

**GROUP FOSTER CARE SYSTEM:
A CASE STUDY OF HOPE COMMUNITY VILLAGE, ALAPPUZHA**

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requirements for the Masters of Social Work Degree Examination

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

This is to certify that this dissertation entitled “GROUP FOSTER CARE SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY OF HOPE COMMUNITY VILLAGE, ALAPPUZHA” is a record of genuine work done by Ms Punnya S Pradeep, fourth semester Master of Social Work student of this college under my supervision and guidance and that is hereby approved for submission.

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ABSTRACT

According to UNICEF, one of the first states in India to implement pro-poor laws and social protection schemes for girls and women living in the most underprivileged neighbourhoods is Kerala. Kerala is always recognised as a child friendly state due to its approach towards safeguarding the rights and best interest of the children. This is to ensure that all the children have an opportunity to enjoy their life and live their life to the fullest. The Juvenile Justice Act has thus brought out the role of group foster care system which is an opportunity for the Child in Need of Care and Protection a familial environment so that they can fulfil their developmental tasks and their urge for socialisation. The Group Foster Care System focus on providing an opportunity for children to be with a mother and siblings who are not directly related to the child. Even though there is no blood relation the child will benefit out of the set up if the care and protection provided is proper.

This qualitative study using interview guide and focus group discussion among the stake holders tries to understand the group foster care system followed in Hope Community Village, Alappuzha. The case study examines Hope Community Village, Alappuzha, Kerala's groundbreaking group foster care system as a transformative strategy for ensuring the wellbeing of vulnerable children. The specific research question focuses to address the process undertaken in the system, how the system is beneficial to the child and about the challenges and coping strategies they follow in the system. Addressing these questions have drawn out the findings that they follow a process which could be related to the process of social work methods like group work and case work, the beneficiality of the system is placed under the Rights of the Children as suggested by UNCRC. The major challenges they face which include funding and changing social policies. The strategies they use include managing fund of their own, taking active role in changing laws and policies, recruitment of staffs and managing to gain social acceptance to tackle these issues. The study concludes that the group foster care system of Hope Community Village could be adopted as a better way of providing care and protection to the children who are in need.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Foster care system

The State temporarily places children in foster care, also known as out-of-home care, when they are unable to reside with their family. Foster children may live with blood relatives or adoptive parents who are not connected to them. Foster care also includes placement settings such as group homes, residential care institutions, homeless shelters, and supervised independent living. In essence, children are placed in foster care when their family is in difficulty. Foster care is intended to be a temporary solution while a stable and supportive family is being built. With the goal of bettering the situation, foster care transforms people. Children should be raised in devoted, secure environments where their needs are met. The demand brought on by the millions of children stumbling through India's streets is too much for the country's foster care system to handle. Numerous problems pose a severe threat to the creation of a stronger system. To create a sufficient system, not enough money is available. Agencies complain about the lack of help from the government. It is also challenging to maintain the foster care system because there aren't many Indian families eager to adopt youngsters. The majority of foster care is given in boarding homes or orphanages, which frequently have a shortage of committed and knowledgeable professionals. Thus, there are challenges faced by the foster care institutions in India. There are certain criteria and rules in India for carrying out the foster care system or in being a foster care parent (Singh, 2022)

1.2 Children

India is a country which accommodates a large number of population due to the alarming growth of birth rates. The growing number of the population demands a growing need to satisfy. Children in India make up a substantial section of the population and are seen as the country's future. The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines that "A child is any person under the age of 18". As per the statistics the Child population (aged 0-18 years) accounts about 444 million in India. Among them a large portion of children are not confined to avail the protection of living in a family environment. Children who lack familial support, are forced into labour, are abused or trafficked, live on the streets, suffer from substance misuse, are involved in armed conflict, civil unrest, natural disasters, etc..12.66 million children were working as

children in 2001, up from 11.28 million in 1991. According to the NFHS-3 (2005–06), 11.8% of kids between the ages of 5 and 14 work, either for their own family or for someone else. 12 lakh or so kids are employed in dangerous jobs or processes that are prohibited by the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act. Crime against children increased by 52.5 % from 2012 to 2013. (Crime in India 2013 Statistics , 2013). In 2012, the NCRB reported 65,038 children missing across the nation. According to NCRB, 2,265 kidnapping and abduction cases involving children were reported to the police in 2004 and classified as instances of trafficking (Gilada, 1993). Among the total population in India the statistics proves that about 700 million population of children could be placed under the children who are in need of care and protection.

1.3. Rights of children

The UNCRC defines child rights as the minimal rights and freedoms that should be granted to all people under the age of 18, regardless of their race, colour, gender, expression of sexual orientation, language, religion, opinion, origins, level of wealth, birth status, or level of aptitude. These rights should be extended to everyone, everywhere.

The rights of a child are those as enumerated under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) including:

- protection against all forms of discrimination or punishment
- right to life
- right from birth to a name, identity and the right to acquire a nationality
- the right not to be separated from their parents against their will
- the Right to freedom of expression
- right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- right of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly
- the Right to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child

- the Right to appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance if the child is a refugee
- the Right for mentally or physically disabled children to enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community
- the Right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health
- the Right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development
- the Right to Education
- right to be protected from economic exploitation and hazardous work
- right to protection from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

The four main rights recognised by UNCRC for the children include:

The Right to Survival: includes right to life, the highest attainable standard of health, nutrition and adequate standard of living, the right to a name and nationality.

The Right to Development: includes the right to education (formal and non- formal), support for early childhood care and development and the right to leisure. Recreation and cultural activities.

The Right to Protection: includes freedom from all forms of exploitation, abuse, inhuman or degrading treatment and neglect, including the right to special protection in situations of emergency and armed conflict.

The Right to Participation: includes respect for the views of the child, freedom of expression, access to appropriate information and freedom of thought, conscience and religion (UNICEF, 1989)

In spite of these rights for the child there are certain classification in the JJ Act through which the child is ensured that their right is being safe guarded. The JJ Act is an Act to consolidate and amend the law relating to children alleged and found to be in conflict with the law and children in need of care and protection, by catering to their basic needs through proper care, protection and treatment, social reintegration, by adopting a child friendly approach in the adjudication and disposal of matters in the best interest of

children and for their rehabilitation through processes provided, and by adopting a child friendly approach. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 is repealed by the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, which went into effect on January 15, 2016.

1.4 Child in need of care and protection

According to Section 1 (14) of Juvenile Justice (Care & Protection of Children) Act 2015, a child in need of care and protection means:

- Child who is found without any home or settled place or abode and without any ostensible means of subsistence;
- who is found working in contravention of labour laws for the time being in force or is found begging, or living on the street; or
- Child who resides with a person, whether a guardian of the child or not, and such person- has injured, exploited, abused or neglected the child or has violated any other law for the time being in force meant for the protection of child; – has threatened to kill, injure, exploit or abuse the child and there is a reasonable likelihood of the threat being carried out; has killed, abused, neglected or exploited some other child or children and there is a reasonable likelihood of the child in question being killed, abused, exploited or neglected by that person; who is mentally ill or mentally or physically challenged or suffering from terminal or incurable disease, having no one to support or look after or having parents or guardians unfit to take care, if found so by the Board or the Committee; who has a parent or guardian and such parent or guardian is found to be unfit or incapacitated, by the Committee or the Board, to care for and protect the safety and well-being of the child; who does not have parents and no one is willing to take care of, or whose parents have abandoned or surrendered him; who is missing or run away child, or whose parents cannot be found after making reasonable inquiry in such manner as may be prescribed; – who has been or is being or is likely to be abused, tortured or exploited for the purpose of sexual abuse or illegal acts; who is found vulnerable and is likely to be inducted into drug abuse or trafficking; or who is being or is likely to be abused for unconscionable gain; who is victim of or affected by any armed conflict, civil unrest or natural calamity; who is at imminent risk of marriage

before attaining the age of marriage and whose parents, family members, guardian and any other persons are likely to be responsible for solemnisation of such marriage (Ministry of law and justice, 2015)

The JJ act gives the Child Care Institutions, Open Shelters, Children Homes, and Special Adoption Agencies special responsibilities with regard to children who need care and protection. Children Homes, Open Shelters, Observation Homes, Special Homes, Places of Safety, Specialised Adoption Agencies, and fit facilities are recognised under this act for providing care and protection to children needing such services are listed under the term "Child Care Institution". (Ministry of law and justice, 2015). Every district or group of districts has a Children's Home established or maintained by the State Government, either directly or through a non-profit organisation, and it is licenced as such for the placement of children in need of protection and care for their care, treatment, education, training, development, and rehabilitation. In order to temporarily receive, care for, and rehabilitate any child who is allegedly in conflict with the law while any inquiry under this Act is pending, a State Government must establish and maintain an observation home in each district or group of districts. This can be done either directly or through a non-profit organisation. Open shelter" refers to a facility for children that the State Government establishes and maintains, either independently or through a non-profit organisation, in accordance with subsection (1) of section 43, and that is registered as such. It serves as a community-based facility for children in need of residential support on a temporary basis, with the goal of preventing abuse, weaning them off of the streets, or otherwise preventing them from living there. "Specialised Adoption Agency" refers to a facility created by the State Government or by a non-profit organisation and acknowledged under section 65 for the purpose of housing orphans, abandoned children, and children who have been turned in on the Committee's order; There is also provision for After care facility which is to cater the purpose of the after-care facility is to ease the transition of youngsters between the ages of 18 and 21 who lack the means to support themselves out of an institutionalised life and into the general population. (Information Kit on Children in need of care and protection: Issues, Programmes and Services, 2023)

After CWC gets a report of a child in need of care and protection, the kid may be placed in a children's home. Within 4 months, an investigation will be started and

finished. After conducting an investigation, if CWC determines that the kid has no family or apparent support, it may permit the child to stay in the children's home or shelter home until a suitable rehabilitation facility is located for him/her or until the child reaches the age of 18. After conducting a thorough investigation into the facility's and the organization's suitability to care for the child in the manner that may be required, the Board or the Committee shall recognise a facility being operated by a Governmental organisation or a voluntary or non-governmental organisation registered under any law currently in effect as being fit to temporarily take the responsibility of a child for a specific purpose. After the investigation is complete, if it is determined that the child does not have a family or other apparent sources of support or that they continue to require care and protection, the court may issue a placement order for them, preferably in a facility that is suitable for group foster care, to remain there until suitable means of rehabilitation are identified for them or until they turn 18 years old. If it is not in the siblings' best interests to be maintained together when placing the siblings under group foster care, the Committee shall use all reasonable efforts to keep the siblings together. The Committee shall give instructions to facilities, such as Group Foster care, in whose custody the child is placed regarding the care, protection, and rehabilitation of the child. These instructions shall include directions relating to immediate shelter and services such as medical care, psychiatric and psychological support, including need-based counselling, occupational therapy, or behaviour modification therapy, skill training, legal aid, educational services, and other developmental activities, as necessary. It may be short term or long-term depending upon the need of the children. Group foster care system is a concept that is gaining a great attention due to its ability to provide temporary homes and support to children those who are left out from families due to various circumstances. Thus, it is critical in giving temporary care and assistance to children who are unable to live with their biological families due to abuse, neglect, or parental substance misuse. As every child has a right to grow in a family environment and recognising the importance of a multi - faceted institution to safe-guard the development and well-being of the children in need, foster care system came into effect. This section introduces a foster care system, its historical backdrop, and an in-depth idea about the effective functioning of a foster care. It emphasises the need of identifying and resolving the obstacles that children in foster care confront in order to promote their well-being and increase their chances of success in life.

