

## Personal Growth: From Sheltered to Self-Reliant

Leaving the CCI marked the beginning of personal growth and self-discovery. The interviewee admitted that before reintegration, they felt like “just a robot” due to the lack of emotional expression and common sense in social situations. Over time, however, they learned valuable life lessons: “I personally grew in my feelings and how to earn, how to convert your passion into a profession.”

## Social Integration: The Struggle to Connect

Social integration post-CCI remained a challenge. The interviewee shared that they struggled to trust others and make new friends: “We are currently not able

to trust random people. We chat and lose interest in people because there is no environment like before.” This sense of isolation is a common issue among care leavers, highlighting the need for better social integration support.

## Advice for Future Care Leavers

Drawing from their own experience, the interviewee offered advice to others about to embark on the same journey: “Don’t think that you are alone here, just learn how to earn and spend money wisely. How to talk to anyone wisely. Try to be smart, don’t be fooled easily. And last, don’t trust anybody in the world because in this open world, there are lots of people who are always trying to rob you.”

## Conclusion: A Path Forward

The insights shared by this care leaver paint a vivid picture of the challenges and growth experienced during reintegration. Their story highlights the importance of extended support, both emotional and practical, to help care leavers successfully transition into independent living. As they continue to navigate the complexities of life after CCI, their resilience and determination serve as a powerful reminder of the strength required to overcome such profound life changes.

These reflections underscore the need for ongoing community support for care leavers. By understanding their experiences, we can work together to create better systems that ensure their successful reintegration into society.

# Children’s Well Being In Foster Caregiving

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## Introduction

This Study gives an account of the foster care system in Rajasthan, Udaipur District and aims to explore the practice which is focused on its various positive impacts on a child’s wellbeing.

Foster care is a non-institutional child care option where children live with extended or unrelated families for temporary care. This report gives an account of a study that explores the wellbeing of children in foster care through a mixed method design, and is the first to explore the dimensions in foster caregiving in India. The research focuses on combining qualitative content analysis and quantitative

analysis of data collected from (8) foster families who have children pertaining to the age group of 4-13. It provides a comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding children’s wellbeing in foster care, the journey of a child from an institution to a family-based environment. The findings emphasize the importance of a child’s development in a family environment, and the effectiveness of foster caregiving as an alternative care.

## Background

The Juvenile Justice Act, of 2015, defines foster care as an arrangement where a child is placed in the domestic environment of a family for care and protection.

Alternative care provides protection and well-being to a child who lacks the care of a parental figure. Numerous research studies have confirmed the advantages of placing children in foster care as opposed to institutional settings. The advantages include improved

physical growth, emotional regulation, improved coping mechanisms, and a conducive environment for healthy life. The current study was conducted with the support of Foster Care Society (FCS) in Udaipur, Rajasthan.

Foster Care Society (FCS) is a nonprofit organization based in Udaipur, Rajasthan, India, and works towards providing loving foster homes for children separated or could not be placed in parental care. It solely works under the guidelines given by the Government of India under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Model Rules, 2016 (as amended in 2022), and now revised Model Foster Care Guidelines, 2024.

This qualitative study explores the benefits provided by the foster care system a crucial component for its effective operation. The results highlight the positive impact of foster care in Rajasthan, addressing the transition of children from Child Care Institutions (CCIs) to family settings, as

well as the challenges and benefits of foster caregiving.

Major reflections of the study were:

- The psychological and physiological well-being of children,
- Parenting styles of Foster Parents,
- The role of Foster Care Society and caregivers in transition to a new environment and maintaining the child's wellbeing,

Literature pertaining to the significance of the studies in this field denotes a picture that shows the detrimental effect of non-family-based care. One study<sup>[1]</sup> suggests that children receiving nonparental care have worse health outcomes, are more likely to encounter instability and disturbances in the caregiving process, and are more susceptible to other socioeconomic antecedents of poor child health (such as abuse, poverty, and neglect). It is instructive to explicitly look at the health risks associated with children living in nonparental care, given the substantial influence that childhood adversity has on health throughout life, and the fact that these risks are higher among children in nonparental care.

In addition, children who are mistreated in institutions for a prolonged period demonstrate various ill behaviors, experience multiple developmental problems, and disturbed personality traits which hamper their functionality in society.

## Conceptual Foundation

Childhood well-being is multi-dimensional, including dimensions of physical, emotional and social, mental, spiritual/cultural well-being; should focus on the immediate lives of children but also consider their future lives; and should incorporate subjective as well as objective measures.

These aspects are directly related to the involvement of parents and the FCS to manage and bring an optimal level of well-being to children who have been in institutions for a long period.

Foster caregiving in the present study is defined as "the temporary care given by foster parents and it relates to constantly providing love and care to the child in all aspects. The subjective aspect of foster caregiving and its impact on children was empirically verified from the quantitative findings of the study derived from the Parenting Style Questionnaire (PSQ)<sup>[2]</sup> administered to foster parents.

