption were reported by their caregiver to having more attention problems.
- 90% of AC had an emotional regulation issue present in the attachment with their caregiver.



## Variables

- Having more problems in DSED or RAD domains is correlated to also having more problems in the other disorder.
- 75% of AC had problems in the domain of seeking comfort from their parent.
- There were no correlations found with AC's pre-adoption history and their risk for RAD or DSED.
- However, the majority of AC displayed problems in RAD/DSED domains even though they did not receive the diagnosis.
- No significant differences between attachment and behavior problems based off of adversity scale and the age at adoption and initial visit were found.



## Discussion

- The significance of the areas where no correlations were found suggests that pre-adoption history may not be the best way to predict later functioning. This advises for more emphasis to be placed on clinical observations and questionnaires at initial medical visits of AC.
- Additionally, the factor of individual resilience could be a possible explanation for why there were no significant correlations with pre-adoption history and post-adoption functioning.
- Finally, the results of this study push for AC to come in for services within the first year of adoption. The timing of coming in before and after a year of adoption did not show any correlation with the AC's behavior problems and attachment, which suggests receiving services as early as possible.