1.5 Background of the Study

Foster care in India has a history that dates back to 1960, when the Central Government launched the first programme of its kind. In Maharashtra, the first non-institutional programme was started in 1972. The "Bal Sangopal Scheme, Non-Institutional Services" was the scheme's long overdue name change in 2005. Karnataka started a foster care programme for orphans in the late 1990s. After the earthquake in Gujarat in 2001, there were also emergency programmes in place where roughly 350 kids were rehabilitated alongside their family members and neighbours. Foster care is currently covered by the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, and the Integrated Child Protection Scheme, 2009 (ICPS). (Ministry of law and justice, 2015)

Foster parents are responsible for giving a kid in their care all the amenities of family life, nurturing them in ways that would promote their personal development and sense of self, without maintaining custody of the child's property or legal rights. On September 30, 2018, there have been an approximate 437,283 children in foster care in India (Mane, 2020). The study thus focuses in introducing a Group Foster care system carried out by Hope Community Village, Alappuzha which strives to address the problem caused by the growing number of children in need of care and protection.

Hope Community Village

John Veitch, a British businessman with long-standing ties to Alappuzha, founded Hope Community Village. He was saddened by the predicament of the underprivileged kids in this area of coastal India. He went to some orphanages run by the government. He was distressed by the institutional approach, which failed to capture the energy that was conceivable if the caring attitude had been different. John came to see that children require a family approach for their healthy development. He wanted to build families for kids who had lost their parents. Realising the need to involve the community in the caring process, he devised a programme that would provide family care for orphans and also address the needs of the neighbourhood's youngsters. The Hope Community Village was established by him in the outskirts of Alappuzha. In order to organise support and resources for the programme of Hope Community Village in Kerala, he formed Hope Community Village UK with the help of his friends back home in the UK. A charitable society under the name of Hope Community Village was registered in Kerala in 1995 (356/1995). The main goal is to provide orphans and vulnerable children

with long-term family care. There are six houses on the property, and there is 'their mother' residing in each family home with 10 children. Here, a mother is a straightforward woman who is concerned about and tends to 'her' children. Despite not having given birth to them, she loves them as if they were her own. The mother takes care of the children, cleans the house, and performs all other duties in houses. Children who have lost their parents' care and protection can receive long-term family care at Hope Community Village. Children who have lost their parental care are sent there and are given long-term care by the government's child protection agencies. They are typically single-parent kids who lack family support because their parent has remarried, is seriously ill, or is otherwise unable to care for them. All of these kids were poor and neglected, and many of them experienced abuse and exploitation. The child is placed in a family environment with children who are not related to them and non-biological parents under the group foster care system. Hope provides housing for 60 people. Under its implementation in 2016, the Juvenile Justice Act makes provisions for youngsters who need care and protection. The organisation underwent certain modifications from their own wards to adhere to the norms and regulations as proposed by the government. The agency's use of social workers in its day-to-day operations has also changed. By implementing particular procedures and strategies, the service provides group foster care for the kids. This is a thorough analysis of the agency's differences from other agencies and how it has changed over time. This is an in-depth study for arriving at a conclusion about working of Hope Community Village as a group foster care system by understanding in detail about their initiatives in protecting the rights and interest of the children in shaping better citizens of tomorrow.

1.6 Statement of the problem

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act of 2015, Section 44(1), states that "the children in need of care and protection may be placed in foster care, including group foster care for their care and protection through orders of the Committee, after following the procedure as may be prescribed in this regard, in a family which does not include the child's biological or adoptive parents or in an unrelated family recognised as suitable for the purpose." (Ministry of law and justice, 2015). The study thus helps in gaining insights into how well the system is functioning and identify areas that need improvement for ensuring the child welfare. It also has

importance in assessing the viability and effectiveness of foster care as a means of providing a safe and nurturing environment for children in need. By studying the agency's practices, policies, and outcomes, can gain insights into the strengths and challenges of running a foster care system. Even though there is a well written guideline regarding the rights of the child, but unlike many other things in our nation, it has rarely been put into practise. Due to being removed from their original family, children may feel a variety of emotions, including as sadness, loss, uncertainty, and anxiety. Children's emotional adjustment may be impacted by the standard of the group foster care setting, the interactions with carers and peers, and the accessibility of mental health help. This can improve their capacity for social interaction, social skills, and navigating social dynamics. If the system lacks in providing any of these it could impact the child's life in a negative manner. Positive cognitive outcomes are influenced by access to high-quality education, engaging learning environments, and individualised support. The lack of resources and educational disruptions, however, can make it difficult for kids to advance academically. The system thus provides a special attention so that first of these neglected rules is the right of children to live with parents or in an environment that is comparable to it, and since 2013, they have been updating what Veitch constructed in 1995 to conform to it. With the help of this study, it will be possible to identify the elements that affect the effectiveness of group foster care settings, the value of stable and encouraging surroundings, and the effects of different interventions on children's outcomes.

1.7 Significance of the study

Kerala is a state which looks forward to ensure that none of its population is left behind. It also provides extra care for the vulnerable session of people which include children, women and old age. Among them the children play a vital role because it is of very much importance to safeguard the interest and protect them from atrocities. It's the duty of the state to provide children with an atmosphere to cherish their childhood so that they can live a dignified life afterwards irrespective of their colour, sex, race, caste, class etc... For this the State has implemented various policies and programmes. Among them the concept of group foster care system is gaining much attention so as to incorporate the child in need of care and protection to a family environment where they will benefit from the care and opportunities extended to them.

The study thus focuses to know in depth about the group foster care system. This particular system is offered in three institutions in Kerala namely, SOS Thrissur, SOS Cochin and Hope Community Village, Alappuzha. SOS Childrens Village are an autonomous, non-profit organisation that works to promote the holistic development of women, children, and those from vulnerable homes. SOS Children's Villages was founded in Austria in 1949, and in India it started operating in 1964. Through their 32 SOS Children's Villages and 32 community initiatives in India, they have helped more than 25,000 children in the past 50 years. SOS India has assisted children, families, and communities in both disaster-stricken and disaster-prone areas, offering hope to families and communities that are in need. Within the 134-nation SOS International Federation, SOS India is the organisation with the greatest operation. SOS Children's Villages of India is dedicated to the welfare of orphaned and abandoned children as well as the development of families and local communities as a preventative measure in the struggle against societal neglect and abandonment. (Hope Community Village, 2023)

The following four pillars form the foundation of the organization's work:

All children have loving parents. Every child has ties to their family and develops a sense of duty and a spirit of sharing as they grow up. A location where the kid feels safe and like they belong. A setting where children are surrounded by their extended families. The homelike setting and long-term assistance provided to every child in their care up to the age of 24 are two of SOS Children's Villages' most distinctive characteristics.

The Thrissur SOS Children's Village first began operating in 1983. Over 170 children are now being cared for by 11 SOS Mothers, 2 SOS Aunts, and 6 Mother Trainees throughout 17 family homes. The Home-Based Care Programme aims to give every kid a loving home to call their own and to ensure that no child grows up alone. All required steps are taken to aid new arrivals' successful acclimatisation to their new surroundings and family members.

In 1990, the SOS Children's Village in Cochin was founded. Over 150 children are currently being cared for in the hamlet as part of its Family Based Care Programme by devoted SOS Mothers and SOS Aunts. The village is host to a wide range of events

planned for kids, mothers, and other coworkers. Festivals of enormous national and international significance are enthusiastically observed in the village, where everyone congregates and revels in good times. Excursions and picnics are also planned for kids and their families as a way to foster team spirit; this gives them a chance to connect with their families. (SOS Children's Village, India, 2023)

These two being a large expanded network of providing specialised care to children in need of care and protection is well established and is preparing the children for a better future. Hope community Village is a small organisation which has started to establish its initial phase by portraying their capacity to provide for the needy children. They also look forward to provide their maximum for the children by limiting their operations in a single institution and not for extending their area of operation. In this scenario the topic has a great relevance in identifying the driving force for an organisation that looks forward to mould the children of tomorrow.

1.8 Chapterization

The Chapterization of the research dissertation is as follows:

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

Chapter 3 – Methodology

Chapter 4 - Focus Group Discussion report

Chapter 5 – Data analysis and Interpretation

Chapter 6 – Findings and suggestions and conclusion

Bibliography

Appendix

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

A literature review is a critical and thorough overview and analysis of the body of work, which may include books, academic articles, dissertations, conference papers, etc., that is relevant to the study that has been done or the research questions that have been posed. It helps build the theoretical and conceptual foundation for the research project, give a broad review of the present state of knowledge, and spot any gaps or contradictions in the literature. Thus, this literature review offers a chance to become familiar with current information and research pertaining to children and the foster care system. This also determines the essential ideas, theories, methods, and strategies applied in prior research on the framed topic. This makes it easier for the researcher and the reader to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of earlier studies and spot any gaps that need to be filled in by future research. The articles and materials gathered are carefully studied, examined, and synthesised to draw out the most important data and ideas on the chosen subject. The literature review presents a cogent narrative of the current literature and is logically organised, highlighting the key themes, concepts, and disputes in the field.