The concept of parenting styles was given by psychologist Diana Baumrind in a study where she distinguished between three main parenting philosophies: permissive, authoritative, and authoritarian.<sup>[3]</sup>

Parenting attitudes and practices - A child's growth is largely shaped by the structures that parents create about attachment, approbation, nurturing, and many other aspects. Early parenting setbacks might lead to maladaptive behaviors and an adult sense of inadequacy.

Authoritarian Parenting<sup>[4]</sup> - follow commands without question

Authoritative Parenting<sup>[5]</sup> - Setting Standards and rules with Monitoring child's behavior

Permissive Parenting<sup>[6]</sup> - Responsive not Demanding

In their quantitative study, (Kuppens & Ceulemans, 2019) examined the psychological control component that describes parental and maternal behaviors and how it affects a child's development. They found that these behaviors may have an effect on a child's behavioral patterns. Based on the reviewed literature, it appears that early intervention with an authoritarian parenting style is more effective in preventing delinquent behavior.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Methodology

The present study adopted the mixed method in Qualitative research design where the primary data was collected

through semi-structured interviews with foster parents and a parenting style questionnaire was administered to a sample of 08 foster parents to assess their parenting styles. This research design is taken to look into phenomena that parents have experienced with regard to the well-being of their foster children. Additionally, the interventions given by FCS in terms of training foster parents were also included in the study, including events conducted prior to the study.

## Findings and Discussion

The interviews conducted for the study revealed very comprehensive perspectives on the changes seen by foster parents in the child since the time of placement, the changes ranged from physical well-being to emotional well-being, and social well-being, which provide a good framework for understanding how psychosocial development<sup>[8]</sup> has been impacted because of the placement of children with foster families and the support provided by the FCS to both children and foster parents.

In the interview the accounts provided by the foster parents were observed during the family visit and while conducting the study.

The dimensions focused were:

- the physical domain,
- the mental aspect,
- emotional connectivity towards the parents and the siblings,
- sense of community and belongingness.

One expression of a foster parent given as, "when we came to take our child home, he was very weak and his appetite was very poor, with constant care and adjusting his eating routine, his weight is now proper and he eats well"

These interviews revealed the positive impact foster caregiving has on

children who are deprived of parental care and a home environment.

The quantitative portion of the study examined the parenting style of foster parents. Authoritative parenting was observed to be the most prevalent among foster parents and was regarded as one of the most effective approaches for the overall well-being of the child.

Ways Foster parents interacted with children:

- Interacting in a positive and nurturing manner,
- were able to establish boundaries and healthy limits regarding acceptable behavior,
- Clear about how disagreements should be handled.

These changes were also greatly impacted by the workshop on Positive parenting<sup>[9]</sup>, led by renowned guest and chartered psychologist Dr. Shalini Purohit in December 2023, organized by the Foster Care Society in collaboration with UNICEF. Its primary goals were to provide a caring and supportive environment for the kids in its care and to teach parents about ways to create a home that is safe and conducive to their development.

Here, the children reportedly formed a healthy emotional bond with the parents despite coming from a very traumatic background, illustrating the importance of foster care and the family environment in a child’s development regardless of the child’s circumstances.

**Phrases that gave an account of the changed behavior and life of children in foster families**

*“My life revolves around her, there is more to life now”*

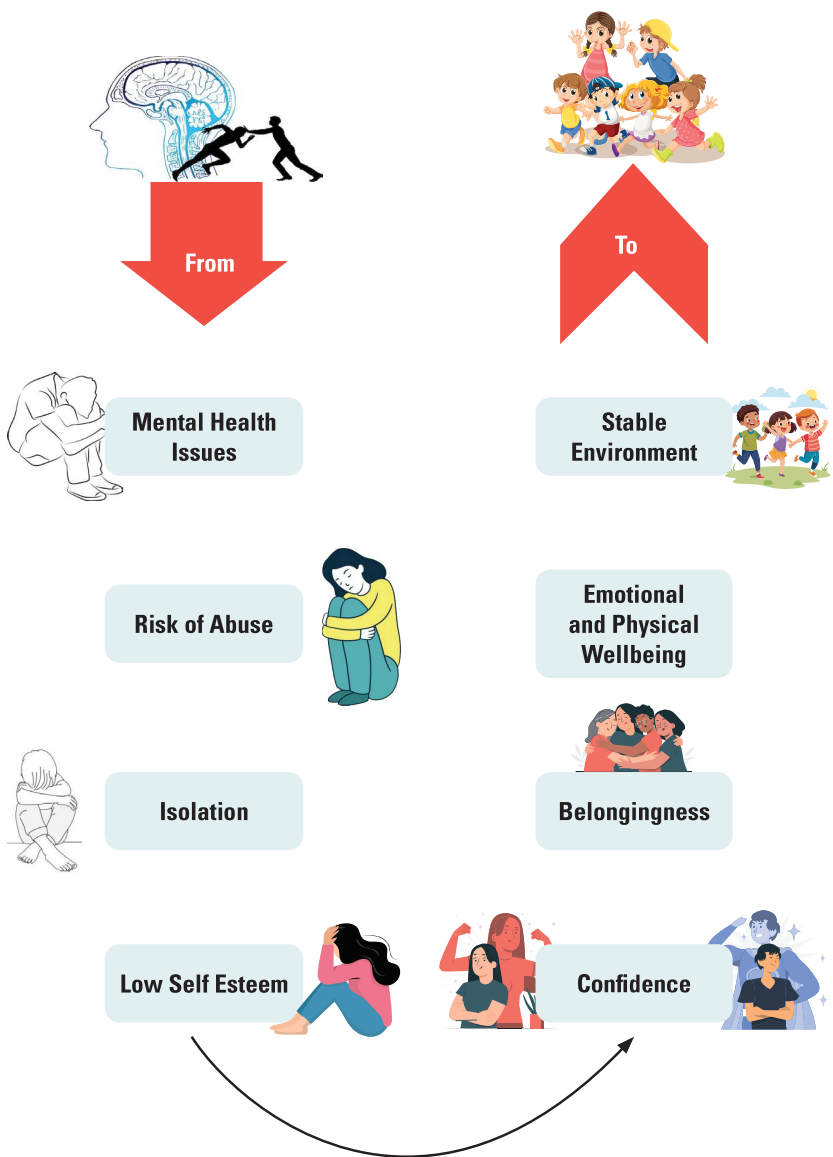
*“He (Child) interacts and gets along with others in the meetings which give him strength and he is happy there”.*

