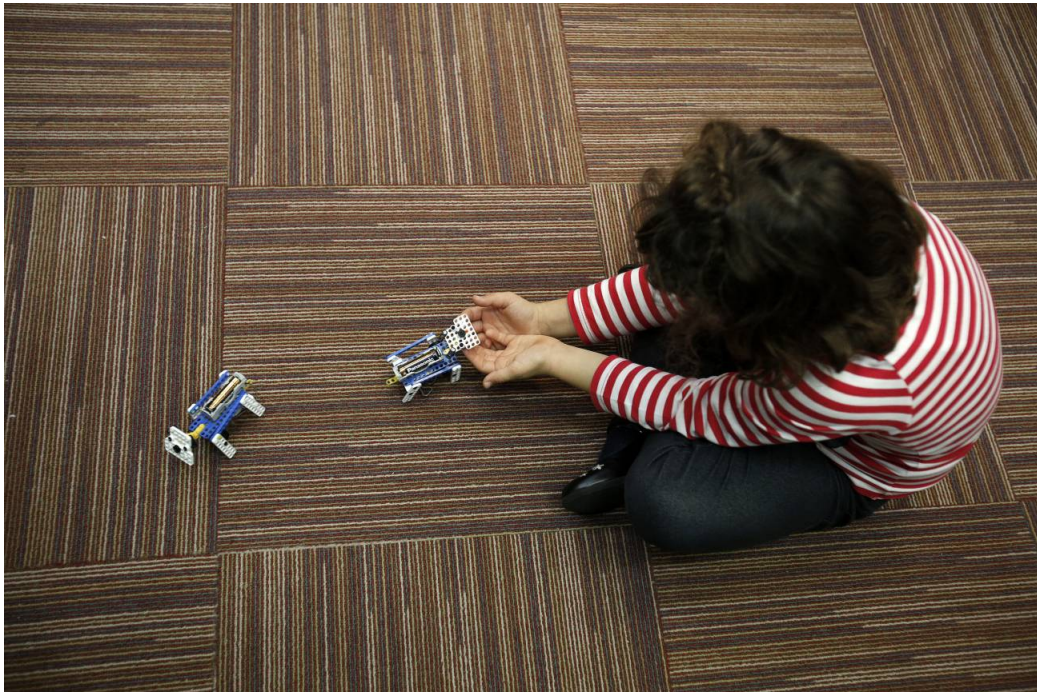


Rejection increases emotional problems in foster children

A study carried out in Spain analyses the variables involved in behavioural problems of children in foster care. The study concludes that emotional relationships and educational style are key to reducing problems with children and the strain on foster families.

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Criticism and rejection by foster carers increases emotional and behavioural problems of their foster children. / SINC

Researchers from the University of Malaga have studied how emotional relationships and educational style impact on the success of foster care. This is one of the alternatives within the child protection system to provide the most normal environment possible for a child separated from their biological family (when this is not an appropriate environment for their upbringing).

The results, published in the 'Journal of Child and Family Studies', show that these two variables in foster carers are important predictors of children's

problems within the family.

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"Criticism and rejection by foster carers increases emotional and behavioural problems of their foster children due to increased strain on the foster carer and the impact on the self-esteem of the child," explains María D. Salas, lead author of the study and scientist at the institute in Malaga, to SINC.

The study links a greater incidence of behavioural problems in foster children with various factors, such as emotional relationships within the social and family context and the educational style of foster carers, given that they are experiences that can trigger the appearance of maladaptive behaviour in the children.

For the authors, "this information could be useful in identifying and selecting foster carers with the best characteristics to carry out this task, as well as emphasise the importance of positive emotional relationships in the training and support given by welfare officers to foster carers".

The sample included 104 foster children (56 boys and 48 girls), aged 11 on average, and their foster carers (86 families). All of the foster families in Malaga, Granada and Jaen participated in the study. The information was provided through the Child Protection System of each of the provinces.

Impulsivity and lack of concentration

Bearing in mind previous research, the main objective of this study was to identify the factors relating to greater emotional and behavioural problems among children, in the context of foster care (behavioural problems, impulsivity and attention deficit).

The scientists detected several variables: older children going into foster care present more problems; children with greater self-esteem suffer from fewer complications but these can increase due to the strain on foster families.

“In terms of family strain, training programmes could be implemented to help foster carers to acquire habits to cope with the children’s behavioural problems. These programmes should include the possibility of sharing experiences with other foster carers and participate in resolving these complications,” adds Salas.

As the authors conclude, “the preparation and support of social workers to foster families is fundamental in reducing the problems of foster children and the strain on those who care for them”.

Reference:

María D. Salas; Miguel A. García-Martín; María J. Fuentes; Isabel M. Bernedo. Variables implicadas en los problemas de conducta y emocionales de los niños en acogimiento familiar. J Child Fam Stud DOI 10.1007/s10826-014-9944-1

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