2.2. Child in need of care and protection

The study, an analytical view of the varied factors which impact the multidimensional development of children also emphasises the need to be conscious of psycho social state of children who are in need of care and protection. It also shares that Indian society generally, not focus upon this aspect. Children are not accorded their due share in the developmental process of the country and least efforts are made to bring them to the mainstream. This has a long-standing impact on the physical, social, psychology, mental and moral development of a child. Thus, the study discusses the developmental needs of children and also the impediments presented for the reason of their being abused and neglected-orphan, abandoned, child beggars and trafficked. The study thus reaches a conclusion that the physical, social, economic and environmental factors have a significant role in the life of a child and thus there is a need to ensure that the developmental tasks at this age are successfully completed in congruence with these factors. (Mengi, 2020),

The study which focused in identifying, synthesising and analysing the available empirical research that explored children's overall experiences of child protection services. The study through systematic review and qualitative evidence synthesis of primary studies revealed that to claim the rights of children to participation and protection, they need access to clear, understandable, and thorough information about the CPS process. Since being in CPS is an emotional event for them, both physical and emotional protection are required. Children's wellbeing depends just as much on a sense of community and self-actualization as it does on access to food and shelter. Thus, the study concluded that in order to improve the short- and long-term outcomes for children involved with the CPS, this knowledge should be applied in practise. (Wilson, Hean , Vanessa , & Abebe, 2020)

The study elaborated that the foster care system as foster care is temporary alternate system conceived in place of institutionalisation of children with an aim to provide the children with a family environment, while differentiating between adoption and foster care. It has also laid down certain constraints in implementing the foster care system which include financial constraints, difficulties in monitoring, behavioural issues of children, etc... The conclusions and suggestions on this regard include an urgent need for the Government to start acting on their promised support to alternative family-based care, inclusion of voluntary organisations into the core areas of child protection in providing foster care services, need for gate keeping, monitoring and transparency of the agencies, etc... (Kumari, 2021)

The study analysed that even though there exist laws for the protection of the child a gap exists between Legislation and Policy. Further the study discussed the role of the social work profession in creating a policy framework for foster care of children and in suggesting that together, social work professionals and educators must fight to eradicate the stigma associated with foster care in India and build a strong system for children who require care. A system that will benefit children not just during their formative years but will also lay the groundwork for their future participation in improving society. Social workers must take the lead in ensuring that all children receive the status and rights they are due. Thus, the study concluded that only an integrated and indigenous social workplace practise can make this possible (Rajput, 2021)

A study of child care institutions in Kerala revealed that many of the children have managed to gain a material well-being but have failed in achieving qualities expected to be achieved by individual. The study was conducted through random sampling method 252 samples are selected out of this population. It is 75 from Boys Home 77 from Girls Home 50 from After Care Home for boys and 50 from After Care Home for Girls. Primary data were collected from important office bearers related with JJ system using Questionnaire and the officers by using Interview Schedule. The study concluded that they lack emotional strength, social commitment, lack of awareness of social problems, lack of opinion, reluctance to face public, superstitions etc. is still existing. But the child-care institutions under JJ act are trying to provide better protection and care to the vulnerable children. (Bindu, 2021)

2.3. Facilities of group foster care

A study by using the framework technique to analyse interviews with 27 young people who had left the SOS children's village in Tema, Ghana. The study's main conclusions were that young adults used a variety of resources, including the SOS mother, youth institutions, and boarding houses, to get ready for adulthood. The young people reported a variety of gaps in their preparation for exiting foster care, including those in finances, housing, and cultural competency. They also noted a variety of obstacles to their preparedness, such as a lack of assistance and direction as well as participation in future decision-making. (Manso, 2011)

The study revealed that although there are many reasons why children enter the child welfare system, they almost always do so from a place of trauma or neglect, making them a high-risk population even before they are placed outside of the home. These kids have a range of difficulties after being taken away from their homes, such as disruptions in their foster family, school, medical care and community was the findings drawn out from the study. (Lockwood, Friedman, & Christian, 2015)

The study compiles and compares characteristics of school-aged children of average intelligence and their families at the time of each child's admission to one of the three care modalities. A scoping review technique is used to (1) chart case characteristics of normally intelligent children (aged 6–12 years) placed out-of-home in one of the three main care modalities, (2) define similarities and differences among those

characteristics, (3) determine the severity of the child and family's problems, and (4) identify the existing knowledge gaps within research on this particular population. Based on the 36 studies included, there is consensus that the majority of normally intelligent children in care demonstrate severe developmental and behavioral problems. However, the severeness as well as the kinds of defining characteristics present differ among the children in foster care, family-style group care, and residential care. (Leloux H. O., Kuiper, Swaab, & Scholte, 2016)

A cross-sectional design was used and data were collected through standardized questionnaires that were completed by the caregivers, substitute caregivers, and behavioral scientists. Case file information was also used. The results showed differences between the three subgroups in all three contexts, which suggest several setting-specific guidelines to promote positive outcome. Biological parents of foster children specifically are in need of support for their individual problems. In family-style group care, specifically, help is required for attachment and trauma-related problems. Residentially placed children are in particular need of specialized care for mental illness, behavioral and school/learning problems. (Leloux O. H., Kuiper, Swaab, & Scholte, 2017)

Perceptions and motivations regarding foster care among foster parents are an area unexplored from South India is indeed an attempt to look into it. Initial assessment of the sample population was done at home and their socio-demographic data was collected. An open-ended question on what motivated them to apply for foster care was given to a sample population consisted of 36 foster parents. Analysis of sociodemographic variables showed that out of 36 foster parents, 21 was belonging to Hindu religion, 8 belonging to Islamic religion and 7 belonging to Christian religion. Most of them belongs to upper middle class and resides in semi urban regions of Kozhikode district. The major motivational themes came out in the qualitative interview were altruism, deprivation, social response, sympathy, empathy, religious beliefs, prestige of the family and a way of meeting parental needs. The present study explored motivations regarding foster care among foster parents. The study found altruism as the most important factor motivating foster care among studied population. (Jose, Mumtaz, Anjali, & Uwnais, 2018)

The objective of the systematic review on foster families gave a critical analysis of the literature by identifying the elements that contribute to the decision to start and maintain a foster family. The findings showed that motivating variables, personal and family characteristics, individual values and beliefs, social context impacts, and perceived familiarity with the child protection system all had a significant impact on one's decision to become a foster parent. The child protection system's factors, individual or family traits, foster kid features, and placement difficulties all have an impact on how long foster families stay in the system. The interaction with agencies and expert assistance stands out as the most crucial elements. Review of retention and intention factors for foster families. (Gouveia, Magalhaes, & Pinto, 2021)

2.4. Challenges of foster care

A study conducted used existing longitudinal data from 1980 through 1986 to investigate the high school and post high school experiences of a group of foster care youth and a matched group of youth living with at least one parent. The results were that the foster youth dropped out of high school at a much higher rate and were significantly less likely to have completed a GED. The foster care high school graduates received significantly less financial assistance for education from their parents or guardians. Foster youth reported more discipline problems in school and experienced more educational disruption due to changing schools. They were significantly less likely to be in a college preparatory high school track. The adults in the lives of the foster care youth were less likely to monitor homework. (Blome, 1997)

The study discusses the current status of the foster care system and finds: Agencies often have difficulty providing adequate, accessible, and appropriate services for the families in their care. Children of color, particularly African-American children, are disproportionately represented in foster care, a situation which raises questions about the equity of the foster care system and threatens the developmental progress of children of color. Foster families can find the experience overwhelming and frustrating, causing many to leave foster parenting within their first year. Organizational problems such as large caseloads, high staff turnover, and data limitations compromise efforts to adequately serve and monitor families. (Chipungu & Bent, 2004)

The study on identified that Children in long-term foster-care have experienced a range of early adversities which continue to affect their self-esteem, self-efficacy and capacity to cope with developmental challenges. Risk and protective characteristics in the foster-child, the foster- carers, the birth family and the agencies involved with the child will interact in complex ways to produce upward or downward spirals. (Schofield & Beek, 2005)

A study on comparison of Children in an SOS Village with those in conventional orphanages conducted a cross-sectional survey of 330 children, aged 4–16 years, living either in an SOS or other conventional orphanages of Karachi, and assessed their behavioral problems using strengths and difficulty questionnaire (SDQ). Behavioral problems on composite SDQ and subscales, rated by foster mothers, were compared between children in the two groups. We found a high burden of behavioral problems among children living in orphanages of Karachi, Pakistan than in SOS villages. Foster mothers' depression and child's nutritional status, which are associated with behavioral problems, can be target of interventions to reduce behavioral problems of children living in orphanages. (Lassi, Mahmud, Syed, & Janjua, 2011)

The focus was on whether small-group care in institutional settings is the exception and does offer adequate care is a key question. Small group housing is used at SOS Children's Villages in an effort to replicate a family-like environment for raising children. The scientific evidence on the links between growing up in SOS villages and child development in multiple domains is examined in a narrative and quantitative synthesis. Results showed substantial developmental delays of SOS children compared with their peers in families. Compared to children in typical institutions SOS children do better on mental health but worse on physical growth. (Van & Bakermans, 2021)

2.5 Research gap analysis

The literature review reveals there have been many studies conducted on this regard to know about the foster care system. The studies have a great significance in the life of children in need of care and protection. India's foster care system is very new and functions within a complicated sociocultural environment. Group foster care systems have been established in 3 different parts of Kerala, which include SOS Thrissur, SOS Aluva and Hope Community village, Alappuzha. SOS Childrens Village is well

established and have 56 years' experience in ensuring that the interest of the CNCP is safeguarded in all ways possible. This study explains about the group foster care system adopted by Hope Community Village in Alappuzha, which is an institution who limited there are of operation within Alappuzha as they are looking forward not to flourish their operations but to provide the best for their beneficiaries. There publicity is increasing due to its mode of working in providing a family environment for the children and has been recognised as a shelter home by the government as they are improving the lives of the CNCP in all ways possible.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the methodology adopted for the study by following a systematic and comprehensive approach in order to know in-depth about the foster care system of Hope Community Village, Alappuzha. The choice of the research methodology was depended upon the nature of the research questions framed so as to reach to a conclusion which could be relied upon. This chapter thus includes the research design, pilot study, setting of study, population, sample, tools and method of data collection. It further explains the mode through which the data will be analysed so as draw out the findings and conclude the research.

3.1. Title of the study

Group Foster Care System: A Case study of Hope Community Village, Alappuzha

3.2. Research Questions

3.2.1 General research question

- what is Group foster care system in Hope Community Village?

3.2.2 Specific research questions

- what is the process they follow in the system?
- how is the system beneficial to the child?
- what are the challenges faced by the system?
- what are the strategies used by the system to tackle the challenges?

