

Introduction

Background:

- The Therapeutic Early Autism Program (TEAP) provides intensive behavioral health services to children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).¹
- TEAP aims to implement treatment as early as possible, utilizing applied behavior analysis (ABA), and works toward improving language, communication, social skills, academics, and living skills.¹

Significance:

- Caregivers of children with ASD often face challenges maintaining mental and social well-being due to the lack of support following diagnosis.^{2, 3}
- Caregivers of children with developmental disorders often face increased mental stressors compared to caregivers of typically developing children.²
- Survey results reflected that caregivers of children at TEAP have a need and want for extra support regarding their overall well-being.
- Resource libraries for caregivers, support caregiver knowledge, confidence, and capacity.²

Objectives

Stronger Together aims to provide access to resources to empower caregiver well-being, reduce caregiver burden, and assist with balancing life with a child with a developmental disorder.

- Identify resources for the autism/developmental disorder community through a multimodal (online and paper version) caregiver toolbox.
- Describe strategies to support the well-being and community building amongst caregivers of children with autism/developmental disorders.

Methods

1. Staff & Caregiver Survey

Developed and administered surveys to TEAP staff and caregivers to identify caregiver needs.

2. Topic Selection

Analyzed survey results and coordinated with our site mentor to identify key areas to address in our resource toolbox, as well as how to make it accessible and effective.

3. Develop Resource Toolbox

Compiled local resources to meet a variety of needs, creating guides to aide caregivers in building community and finding supports.

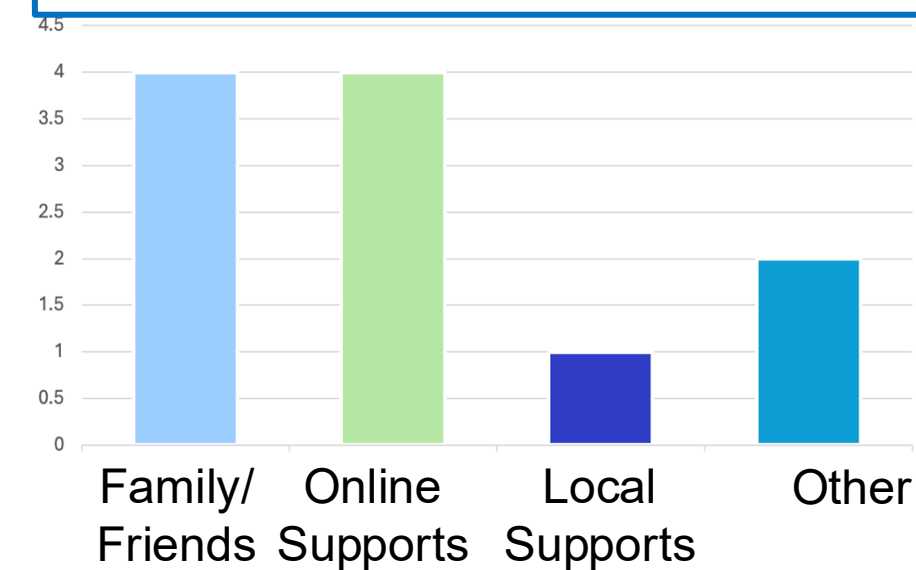
4. Disseminating

Disseminating multimodal resource toolbox, training staff on maintaining the resource, gathering feedback on its effectiveness and accessibility.

