

Transitioning to Family Foster Care: Foster parents' psychological well-being in the first month of placement

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INTRODUCTION

- Transitions to family foster care (FFC) are a challenging process for both children and foster families
- Early transition period - foster parents must not only exhibit responsive, sensitive parenting but also navigate the complex challenges associated with foster care and the unique needs of the children in their care (Berrick & Skivenes, 2012; Lanigan & Burleson, 2017).
- Some research has suggested that this transition period can result in significant psychological distress among foster carers (Canzi et al., 2019) and diminished responsiveness during the early months post-placement (Gabler et al., 2018), but studies are scarce.

Objectives: To preliminary explore parental stress, self-efficacy, well-being and satisfaction in foster parenting of Portuguese foster parents receiving MIAF (Integrated Model of Family Foster Care) in the first month of placement, and its association with fostered children demographics and development, and foster families' demographics.

METHODS

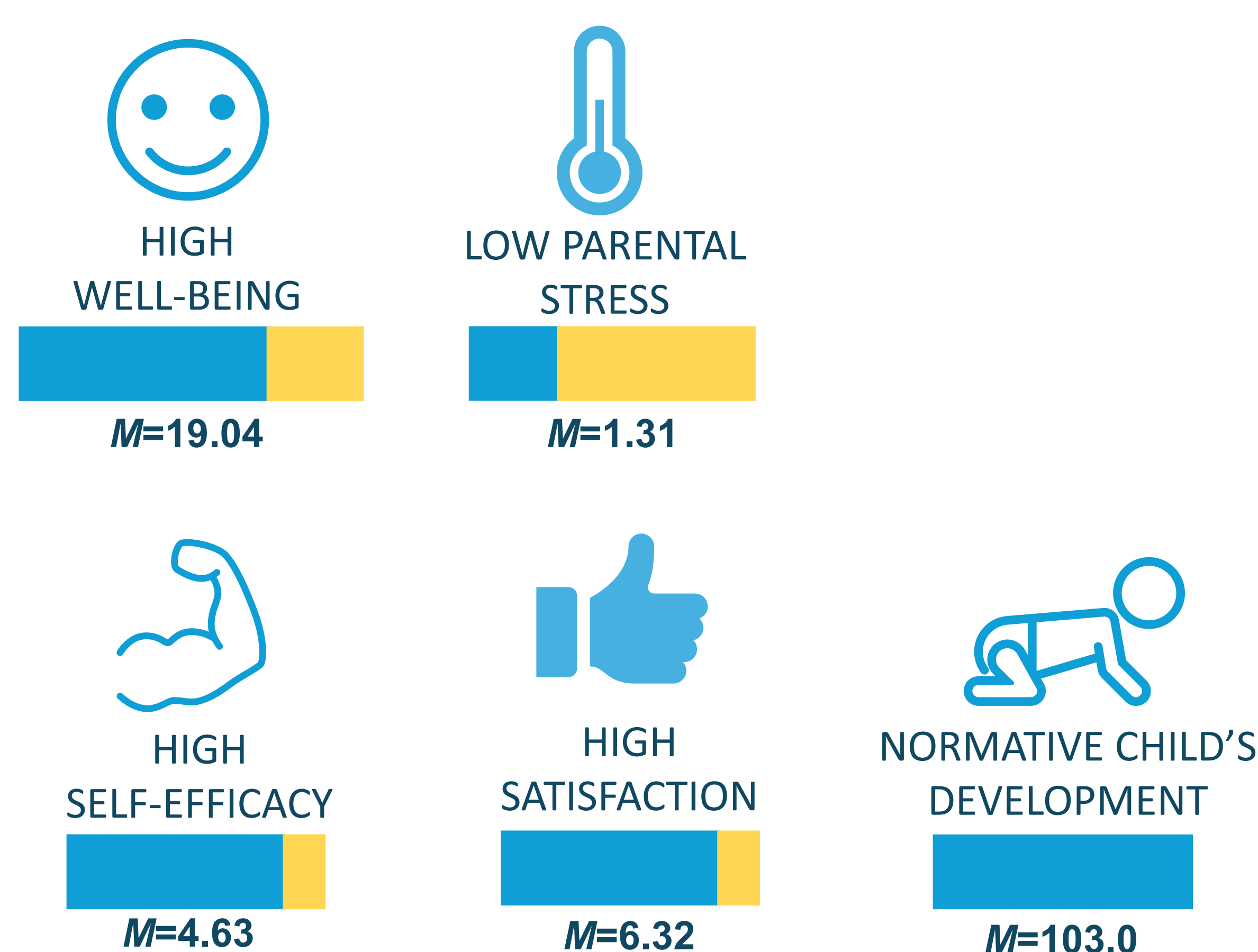
Sample: 24 foster families and their fostered children aged between 0 and 84 months ($M = 14.18$ months, $SD = 21.11$; 58.3% girls) receiving MIAF in four different FFC services in Portugal.

Measures:

- Sociodemographic questionnaire - foster caregiver's age, education level, with biological children; child's age, sex; type of placement (planned, emergency)
- *Daily Hassles Questionnaire* (Kanner et al., 1981) – parental stress
- *Me as a Parent- Short Form* (Matthews et al., 2022) – parental self-efficacy in foster care
- *Kansas Parental Satisfaction Scale* (Schumm et al., 2007) – parental satisfaction with foster care experience
- *Subjective Psychological Wellbeing-WHO-5* (Topp et al., 2015) – psychological well-being
- *Griffiths Scales of Child Development, Third Edition* (Griffiths III; Green et al., 2015)

Procedures: After one month of placement, foster families completed online questionnaires reporting sociodemographic data, parental stress, self-efficacy, satisfaction and well-being. Data regarding children's development were collected face-to-face.

RESULTS



+ Foster parents' **stress:**

- Well-being ($r_s(22) = -.477, p = .018$)
- Satisfaction ($r_s(22) = -.408, p = .048$)
- Child's development learning domain ($r_s(10) = -.587, p = .045$)

+ Foster parents' **satisfaction:**

- + Levels of self-efficacy ($r_s(22) = .566, p = .004$)
- + Well-being ($r_s(22) = .486, p = .016$)
- + Children's age ($r_s(22) = -.422, p = .040$)

→ Planned transition to FFC (vs. emergency; $U = 92.50, p = .034$)

CONCLUSIONS

- In general, foster families showed positive adaptation during the first month of child's placement
- However, child's variables and factors related to the fostering process may contribute to foster parents' stress and satisfaction
- Further research is urgently needed to identify key variables contributing to successful placements and promoting positive developmental trajectories for children and families