3.3. Definition of concepts

3.3.1 Group foster care

Theoretical definition: “Placement of a child in an intimate or homelike setting in which up to eight related or unrelated children live for a varying period of time with a single set of house parents or with a rotating staff of trained care givers.” (Kerala state welfare council, 2017)

Operational definition: A family-based care provided by Hope Community Village for the children who are in need, which contributes to their overall development.

3.3.2. System

Theoretical definition: “An association of elements or components, organised for a common goal” (Solanki, 2021)

Operational definition: The functioning of the Hope Village Community, its organisational structure and facilities for children

3.3.3. Process

Theoretical definition: “A process is a series of steps and decisions involved in the way work is completed” (Baird, 2021)

Operational definition: The steps undertaken by Hope Community Village to admit a child and ensuring their care after admission.

3.4. Research Approach

Qualitative approach is employed in the research and case study was used to gain an in-depth understanding about the research focus, which is an organisation namely Hope Community Village, Alappuzha. Thus, the approach adopted here is based on the definition that qualitative research as an iterative process in which improved understanding to the scientific community is achieved by making new significant distinctions resulting from getting closer to the phenomenon studied. (Aspers & Corte, 2019)

3.5. Research design

This reveals the blue-print of the overall strategies being carried out to integrate all the relevant area which have contributed to the research as a whole by helping in data collection and its analysis. A single case study research design was adopted to place a special focus to the single unit of group foster care system- Hope Community Village as it will provide a basis for data in-depth. Thus, the research design helped in preventing frustration by providing the glue that holds the research project together through a structure plan that show how all of the major parts of the research project the samples, measures, programs, and methods of assignment work together to try to address the central research questions (Jongbo, 2014).

3.6. Pilot study

Before the primary research study, a pilot study is conducted as a small-scale exploratory examination. It acted as a trial run for the research techniques, tools for gathering data, and procedures so as to apply in the investigation. The major goal was to find and address any potential problems or difficulties that might occur during the main study so that the required corrections and improvements could be made. The pilot study was carried out to check the feasibility of the tool through telephonic interview of the Administrator of Hope Community Village, Alappuzha which helped in predicting the appropriate tools to be employed and the sample size were determined. This catered to bring modifications to the questions framed so that the respondents shall be direct to provide appropriate opinion regarding the system and the activities carried out by them. The prior engagement with the organisation as a part of block placement which as course requirement of awarding degree in Master of Social Work has also served in providing an overall idea about conducting the research.

3.7. Research Site

This explains the location where the study is carried out. The selection of the research location is essential because it has a direct bearing on the method of data collecting, the applicability of the results, and the overall validity and dependability of the study. The researcher decided to conduct study in Hope Community Village, Alappuzha to gain an in-depth understanding about the group foster care system because it guarantees to provide an environment that is conducive to collecting accurate and relevant data about the organisation and the system. The researcher took into consideration a number of factors, including the research objectives, the target population, the research design, and the availability of resources.

3.8. Sampling

A non-probability sampling technique was used so that the selection of participants is based on criteria other than random selection which relied on subjective judgment and convenience. Among non-probability sampling, purposive sampling method was selected as the participants are chosen deliberately based on specific criteria or characteristics relevant to the research objectives which the researcher has identified through the previous field level engagement over a period of one month.

Hope Community Village is an organisation which comprises of six houses with a total of six mothers and sixty children who are allotted in such a way that each house has a total of ten children and 1 Mother who will take care of their children. From this the researcher selected twenty children who were able to provide the information that could cater to the actual need of the researcher. The Mothers from six houses were also the participants who helped to share information so as to know in depth about the foster care system in Hope Community Village, Alappuzha. Researcher had further selected staffs who possess certain expertise, experiences, or characteristics that are crucial to the study and can share valuable information to satisfy the need of the research. The administrative staffs of the organisation helped to gather information in relation to the specific research questions of the study. These selected samples have added on to the effectiveness of the study.

3.9. Sample size

For the present study which focused on revealing the group foster system a single sample was selected thus ensuring that the research focus is limited to the organisation - Hope Community Village. From Hope Community Village out of the 60 children, the selected 20 Children were divided on the basis of their age, thus they were grouped as childhood group which comprised of children who belonged to an age group from 9-11. The Adolescent girls' group comprised of children who belonged to an age group of 12-17. Thus, a total of 9 and 11 participants were there in childhood and adolescent girls' group respectively. The FGD group of Hope Mothers comprised of 6 participants who actively took part in the process. Three staffs were selected from the administrative wing which include the Director of the agency, the Administrator and the Assistant Director. Thus, it contributed to the overall research in analysing the group foster care of Hope Community Village in an in-depth manner.

3.10. Sources of data

3.10.1. Primary data

Primary data is the original material that was gathered directly from the source for this particular research study in order to compile first-hand data that is tailored to the study's requirements. It was thus collected from the children who were the beneficiaries out of the group foster care system in Hope Community Village. The participants were divided

based on their age so that two groups were created as childhood group and adolescent girls' group who were subjected to separate Focus Group Discussions. The Hope Mothers were also the primary data source who provided information through Focus Group Discussion. The staffs of the organisation underwent Key informants' interview which added on to the primary data. This information thus is more precise, in-depth, and targeted at the study's goals so as to gain an understanding about the functioning of Group Foster Care System at Hope Community Village.

3.10.2. Secondary data

Secondary data refers to information that was gathered by another party for a different reason but was used by the researcher in this study. It is already known knowledge that can be found in a variety of places, including books, articles, papers, databases, public documents, and online platforms.

3.11. Tools for data collection

This qualitative study used focus groups discussion and interview guides as data collection strategies to get rich, in-depth information from participants.

An interview guide was used which is a semi-structured list of questions and directives used to direct the interviewer during one-on-one meetings with staffs such as the organization's administrator, director, and assistant director who were interviewed separately. It aided in ensuring consistency in the data collected while giving flexibility to investigate new themes and delve further into participant's responses. The interview guide was created based on the research questions and went through an iterative refinement process, through pre-testing, to make sure it successfully captures the needed information and promotes meaningful conversation with participants.

Focus group discussions (FGDs) are a type of qualitative research technique used in this study that entails gathering a small group of participants to talk about a particular subject or research question. FGDs tapped into the dynamics and interactions within the group to generate a wider range of viewpoints and to encourage the study of common experiences or opposing viewpoints regarding the asked questions. The focus group discussion involved three different groups: the Children's Group, the Adolescent

Group, and the Hope Mothers Group, which had 9, 11, and 6 participants, respectively. The researcher served as the moderator of the FGD and used a discussion guide to direct the conversation. A collection of open-ended questions and prompts are included in the discussion guide, which has been tailored for group settings. These questions and prompts were meant to inspire discussion and urge participants to share their thoughts on particular themes pertaining to the organization's Group Foster Care system.

3.12. Data collection

The researcher collected data from the stakeholders of Hope Community Village, Alappuzha by visiting the place and spending 2 days in the organisation. On the first day interview with the Director and Administrator of the agency was completed which took almost two hours. From that the researcher was able to gather the information regarding the process, benefits, challenges and the strategies they use to tackle the challenges in the system. On the second day the interview session with Assistant Director of the agency was carried out who provided detailed information regarding the benefits that the organisation looks forward to provide for their children.

The researcher has allotted an afternoon session on the first day for conducting the focus group discussion of Hope Mothers so that they would be free after their works. As there was a better rapport establishment with the Hope Mothers due to the researcher's previous field engagement at the organisation the discussion went on smoothly and the necessary data were gained within one hour.

The focus group discussion was conducted in such a way that an ice breaking session was carried out in the beginning so as to polish the rapport with the participants who were familiar to the researcher through experience of previous field engagement. This had provided a comfortable environment for the participants. The focus group discussion was conducted among the children of age group 9-11 who were categorised as childhood group. The children from age group of 12-17 was divided into adolescent girls' group who took part actively in the focus group discussion. Each discussion has consumed a total of one and a half hour which helped the researcher to know in depth about the system form the stakeholders.

The whole discussions and interviews were in Malayalam which were later transcribed to English.

3.13. Data Analysis

The data collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were subjected to a process of analysis in qualitative research with the primary aim to understand the perspective of the stake holders. The analysis was carried out through thematic analysis is used to locate, examine, and interpret themes or patterns in qualitative data to find significant insights and patterns that answer the research questions, it entails methodically classifying and organising data. It made it easier for the researcher to identify trends, point out differences, and give a thorough explanation of the qualitative data. Additionally, it provided a flexible and organised method for analysing the qualitative data mentioned under the specific research questions, such as:

- What is the process they follow in the system?
- How is the system beneficial to the child?
- What are the challenges faced by the system?
- What are the strategies used by the system to tackle the challenge?

3.15. Ethical Considerations

It is very much essential to think about and handle ethical issues when conducting research in a group foster care system to protect the participants' rights, privacy, and well-being. Initially the permission was taken from the Department of Social Work for approaching Hope Community Village for the purpose of study. Obtained the informed verbal consent of every participant and made sure that they are fully aware of the research's goals, methods, risks, advantages, confidentiality, and voluntary nature of participation. Participants were given the chance to ask questions before consenting to participate, and it was confirmed that they had the mental capacity to understand and give consent. Recognising that group foster care participants may be viewed as vulnerable owing to their age, backgrounds, or current situations the privacy and confidentiality of the data obtained was guaranteed by taking extra care to reduce any potential harm or suffering caused by the research.

3.16. Limitations

- The major limitation faced during the research was time duration. In spite of the other field engagements as a MSW Post Graduate student there was time

constrain to carry out in-depth research in the field of group foster care, thus limited the study to a single case.

- The sampling is purposive and hence cannot be generalised to other group foster care system.
- As the respondents comprised majority of the children of group foster care system questions that affect their privacy could not be asked thus those were eliminated.

3.17. Conclusion

The methodology provides guided the researcher to complete the study in a systematic and scientific manner. In order to guarantee the validity, dependability, and ethical integrity of this research, the methodology that was used is crucial. The research design, data collection procedures, and data analysis strategies are only a few of the components of this methodology that have all been carefully chosen to answer the study objectives.