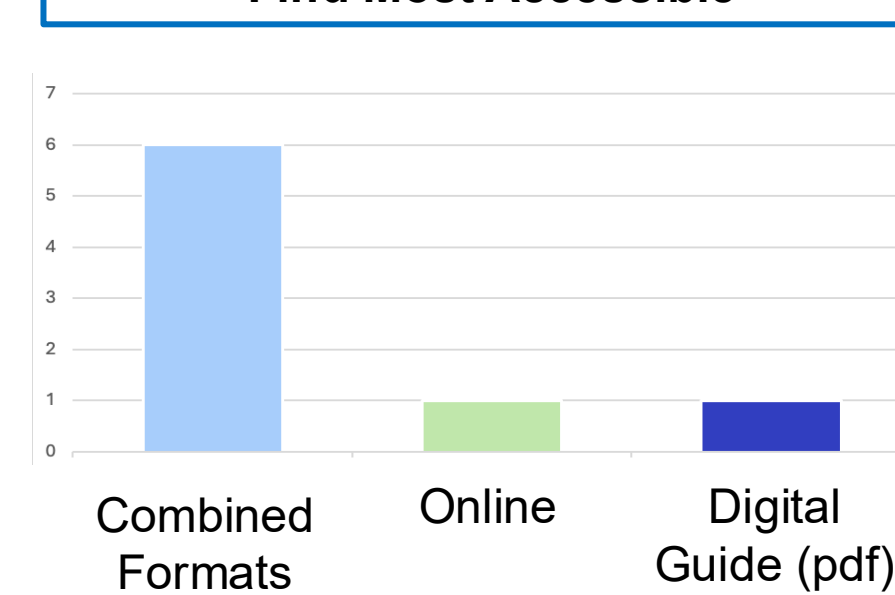
Results

Pre-survey:

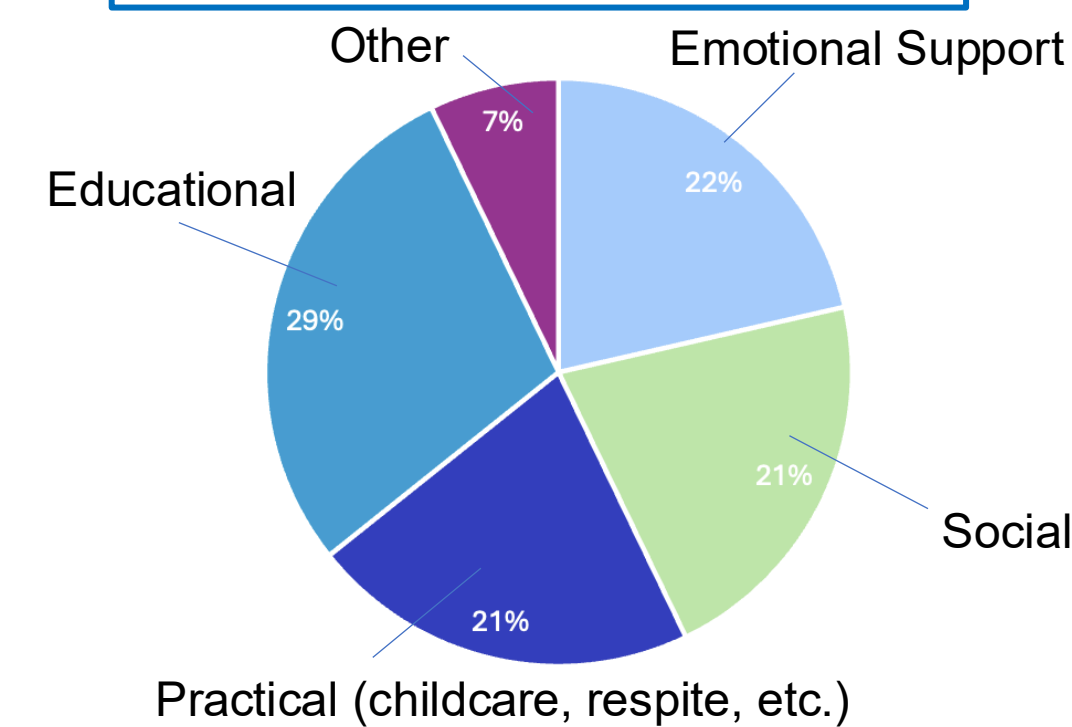
Types of Resources Caregivers Use



Resource Format Caregivers Find Most Accessible



Types of Support Caregivers Need

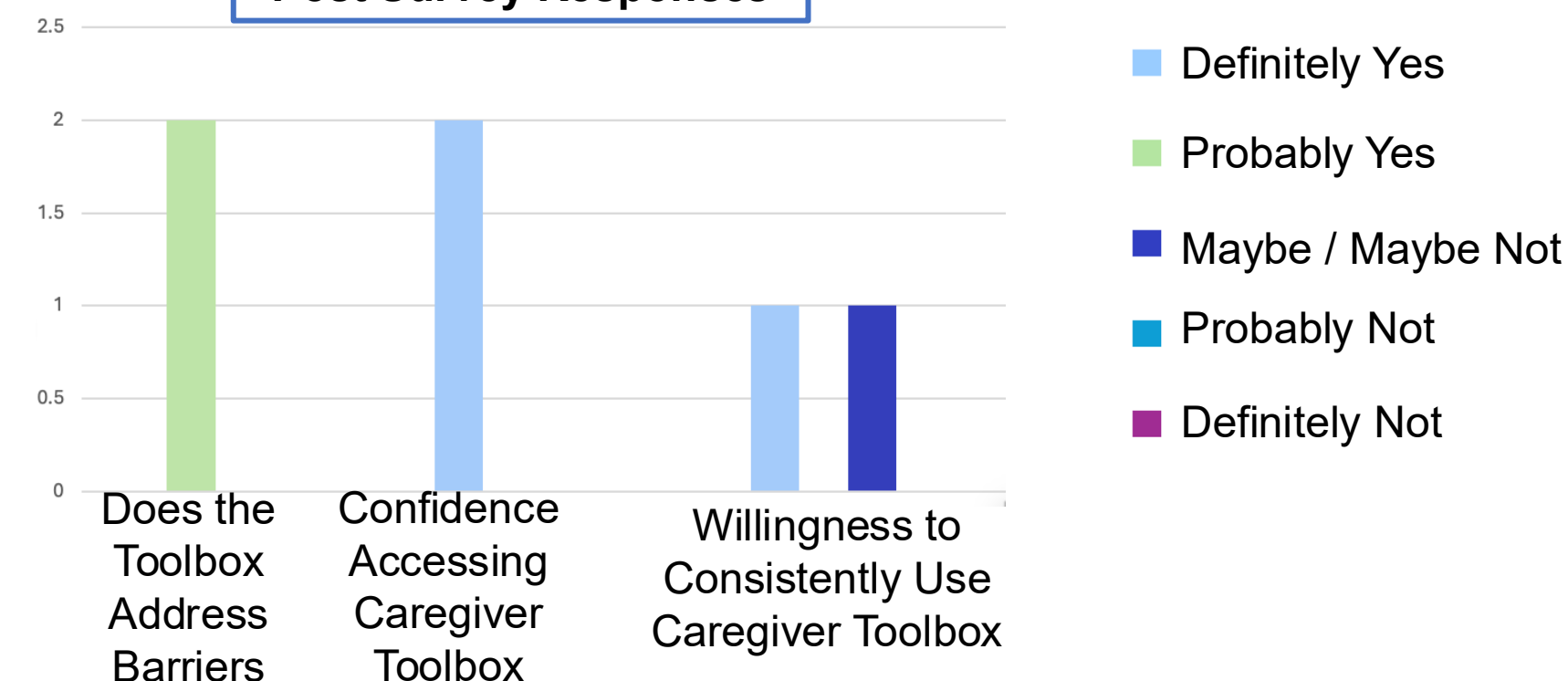


Interpretations:

- Limited utilization of local resources.
- Caregivers reported a need for educational resources.
- A desire for multiple formats was expressed.

Post-survey:

Post Survey Responses



Interpretations:

- Caregivers reported toolbox materials addressed barriers.
- Caregivers reported having confidence in accessing the resource toolbox.
- Mixed results with consistent usability.

Discussion

Major Takeaways:

- Caregiver reported underutilization of local autism resources, despite the need for support, emphasizing the need to clearly inform caregivers about these resources.
- There is a need for greater autism education and understanding via accessible resources as requested by caregivers.
- Caregivers' reported interest for a combination of formats highlights the need to deliver a multimodal resource.

Recommendations:

- Resources should be updated as needed, ensuring information remains current.
- Resource toolbox should be utilized as caregivers' needs are expressed.