*“He has improved physically, he was very weak and malnourished,*

*now over these years his health has improved and he communicates all his problems”.* Developmentally these changes were very evidently seen in children by the members of FCS.

Currently, there are 40 foster families in Udaipur, with children aged 4 to 13. FCS makes rigorous follow-up procedures and conducts pre and post-counseling sessions to help parents and children adjust to each other and support healthy relationships. Post-sessions

equip parents to handle different stages of development and navigate changes they may face. FCS organizes various weeks and activities to connect the child and foster carers, providing knowledge on parenting, skill building, and trust activities. These meetings help foster children feel a sense of belonging and connection. The monthly and yearly activities conducted by FCS play a pivotal role in the adjustment and acceptance of family life.



## Conclusion and Recommendations

With the results presented, it is evident that a family environment is an essential aspect of a child's development. This study represents the major findings in the field of foster caregiving and is evidence of a responsible and effective functioning of the foster care system in Udaipur, Rajasthan, India, which needs more support and acknowledgment.

The testaments presented in the study confirm the impact foster caregiving, has on children and how essential is this anchor for a society to provide each child with a daily environment of love and care in their upbringing.

The stated level of wellbeing of children in different domains of life is very relevant and crucial for the study. This suggests that additional research is needed to examine the more intricate facets of child care in the foster system. Therefore, it is recommended to have an advanced longitudinal study on the subject to capture more nuanced aspects of foster care and its impact on children's well-being while highlighting its scope and applicability.

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11. Baumrind D. Child care practices anteceding three patterns of preschool behavior. *Genet Psychol Monogr*. 1967 Feb;75(1):43-88. PMID: 6032134.
12. Authoritarian parents impose strict guidelines on their kids without providing any justification, and they expect them to follow them religiously.
13. While being attentive, kind, and encouraging, the parents also impose strict boundaries on their kids. They use discussion, reasoning, and rule explanation to try to rein in children's behavior.
14. Despite having few rules and regulations, permissive parents are typically quite affectionate.
15. Sarwar, Samiullah. (2016). Influence of Parenting Style on Children's Behaviour. *Journal of Education and Educational Development*.
16. Relating to the relationship between behavioral and social factors, as well as the impact of social factors on an individual's mind or behavior.
17. A collection of parenting practices known as "positive parenting" encourage your child's ability to love, trust, explore, and learn.

## Journey of a Boy from a School Goer to Bread Earner: P.E.R. Framework of Intervention Development

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"I am not a criminal; I am just a child who is willing to learn and be successful in life."

### A Story

Nitish (name changed), A 12-year-old boy who lives with his parents and two younger siblings in a one-room house. The walls of the house are filled with the colorful imaginations of all three children. Nitish's life goal is to study hard to become a famous architect in future.

His loving personality enchants everyone he meets. The neighborhood always appreciates his positive outlook towards a fruitful future ahead. Younger siblings feel protected in his presence and respond with a smile to all his requests.

One day, while their mother was cooking and their father was getting ready for work, a few police officials came to visit them at their house. They started questioning his mother and father in a harsh tone. All the siblings saw the scenario and cringed at their brother Nitish.

As a result of the heated discussions, police officials handcuffed the father and took him away in their jeep. From the whole situation, children could only understand that the police took away their father for a crime. This sudden shift in the home atmosphere left mother and children shocked. Mother could not bear the embarrassment and hence committed suicide.

With no awareness of who to approach for psychological, social, legal, and survival support, they started finding ways to adapt and survive. Now, this marks the beginning of the child's