CHAPTER 4: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION REPORT

4.1. Introduction:

A structured yet adaptable format was used for the focus group discussion to promote active involvement and conversation among the members. The discussion was well facilitated, ensuring that each member had an equal chance to share their thoughts and views. Researcher performed the role of a note-taker by observing the session and audio-recorded it in order to document the main ideas and themes that were covered. The discussion was initiated by explaining the general instructions regarding the purpose and objectives of the study, ethical considerations with regards to securing anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants about the topic and the tool. The discussion started with a self-introduction by the participants and followed by the self-introduction of the researcher. The researcher had one month experience at the organisation prior to the research which helped in understanding in-depth about the organisation and made it easy for the researcher to initiate the discussion. This helped in developing a positive and comfortable climate to have the discussion to know more about the system.

The following were the goals for the focus group discussion:

- to find shared themes, issues, or points of agreement or disagreement among the participants.
- to investigate various points of view and experiences in relation to group foster care system of Hope Community Village, Alappuzha
- to produce conclusions and suggestions based on the participants' experience.

The Focus group discussion is conducted among three groups, namely

FGD 1: Hope Mothers group

FGD 2: Adolescent girls' group

FGD 3: Childhood group

4.2. FGD – 1

Date: 16 June 2023, Friday

Location: Hope Community Village

Time: 02:00 pm – 03:00 pm

Number of participants: 6

Participants: Hope Mothers

Age: 45-55

The discussion started with an ice breaking session where the researcher encouraged the Mothers to talk about their selves of which they will be confident about. As the researcher had familiarity with the Mothers the ice breaking session was smooth and the participants were comfortable with the atmosphere. The discussion was initiated by the researcher enquiring about the contribution of Hope Mothers to the well-being and development of children. When one mother explained that *“We have a great role to be played in the organisation and in the life of a child and we are trained to it”*. The Mothers in the group supported and the second participant have added on to it that *“The experiences we get from the system makes us stronger and prepare to deal with the challenges so that we could ensure our contribution towards well-functioning of the organisation and which will eventually lead to the success of the life of children”*. The participants made it clear through the discussion that the agency has succeeded in providing a family environment for the children who has lost the chances to live in a safe and comfortable family. Hope Mothers took up an active role in moulding the life of a child by ensuring that the child utilises the opportunities at the agency which tries to improve their well-being and development. The Mothers needs to perform all those duties that a normal mother plays in her family. *“We are not merely staffs, instead we are devoted ourselves for the children in the agency, we firmly believe that there is a great role for a mother in the life of a child and no child should be ignored from that. So, we do our maximum in a house to look after our children”*. The Mother thus become able to observe even the minute changes in the behaviour of the child, look after the child to satisfy their needs by addressing it to the agency, ensure that the child succeeds

in achieving the developmental tasks appropriate to their age, etc... Agency also provides opportunity for the children to take part in extra-curricular activities which provides them tasks to acquire abilities and skills which will help them to take their life forward. *“We are happy that the children are provided with opportunities which a normal child may not get to excel in the field of arts, dance, music etc... So, we will never say that organisation is ignorant”*, to which all the participants have mutually agreed. The children also get opportunity to enjoy freedom like a normal child to select to lead their own life, but the agency ensure that their children are well prepared to live well in the society as a dignified individual.

The researcher then directed the group to discuss about the involvement of foster mothers in the decision-making process regarding the child's education, and healthcare *“ The agency also focuses on the health and well-being of the children as there is daily observation carried out by the staff and also they consequently arranges different medical checkups to ensure that the child is free from diseases or deficiencies”* was the opinion of a participant while the next one added that *“even during Covid 19 the measures taken by the agency to prevent spread of the disease among the stakeholders were appreciable”*. One of the Mother had shared an incident that *“I got X into my hands when he was 2 years old. A lean boy who didn't had the capacity to stand on his own because he was too weak and had issues associated with malnutrition. With the help from the system and my efforts he is now healthy and has gained the energy appropriate to his age”*. The participants shared that there were many instances which showed the sincerity of the organisation in preparing the children for their next stage where education and health care has an important role to play. When the researcher asked about the educational facilities a participant have opined that *“Children are provided with an extra care in educational matters as the provision for tuition to the children starts at a very younger age when they are admitted to school and will continue till, they reach 12th grade.”* was an opinion to which all the Hope Mothers agreed upon. The children are admitted to schools based on the preference and the ability of the children. *“The agency does all the support to ensure that the child is getting access to good quality education and the child is helped to access it. Our child 'X' is now in the process of being a doctor, it is seen as the combined effort of the system in fulfilling her dream”*, opined a Hope Mother. *“Even regarding the children's health and education as Mothers our opinion also have an importance, The agency will only take the decision*

after consulting with us and have already given guidelines to take an extra care into their matters regarding the child”, opined the Mothers when the researcher asked about their role in the matters concerning to health and education. Mothers will also be consulted before taking the final decision. Regarding the health care also the agency ensures that the physical, mental and spiritual health of the children and the Hope Mothers is being taken care of. A participant has also opined that *“The system ensures that the health, not only of children but also of Hope Mothers health emergencies are addressed as soon as possible”*. As a mother have a major role in a family regarding these matters the Hope Mother is also included in the decision-making process regarding the child’s overall need and betterment and is also given a special attention for their own well-being by the organisation. The participants of the group discussion have thus agreed that the agency does focus on providing the best possible education and health care facilities to ensure that the children are leading a quality life

The discussion proceeded by discussing about the support system that the agency provides in directing the Hope Mothers to manage the emotional challenges that may arise when caring the children who have experienced trauma or loss. *“I have experienced many situations like these. Initially we were little bit scared and was finding it difficult to address the issues even though the agency has insisted us with trainings regarding these. I have even thought that this job is not at all fit for me. But gradually through experience I am able to make the child adapt to the situation and combat with the issues that may arise during the process of looking after a child,”* was the opinion of a participant. The next participant has added to it that *“Now we are very happy to be the part of this organisation and we are enjoying the life here as these children are our children.”* The mothers thus became expertise in handling the problems which they are gaining through the initial training and their years of experience in handling children with different issues or adjustment problems at the agency helped them to improve themselves. *“Now we could even sense a small difference that is occurring to a child if there is any change in his/her behaviour”*, told a participant. The Mothers have thus developed potential to observe the children, the difference in their attitude and tackle or resolve the issues the child face along with the system. Through the life as a Hope Mother, they are getting enough opportunities to address the problems of the children who may face difficulties at different stages of development in which the agencies also provide a support system in tackling the

problems of the children. When the researcher enquired to know about the attachment they have with the system and the children they together shared that *“We would like to stay with our kids, it is with them we have spent our major part of our lives”*. They also shared about how much they miss their adolescent boys which was clear when everybody agreed to the dialogue of a participant that *“It is very difficult for us to leave our male children to youth house, but we know that as a group foster care system we should bound to the rules and regulations. The system also provides opportunity for us to meet them during celebrations. They come back here and enjoys along with their family. That is a great joy”*. One of the Mother shared that *“The happiness is that we are dignified for our position when it comes to decisions regarding our child’s matters, which encourage us to continue in the system by contributing fully to its betterment,”* The researcher have thus directed the participants by raising different topics for discussion so as to gain their opinions to address the research questions which will help the researcher in data analysis and interpretation. The discussion has ended when the researcher was able to completed the topics on the discussion guide and then thanked the participants for their cooperation.

4.3. FGD – 2

Date: 17 June 2023, Saturday

Location: Hope Community Village

Time: 10:00 am – 11:00 am

Number of participants: 11

Participants: Adolescent Girls' Group

Age: 12-17

The discussion was started with an ice breaking session where the participants so as to create a comfortable atmosphere. Even though the researcher had a good rapport with the girls they had a tension when the researcher has explained the actual need. They underestimated their own potential to answer the questions regarding the organisation. But when the discussion was started the adolescent girls', group were sharing their point of view in such a way they analyse the overall functioning of the agency. Thus, the researcher was able to gain an understanding about the organisation regarding the services provided by them. Majority of the participants were beneficiaries of the system since years. Thus, they were experiencing the changes that the agency brought forward, the new activities implemented, the role of Hope Mothers, the attitude and functioning of different staff in the agency etc...

The discussion begins with the *family environment* provided by the organisation. The initial opinion that popped up soon after hearing about the family environment was the role of Hope Mother. *"We are feeling like we are at home, we have a mother who provides us with care and we have a space to discuss any matters with them."* Started by a participant on to which other one has included that *"We may be scolded for the mistakes that we do, but eventually the love of the Mother is something special"*. *"We know that they are not our actual Mothers but we have never felt like that. It is so hard for us to remain in home when the Mother go for a leave because we will miss her"* the participants enthusiastically shared about the role of Hope Mothers who play a major

role in ensuring that their children get everything possible. When the researcher enquired about the opportunities, they get at the organisation they were very eager to share that *“We have our own cycles in which we are going for tuitions or to schools”* while the other one had added that *“We are getting opportunities to study dance, music, art, martial arts etc..”*. Then the next participant added that *“The provision for football coaching is also available and many of have participated in district level football championships and some have got opportunities above that which makes football a passion for us.”* One of the participants shared that *“The opportunity for us to engage in different extra-curricular activities are really unique as we are getting exposure to these while our friends at the school only have access to any one of these activity”*. Thus, they have explained about there opportunities at the organisation which revealed that they are independent in travelling to their school or nearby places. The special attention of the agency in providing opportunities is also note-worthy. *“We have sisters and brothers. We feel happy when we are together and it creates a sense of belonging which is very much needed for a family environment. We make our elder ones as role model and there is always opportunity provided by the organisation to come back and meet our Mothers and siblings at the organisation. Some of our elder sisters are married, and they are leading a good life outside. They will come to visit us so that we won't miss them anymore”, So we consider this as our home”*. The participants also cherished their memories with their siblings at their home and their participation in the daily activities together which made them call their house a ‘home’. This was their overall opinion about the family environment at the organisation to which no one had opposition and instead they were eager to add different points.

The participants were then made to discuss about the *education and health care facilities* provided by the organisation where they shared that the system ensures that each child gets access to proper education and health care. Regarding education the participants shared that *“we are happy about our schools and the additional opportunities like tuition facility which begins from an LKG and continues till 12th grade, library, books for additional reference etc... are very much helpful for us to continue our studies”*. The next participant shared an opinion that *“We are also getting access to electronic gadgets like the tablets provided on week-ends and classes on different topics add on to widening our knowledge about the new opportunities around them by making opportunities of the career guidance classes and searching more details*

about our area of interest.” The health of the child is also given special attention because it plays a vital role in the existence of human beings. Regarding health care one of the participants shared that *“I was diagnosed with iron deficiency when a camp was conducted at the system. Now the system is providing iron supplements and an extra care to tackle with the issue.”*, Next one has added that *“As children we are getting platforms to be aware about mental health through awareness sessions and to ensure our well-being of mental health whenever we need support”*, Rather than the physical health the system ensures that the mental health of the child is being protected by providing necessary interventions at the appropriate times.