Conclusion

Implications:

- Multi-modal resources, via website, paper version, and podcasts, offered to caregivers of children with developmental disorders at TEAP could help increase use of resources.^{2, 3}
- Parents have the ability to quickly access reliable education through various formats that can be updated as needed.

Limitations:

- Small pilot project, results not generalizable.
- Limited sample size, may not be representative of the population.
- Study restricted to one location, may not represent widespread demographics.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to our site mentor Ali Perryman M.A., BCBA, LBS, as well as all staff and clients at Therapeutic Early Autism Program for their support, encouragement, and participation in this project. Special thanks to Kelsey Voltz-Poremba, CScD, OTR/L for supporting this capstone experience.

References

- Therapeutic early autism program*. UPMC. (n.d.). <https://www.upmc.com/services/behavioralhealth/programs/autism/children/early-autism-program>
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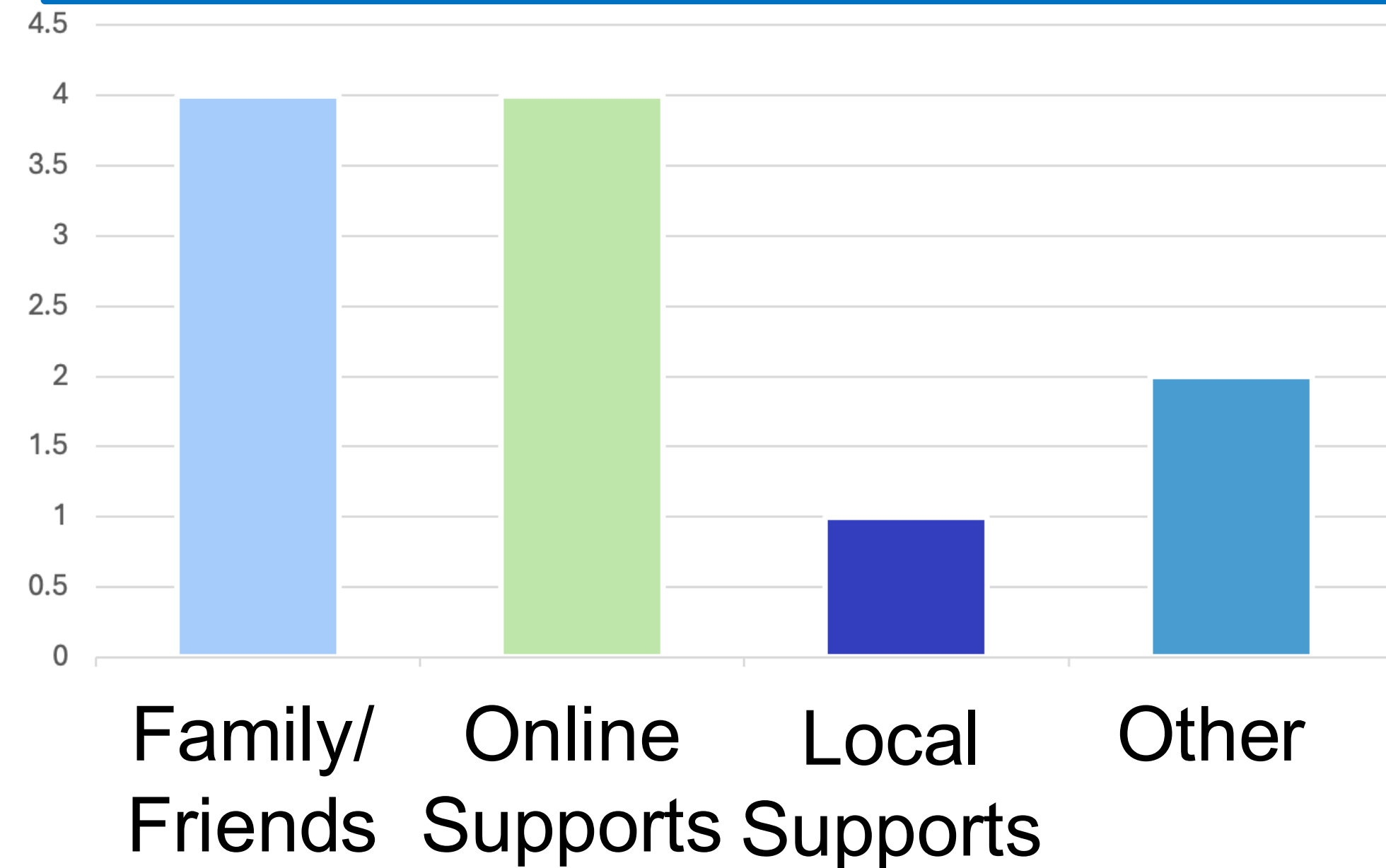