The discussion then continued to discuss the effectiveness of the system in *addressing the issues of adolescents*. The system provided special attention to the changes happening within the children and helping them to cope up with their physical and mental changes. They agreed to the opinion of a participant that *“We are treated well during our menarche by providing nutritious food, appropriate rest and the system provides us with menstrual pads on a monthly basis and is also encouraging the use of menstrual cups among the girls. We have an incinerator in the organisation to dispose our pads and sessions regarding menstrual hygiene ids being carried. Our Mothers will also help us a lot during that time”*. Thus, they were oriented about the physical and mental changes that takes place at the adolescent age through awareness sessions on different topics. The children are provided with counselling sessions and the mothers and the staffs of the agency help to deal with the issues that arise at this age. They also discuss about their Child Protection Team when the researcher enquired about their protection in the agency that *“adolescent girls meeting is conducted every month which is a platform for them to address their issues. We elect a representative from our side who will be participating in the meetings of the Child protection Team and shall raise our concerns regarding any matters”*. Thus, the adolescent girls’ group were totally happy with the functioning of the system as there were no confusions or conflicts among the group while initiating discussions on different topics related to the system. The activities carried out by the organisation added on to their opportunities for enjoyment and enhancing their skills which pave opportunity for the preparedness for the next stage of life. The session thus ended after the discussion by giving a thanks note to the participants.

4.4. FGD – 3

Date: 17 June 2023, Saturday

Location: Hope Community Village

Time: 12:30 pm – 01:30 pm

Number of participants: 9

Participants: Children's Group

Age: 9-11

The discussions were conducted about the questions specific to their age to know in-depth about their opinion regarding the system. The participants of the children's group were enthusiastic as the researcher initiated the discussion with an ice breaking session. The children were given opportunities to respond to the questions that the researcher asked to ensure equal participation. The discussion started with their opinion about their Hope Mothers in which one of the participants shared that *"I am happy about my Mother the way she cares me and love me is very good and my mother is my good friend."* To which the other participants have added that *"I also feel the same"*. One of the participants shared that *"even if my mother scold me whenever I am doing something naughty, the quarrel won't last for long and I know that my mother always wants me to be good."* When the researcher asked about the organisation the response from a child was that *"We have owned it up as our home, we no more feel that we are away from our parents because the facilities we get here are immense"*, The researcher then enquired about the matters at schools and the response from a participant was that *"My Mother will help me in my studies and will come to school to attend PTA meetings to interact with the teachers to know about my educational status."* The children also shared that it's their Mother who creates a family environment by ensuring the harmony and love in the family. *"On all evenings the family members join together for prayer session, where the mother takes the lead and we the children follow her words. On Sundays we will go to church together to attend the prayer"*, the researcher then asked about the attitude of the staffs towards the children and the group then shared a common

opinion “*we have an openness the staff at the agency, they will help us out when needed and is providing us with all the facilities they could. We have never got any bad experience from them. Instead, we have freedom to do any matters of our interest if it is good*”. Thus, it was understood that the children have the opportunity to approach the staffs directly and they are comfortable with them. The staff in the system plans new activities to engage the students and also to help the children develop new skills which is appropriate for them to lead a better life

When asked about the opportunities at the system The group enthusiastically shared the wide range of activities available for them at the agency. “*We have opportunities learn music, keyboard, guitar; dance, art and craft, drawing, swimming and football which gives us happiness*” and through this they have realised their potential and are trying to improve their abilities in their area of interest. One of them also shared that “*We have opportunities for enjoyment during vacations as the agency take us out for trips, theatres and picnics*”. The group shared their memory of the last vacation and their days at the organisations were tightly packed to ensure their engagement in different activities to utilise their time effectively. One of them shared that “*we have opportunity to watch television till 09:00 pm on all days after completing their daily works.*” Regarding the education and healthcare also the children were happy about the initiative of the agency as they got all the provisions at various instances which they were not able to explain much instead they said that they will be taken to hospitals when needed. Thus, the system ensure that their children are provided with all the available opportunities that a normal child will get. The researcher then thanked the children as the researcher was happy that they shared much details appropriate to their age in helping the researcher to address the research questions.

Thus, in total the groups were happy about their existence and opportunities for enhancement at the agency. There was no difference in opinions which made the researcher understood that the sharing is not cooked up instead it was from their experience.

4.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the focus group discussion was successful in facilitating an honest and interesting dialogue among the participants, which helped them come to a consensus. The group members displayed a willingness to examine different perspectives and work together towards a common understanding through active listening and respectful exchange of ideas. The debate gave participants the chance to explore different perspectives, experiences, and insights, which helped them to widen their horizons. A spirit of respect and cooperation that persisted throughout the meeting helped to create a welcoming atmosphere where everyone's opinions were appreciated. The participants actively looked for areas of agreement, building on one other's ideas, and seeking out common ground. They understood the value of agreement, as well as the fact that the group's viewpoint is more influential than any single individual.

Through their collective efforts, the focus group was able to synthesise their different ideas and experiences to arrive at a shared opinion. This agreement is a useful result since it denotes a shared understanding and a united course for action or decision-making. The groups succeeded to give their opinion according to the experience they have which helped the researcher to get into findings which will be presented in the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter discusses qualitative data analysis, a systematic procedure for deciphering and making sense of non-numerical data through the analysis and interpretation of the rich and extensive data gathered through qualitative research techniques including interviews and focus group discussions. It focuses on identifying patterns and insights in the data to provide readers a fuller understanding of the study's focus on the organisation that offers group foster care. In order for the study to delve into the richness of qualitative data and produce significant knowledge and understanding, the researcher has stressed the need of maintaining rigour, transparency, and validity throughout the analysis process. The analysis of data is listed under different themes by incorporating the crux of specific research questions.

5.1. Process employed in the system

The various tools employed by the researcher in the study enabled the researcher to arrive at the findings regarding the process that the group foster care system at Hope Community Village follow in accommodating the child. The child's development, safety, and well-being are of utmost importance during the entire process. The system of group foster care look forward to give kids a safe, nurturing environment where they may develop, get over past traumas, make good friends, enhance sibling relationships and get ready for the future. Even though the system didn't provide a term for the step-by-step procedure, the researcher was nevertheless able to relate their study to the many stages employed in various social work methodologies. The stages undertaken by the agency in admitting a child is as follows:

Intake:

Typically, a child in need of care and protection is sent to the CWC. Referrals may originate from many different places, including from parents, concerned citizens, schools, the police, or other governmental organisations. Child Welfare Committee is a monitoring agency or a quasi-judiciary body who is the apex body in Kerala that plays a major role in ensuring that a child's life is safeguarded. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 in India created the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), a legislative organisation. The well-being and protection of children who

require care and protection is its main responsibility. CWCs are established at the district level, with a primary goal of defending the rights and welfare of children. Children who require care and protection are the responsibility of CWCs for rehabilitation. They strive to give children with a safe and secure environment that is free from maltreatment, exploitation, and neglect. The kid is put in a group foster care system if CWC determines that the child should have the chance to live with a family and enjoy a family atmosphere. The DCPU, a government organisation created under the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS) to ensure the protection and well-being of children in the district, performs its duties under the CWC in every district. Coordination and implementation of local child protection services are its main responsibilities. If CWC prefer to send the child to Hope Community Village, the entire organisation gladly accepts the child.

Assessment:

“A child Needs to have access to basic needs so that they feel that they have their own worth”, opined the respondent during the interview. Each child in a system of group foster care has particular needs, abilities, and difficulties. When a child is transferred to Hope Community Village following the initial CWC assessment of the child, the system evaluates the child's medical status by considering a thorough medical examination of the child's blood type, skin, oral health, and other factors, including the Elisa Test. The youngster receives additional attention if the system discovers any health deficiencies. Officially stored alongside the child's documentation are their medical records, which even include minute information on the type of medication the child takes. A registration register for admissions will be kept, to which information regarding the CWC order number, OT number, child's photo, SIR details, etc. will be added. This acts as the child's official record. The interaction of the kid with the staff and the evaluation of the Social Investigation Report provided by CWC help to ensure their mental health. Professionals with training in child psychology or psychiatry carry out this evaluation to determine the kid's emotional condition, behavioural tendencies, and any particular needs for support or intervention. In the process of evaluating the kid, the staff, especially the social worker, is crucial in putting the finishing touches on the child care programme. The child will get either long or short-term care depending on the assessment's findings. Caretakers and professionals can offer individualised care and

assistance by using a need assessment to discover and comprehend unique traits of the child in the system. It makes sure that interventions and services are customised to match each child's unique needs, fostering their overall development and well-being. The group foster care system uses assessment to identify the resources, services, and interventions needed to effectively meet the needs of the children. It assists in effectively allocating resources, ensuring that they are focused on the initiatives that will have the biggest positive effects on the lives of the kids. With this strategy, intervention effectiveness is maximised and resource waste is avoided.

Intervention:

Needs assessment give important information about the particular issues and places where kids in the system of group foster care might need extra assistance or intervention. The system's professionals can create focused interventions that address the identified needs thanks to this information. It enables the early detection of problems, prompt intervention, and application of research-supported practises to enhance the outcomes for the kids. A care plan is prepared which serves as the blueprint in directing the system to help the child in achieving the well-being. The Form 7 - Individual care plan of the child by JJ Act is divided into different parts which comprises of:

- Part A to be completed when the child enters the CCI
- Part B to be completed every 2 weeks for 3 months, then once a month for the duration of the child's placement.,
- Part C to be completed 15 days prior to release.
- Part D to be completed at follow up after release for 1.5 - 2 years or thereafter as per CWC orders.

Hope Community Village comprises of six houses each house with a mother and ten children under her. According to the needs assessed the child is determined to be kept at the home appropriate for the child, by taking into account the age of the child, the child's religion, the ability of mother in dealing with the issues of the child, the gender balance in the family and the vacancy available. The child is welcomed to the Home by the family members and in the assembly the new child receives a special welcome through which the child is integrated to the family environment. The Child is then taken

out to shopping along with Mother so as to buy the items for personal use and this promotes the rapport building between the Mother and the child through which the Child gradually gets adjusted with the family they are into. Once the child's expectation regarding the care, protection, health and nutrition needs are fulfilled through proper interventions at the system emotional and psychological support needs, educational and training needs are taken care of the emotional and psychological care are addressed appropriate to their age by employing necessary interventions suiting to the circumstances. If there are girls in the system, it is recommended under the JJ Act that a boy be removed from group foster care when he turns 10 years old. *"It is very difficult for us to leave our male children to youth house, but we know that as a group foster care system we should bound to the rules and regulations. The system also provides opportunity for us to meet them during celebrations. They come back here and enjoys along with their family. That is a great joy"*, the mothers shared about the separation of male children from the house. The system thus observes the psychological changes that can happen in an adolescent boy appropriate to their age and when the boy begins to show signs of maturity, they are shifted to Hope Youth House which is a provision to provide shelter to adolescent boys who are in need of care and protection. The educational and training needs of children are satisfied by allotting them to educational institution according to the ability, interest and potential of the child. The child in the system is provided with a good quality education which shall bring out the complete potential of the child. *"Our child 'X' is now in the process of being a doctor, it is seen as the combined effort of the system in fulfilling her dream"*, shared a proud mother. The Child at the system is helped to identify their interests to encourage creativity. Through this manner the child is brought back to a normal life where they have the opportunity to love their life to the fullest by utilising the opportunities provided by the system. As a result, the system offers assistance and direction during life transitions, assisting kids in acclimating to new settings and seeing to it that their needs are addressed all along the way

Evaluation:

The well-being and development of the children in the care of the carers and professionals involved in the group foster care system are supported and promoted by maintaining appropriate boundaries and using observation as a tool. Daily observation

is used to evaluate the well-being and development of the children in care. To evaluate the physical well-being, it is crucial to keep an eye out for any wounds, disease symptoms, or changes in food or sleeping patterns that could suggest health issues. The ability to evaluate the children's emotional and behavioural health is made possible by daily observation. This include studying their disposition, interactions with others, interactions with carers, and general demeanour. The system thus looks out for indicators of joy, engagement, and pleasant relationships with others as well as any signs of worry, anger, withdrawal, or emotional pain. Understanding the social development of children can also be gained through observation by looking for their participation in group activities, capacity to develop and sustain connections with peers and adults, and social skills including sharing, taking turns, and conflict resolution. The system thus checks to see if the kids behave in an age-appropriate social way and show empathy and collaboration which can contribute for evaluating the future development of the child in developing a desired social behaviour. A special attention is provided to observe how they interact with the learning materials, how they participate in discussions, and how well they follow directions. Keeping an eye out for indications of academic progress, such as boosted confidence, skill growth, and a positive outlook on learning will help the system to evaluate the development of the child. Their capacity to carry out self-care procedures including getting dressed, eating, and keeping themselves clean are areas which should be paid attention to. The system keeps an eye out for improvement in activities like time management, planning, solving problems, and making decisions. *“One of the main duties of the social worker in the agency is to carry out daily observation of the child, the key staff in the organisation also divide the works among them to ensure that all the children are being observed”*, shared the administrator during the interview. Daily observation can assist in identifying areas where kids might require more assistance or intervention to develop these abilities. The staff in the organisation especially a residential social worker took up active role in carrying out the evaluation through daily observation.

Relinking:

Children in foster care must create and sustain relationships with their biological families or other important people in their life. It emphasises the value of preserving and enhancing current relationships, encouraging family reconciliation when practical,

and boosting the child's general wellbeing. *“Hope Community Village has a great history of relinking”* shared the Director of the agency. The system works to build and maintain healthy relationships between the child and their family members because it understands the importance of family ties. This may involve frequent visits, facilitated communication, and joint decision-making where appropriate and in the child's best interests. The system therefore concentrates on helping kids through transitions, whether going from foster care to a placement with their birth family, to another foster home, or to independent life. It entails preparing the kid for the move, offering emotional support, and making sure that the services and resources need to facilitate a successful and smooth transfer are in place. The efforts for relinking are initiated by the system when the child is grown up to be accommodated to higher studies. The system gives it a try to accommodate the child in their native place so as to provide them with opportunity to integrate the child with the original family if it's safe for the child. Yet another sort of relinking adopted by the system is through making the child self-reliant by pursuing a career according to their ability. Once the child is independent through a job and he/she is capable to earn for their living they are free enough to choose partners whose details will be gained through a proper investigation from the system and if found appropriate the marriage will be celebrated at the system. Twenty-two girls and two men from Hope Community Village were happily married with the support from the agency. *“Our elder sisters are married, and they are leading a good life outside. They will come to visit us so that we won't miss them anymore”*, the group of children shared their joy enthusiastically. The system also maintains certain marriage policies in order to ensure that their beneficiaries have access to economic gains if they follow the parameters as suggested in the policy. Their primary objective of the system is in making their beneficiaries self-reliant and independent so that they can lead a happy life on their own. *“Marriage is not settling criteria for Hope Community Village, instead the focus is in empowering the child through education,”* opined the Director. By speaking up for the child's best interests and serving as a mediator between the child, their family, and other parties concerned, the system makes sure they play a critical position in relinking.

If there is no possibility for the child to be relinked then the beneficiary will be rehabilitated by the system. The facility of after care provided by the system ensures in ongoing support and assistance to the life of the child. They provide a continuum of

support to aid young people in effectively making the transition from institutional care to independent living. Aftercare programmes give young people the tools they need to deal with the challenges of adulthood. Aftercare programme at Hope Community Village encourage self-sufficiency and give young people the tools they need to succeed by placing a high priority on educational and career possibilities. For young people exiting group foster care, finding secure housing is frequently a top worry. Aftercare facility at Hope Community Village provide assistance in locating acceptable housing options. *“We would like to stay with our kids, it is with them we have spent our major part of our lives”*, was a dialogue pooped in between the focus group discussion of Hope Mothers. The provision of after care is not only available for the children who completes the age of 18 but also for the Hope Mother who doesn't needs to go back to their normal family and is urging to live with the children in the Hope Community Village. Or else the mother will not be having a place to go back into. In such a situation they will be placed under the after-care facility of Hope Community Village.

Follow up:

Follow-up makes ensuring that children in a system of group foster care receive continuous, uninterrupted care and assistance. It makes it possible for the child's life to shift between carers or placements without any major hiccups. A sense of stability and security is crucial for the wellbeing of foster children, and it can be maintained by routine follow-up. Through this, the child's adaptability to their new surroundings, whether they are receiving the right facilities to meet their needs and if their emotional and physical needs are being fulfilled are all evaluated by the carers, social workers, and other system specialists. This monitoring aids in spotting any prospective problems or trouble spots that need more assistance or intervention. It adds on to the one of the key responsibilities of the Director of the agency in calling the re-linked child and enquiring about their present condition. The system frequently emphasises not leaving the child alone, but rather developing a sense of belonging for the child and giving the family the child is reconnected the impression that someone is looking out for the child. Regular visits from the accountable staff are carried out, who serves as a mother or father figure in the system, ensuring that the follow-up is done correctly. To carry out the follow-up process, the system's side will visit the youngster and present gifts utilising the monthly funding about which will be recorded in the monthly report

regarding the follow up. If the system finds that there is a need for an extra attention in order to facilitate the well-being of the relinked beneficiary the system intervenes with the appropriate measure. Certain fund allotment is being fixed so as to support the beneficiary through follow up which include Rs.5000 as allowance for pregnancy, Rs. 1,80,000 for marriage expenditure, etc... Carers and professionals can see issues early by remaining in touch and involved with the beneficiary. This could entail attending to behavioural issues, emotional needs, academic challenges, or any other issues that might impair their wellbeing in a new environment. Regular follow-up enables Hope Community Village, which acts with the utmost sincerity, to continue its advocacy and support for the beneficiaries who were in the foster care system. It makes sure that their opinions are heard, that their rights are upheld, and that their best interests are taken into account. The opportunity to converse with the beneficiaries, comprehend their demands, and fight for any alterations or enhancements that might benefit their quality of life is presented through follow-up visits.

5.2. Benefit of the system

There will be a range of feelings and uncertainties in the life of child who is in need of care and protection. However, the system of group foster care can offer beneficial care, support, and chances for development. The goal of the system of group foster care is to develop a nurturing and encouraging atmosphere where children can feel secure, appreciated, and in control. It provides a number of advantages designed to improve general wellbeing and aid the youngster in adjusting to this time of transition in your life. In this regard the researcher has analysed the benefits of group foster care system offered by Hope Community Village. The benefits of the system will be presented on the themes under the four basic child rights proposed by Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1992. The four basic rights of the child include:

- the right to survival
- the right to protection
- the right to development
- the right to participation

Right to survival:

Quality health care

Children must have access to high-quality healthcare since it is essential to their general health, development, and growth. Early health issue discovery is ensured by high-quality healthcare, allowing for prompt intervention and treatment. Hope Community village give importance to a complete medical examination of the child at the time of admission to the agency. Thus, medical examination is added to the record of the child and if any illness is being diagnosed the child is given special attention. If the Child have a past history of taking any medicine the system ensures that it is being continued at the prescribed level. Regular check-ups are conducted among the children and mothers to ensure that their health is prioritised. *“The system ensures that the health, not only of children but also of Hope Mothers health emergencies are addressed as soon as possible”* was noted by the researcher at the time of Focus Group Discussion. This helps in avoiding or reducing long-term effects and enhance outcomes for children by addressing health issues as soon as they arise. In order to assess the physical growth and development appropriate to their age children need proper medical care and attention. Regular height, weight, and developmental milestone monitoring aids in spotting any anomalies or delays that may need treatment which is carried out by the system. *“I was diagnosed with iron deficiency when a camp was conducted at the system. Now the system is providing iron supplements and an extra care to tackle with the issue.”*, was shared by a participant in between the discussion. The nutrition, exercise, and other elements that contribute to healthy growth and development can be implemented after discussion with healthcare specialists.

Health according to the system does not merely focuses on physical health whereas the other aspects of health is also paid attention to. The kids frequently originate from difficult homes, such abusive or neglectful ones, and they can have gone through different kinds of trauma. For their general well-being and future growth, it is imperative that their mental health requirements be met. The mental health of the child in the system is being taken care of through proper and timely intervention. *“As children we are getting platforms to be aware about mental health through awareness sessions and to ensure our well-being of mental health whenever we need support”*, opined the

children's group. They can process their experiences, recover from trauma, and create healthy coping mechanisms with the aid of appropriate mental health interventions. They can get the tools and techniques they need from mental health care to control their emotions, strengthen their resilience, and form positive interpersonal connections. Early support and intervention might potentially lessen the long-term detrimental impacts on a person's mental health, relationships, and general quality of life. Awareness classes on different aspects of health add on to the benefit of the system in safeguarding the health status of the child. To satisfy these commitments and provide a secure and loving environment for these kids, which the system assures through its activities, access to mental health support is a crucial component.