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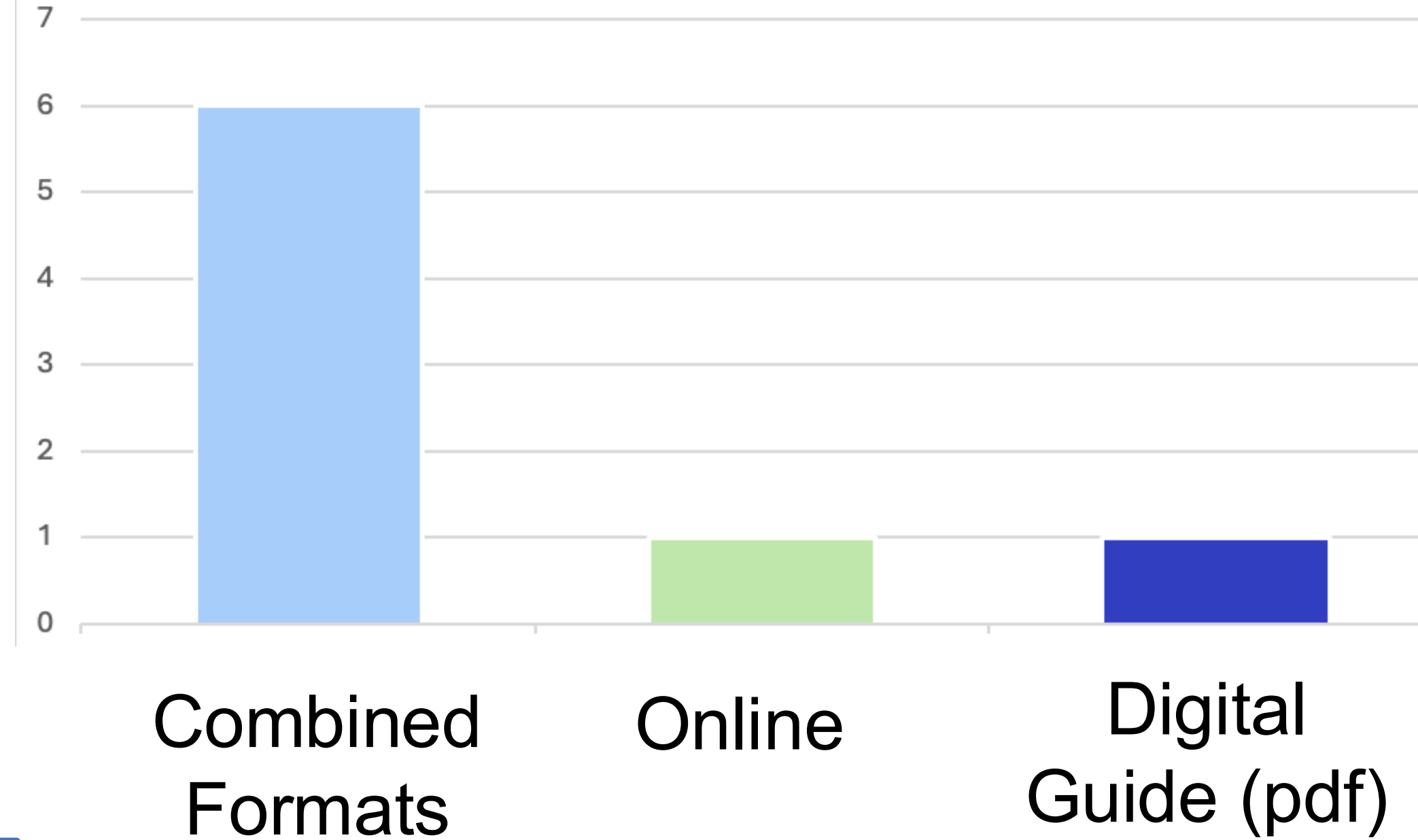
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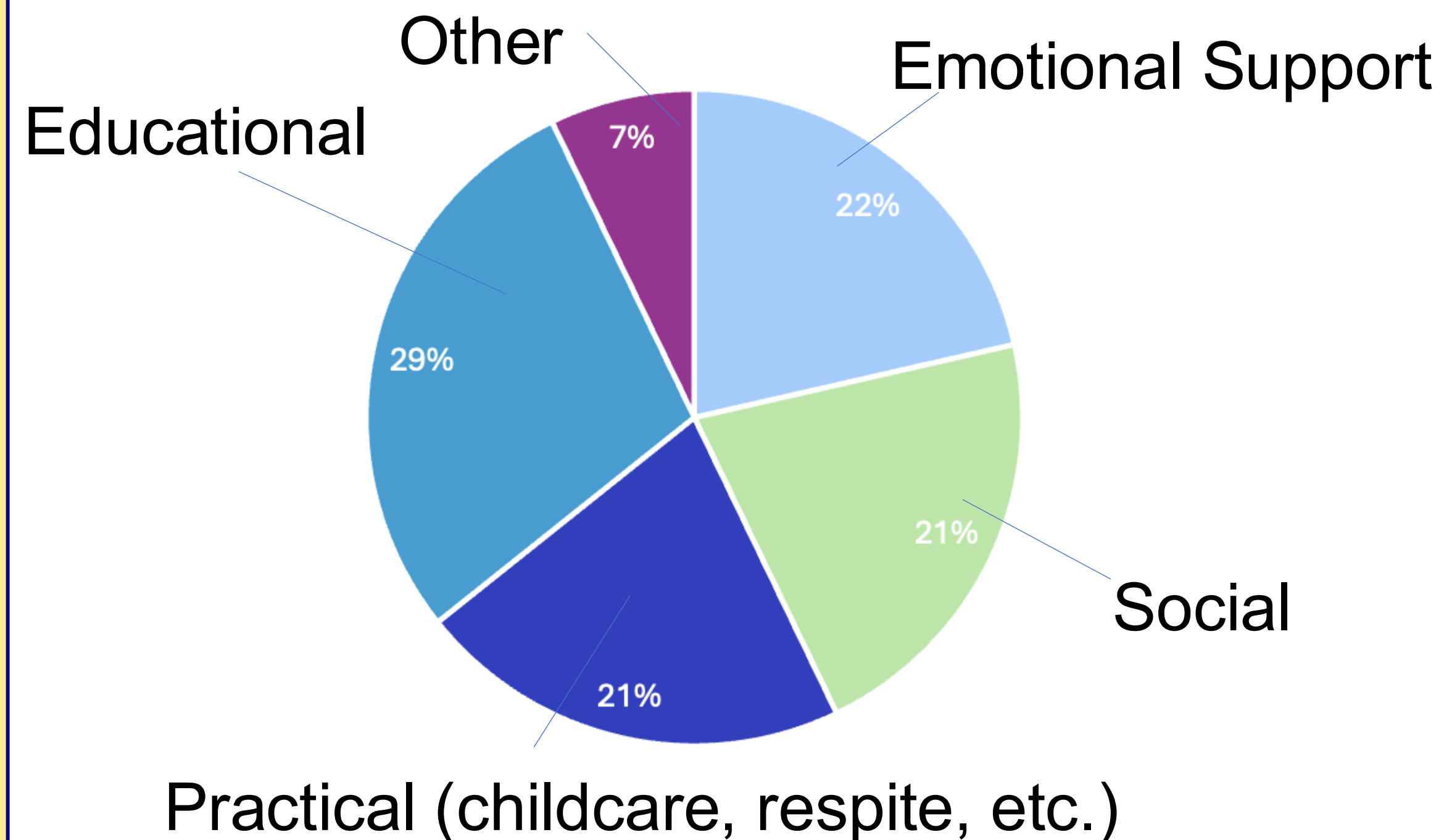
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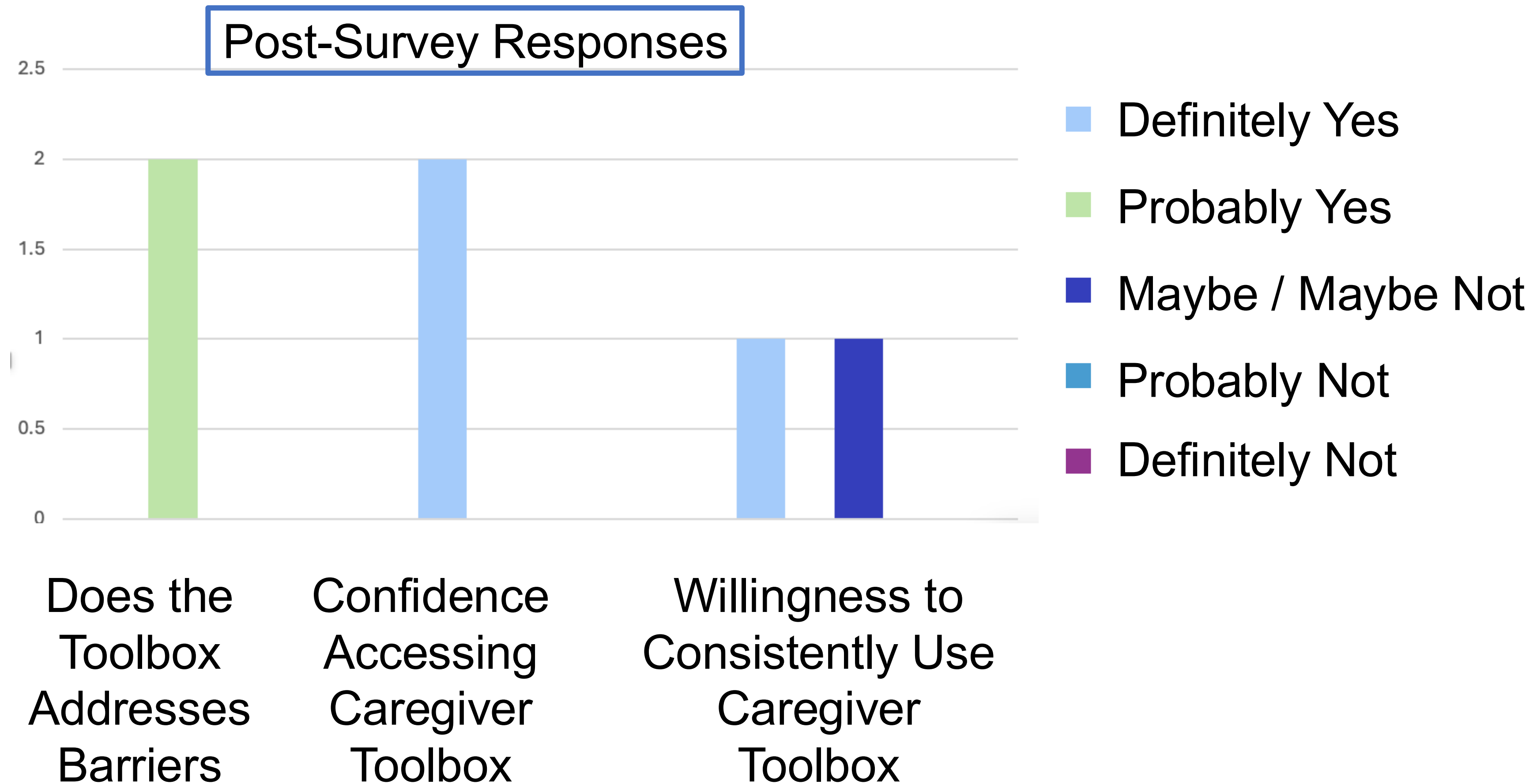


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