Age-appropriate nutrition

Children grow and develop quickly during early infancy and adolescence. The basic nutrients that enable healthy physical development, bone development, and organ function include proteins, vitamins, minerals, and carbohydrates. Age-appropriate diet supports the development of learning, memory, focus, and other cognitive skills. The system ensures that their children is provided with appropriate nutrition by following a proper diet time table which include the vitamin, minerals, protein, etc... that a child need for their growth. Monthly supply of fruits, vegetables, nuts etc...is distributed equally to the houses so that the children get access to quality food. Healthy eating habits that can survive into maturity must be formed throughout childhood. Children who are exposed to a range of healthy foods and who are taught about balanced diets are more likely to have positive relationships with food, learn how to control their portion sizes, and make healthier food decisions throughout their lives. A hope mother shared that *"I got X into my hands when he was 2 years old. A lean boy who didn't had the capacity to stand on his own because he was too weak and had issues associated with malnutrition. With the help from the system and my efforts he is now healthy and has gained the energy appropriate to his age"*. Proper supply of nutrition will help to have the energy and required to engage in regular activities, encourage muscular growth, and improve their overall physical performance if they eat enough and appropriate food.

A safe place to live

For children to be protected and to have their right to survival upheld, it is crucial to provide them with a safe place to live. Hope community Village that a child is to be provided a safe place to live in in which they have developed a sense of belonging through a family atmosphere. Protecting children from immediate harm, ensuring their access to basics, preventing accident and injuries, and fostering their general wellbeing are all important ways to defend their right to survival. The system thus put a high priority on protecting children and offering family support networks help to build a safe and secure environment where children can survive and grow. *“We have owned it up as our home, we no more feel that we are away from our parents because the facilities we get here are immense”*, shared the children. Hope Community Village comprises of 6 houses situated in a single compound in which resides a Hope Mother and ten children under them. A friendly neighbourhood and easy access to social services are essential components of a secure living situation. The mother along with the system ensures that the child is having access to a safe place to live. Moreover, a safe place to live in the system ensures in creating a family environment for the child by engaging them in the activities of the household. The pets in the system add to the naturality of a family environment. The houses take up the shift in caring and grooming the pets so that all of them get chances equally. The neighbourhood at the system provide opportunity for peer group interaction which is at most important at this age and could be beneficial for the socialisation of the child. It provides opportunity for children to express themselves, build positive self-esteem, and cultivate good mental health as well as connections that are nurturing and helpful.

Right to Protection

Protection from physical violence and psychological intimidation

Children's physical health and safety are ensured when they are protected from physical abuse, allowing them to develop and thrive without having to worry about getting hurt. It assists in avoiding both short-term and long-term bodily effects that may have a long-lasting effect on their wellbeing. In order to protect the child from any kind of physical violence the system ensures child protection policy is implemented by child protection

team. The team comprises of the Director as Child Protection Officer, Assistant director as Women Representative, Senior social worker, elected representative of Hope mothers, girl and boy representative elected among children. The Child Protection Team arranges monthly meeting or in an emergency which is a platform to address any sort of violence or problems occurred in the system which shall be solved by certain undertakings as soon as possible. The team functions in order to prevent or address any kind of physical violence, psychological intimidation, protected from child labor, tasks that are dangerous or impede their education. It is crucial for children's emotional and psychological development that they are shielded from these experiences. The suggestion box at the agency is open for accepting suggestions from the beneficiaries who can write their opinions or complaints. The box will be opened every month before the meeting in the presence of Child protection team who shall discuss the issue and take appropriate action. *“If there are any worries the children can post their suggestion in the suggestion, they are directed to even write with left hand if they have any apprehension of being found out. The system never wants to blame the child for raising any questions instead the system looks forward to solving the issue as soon as possible”*, the staff shared during the interview. Daily observation conducted by the social worker at the agency is an add on in ensuring that the protection of the child is being taken care of. Children who are shielded from physical abuse and psychological trauma can grow resilient and learn effective coping skills. They develop their capacity to triumph over adversity and thrive in the face of adversities by learning to negotiate challenges and pressures in a creative and positive way. Thus, they give kids the chance to develop, thrive, and realise their full potential by fostering secure and supportive settings.

Rehabilitation and reintegration into society with dignity

A child's well-being, development, and effective reintegration back into society depend on their rehabilitation and respectful reintegration. Recognising the child's inherent value, upholding their rights, and giving them chances to reconstruct their lives with dignity should be the main goals of the rehabilitation and reintegration process. The system also focuses in facilitating the child to socialise in such a way that the child is best suited to live in a society. The life that the child carries out in this group foster care system cater to their basic needs of interacting and interrelating with their siblings and the peer group so that they are moulded in such a way to be a social being. The system

ensures that rather than a mere growth of the child the system makes up humans who are fit to live in a society. The facilities provided in the system which ensure their education, participating them in different activities for their physical, mental and cognitive development, providing them opportunities to engage with their peer group and family empowers the child so as to lead a dignified life. The system provides them with all the assistance they need for their psychological, educational, emotional, and physical needs. By encouraging holistic development, the system provides them the tools they need to reintegrate into society as responsible, productive adults. When children are successfully reintegrated, they have the chance to develop into law-abiding citizens who contribute favourably to society.

Respect to their Ethnic background and Religion

All child's circumstances are different, it is thus very crucial to approach the subject of ethnicity and religion in foster care with consideration, openness, and respect for each child's particular needs and rights. The system plays special attention in understanding and appreciating the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the children they look after. *“Efforts are made by the system to place children with family who share or comprehend their religious heritage. A child's sense of belonging can be facilitated and the likelihood of identity conflicts are reduced by placing them with a family that recognises and respects their cultural and religious practises”*, opined the respondent during the interview. As long as it doesn't impair their wellbeing, the children are free to practise their religion or adhere to their cultural practises. Foster families ought to be understanding of a child's religious convictions and give them the chance to take part in religious observances or activities. *“On all evenings the family members join together for prayer session, where the mother takes the lead and we the children follow her words. On Sundays we will go to church together to attend the prayer”*, this words from the discussion with the childhood groups reflect that they are given opportunities to worship their own religion. The children at the time of intake are assessed about their religion and at the time of intervention they are matched with the family who practice the same religion that they follow thus Child from Christian background will be directed to Christian house and Hindu background to Hindu house. When it comes regarding celebrations the system celebrate all the religious festival with great pleasure which in turn is creating a sense of unity in diversity among the children which is very much

needed for creating better citizen who shall accept the diversities. They also are given opportunities to visit the religious place of their choice in holidays or as per their demand provided if all other conditions are favourable. As a result, the method guarantees that a child's ethnic and religious requirements are recognised and satisfied, and that any difficulties or issues may be handled cooperatively. It is essential for a child's general well-being and identity development in the foster care system to respect that child's ethnic heritage and religion.

Right to development

Specialized skills and physical and mental abilities

Children's general growth and wellbeing are significantly influenced by their specialised abilities, as well as their physical and mental capabilities. A child's personal development and self-esteem are influenced by their specialised talents and abilities. The system provides them opportunities to engage in various extra-curricular activities which include attending classes for keyboard, guitar, music, dance, art and craft, karate, swimming, football coaching etc... *“Let the child knock all the doors, and find their treasure that will be hidden behind these doors”* was the opinion of the administrator of the system. Thus, the child analyses their real potential or ability in some of this area and the system nurtures it. Even the cycle provided by the system helps in catering a sense of independence while the child achieves a motor ability appropriate to their age. Children gain confidence and a sense of success when they excel in a specific skill or area of interest. They gain a strong feeling of identity and establish a positive self-image as a result. A child's academic success can be significantly impacted by specific skills and abilities. The children are provided with training in IT field from an age of five years. Starting from the simple skills the child gains specialised abilities in this regard, not only the academic excellence the motor skills and cognitive skills of the child will also be enhanced through these activities. *“The opportunity for us to engage in different extra-curricular activities are really unique as we are getting exposure to these while our friends at the school only have access to any one of these activity”*, was a dialogue popped up in between the discussion with the adolescent girls. The children are also provided with sessions on different socially relevant aspects or skills form resource persons in order to ensure that it contribute to their overall well-being. In order to provide an educational support, the children are given special attention from an age of

five by ensuring that they are getting special tuition for various subjects till an age of seventeen until they complete their higher secondary classes. Specialised or exceptional children frequently find it simpler to connect with others and establish relationships. Their skills can act as conversation starters and help them connect with individuals who have similar interests. It offers chances for wholesome social contacts, group cooperation, and collaboration. Early acquisition of specialised knowledge and skills can pave the way for future chances. Children can use it to investigate various job options, identify their passions, and come to wise conclusions about their future. Many of the children in the system benefit from certain capabilities, such as musical or athletic aptitudes, which can even lead to scholarships, talent-based programmes, or professional chances in later life. The children in the system are extremely talented in any of these areas and are recipients of many awards in these activities when competing with the children outside. Children's different skills and talents should be valued since doing so fosters inclusivity and a sense of belonging. It contributes to the development of an atmosphere that values, respects, and nurtures the individual talents and skills of every kid. The basis for excellent mental health and emotional resilience throughout adulthood is also laid by developing these skills early in childhood. Thus, this method followed by the system is essential in helping kids discover and build on their unique abilities while also giving them opportunity for growth and development in areas of interest.

Right to participation

Taking their voices into account

Children are empowered and feel more a part of the community when their voices are taken into consideration. It respects their individual rights and gives them the freedom to voice their needs, choices, and opinions. Increased self-esteem and self-determination result from this involvement, which creates a sense of ownership and control over their lives. The agency guarantees this through making the child involved in all the procedures and decision that the system follows. An adolescent girl shared that *“We elect a representative from our side who will be participating in the meetings of the Child protection Team and shall raise our concerns regarding any matters”*. The compulsory participation for them in all the activities conducted by the system and the special roles allotted for them in decision making bodies such as Child Protection Team

make them aware about their rights and in ensuring that they advocate for their own rights which creates a leadership quality among the children. Better results may result from actively including kids in decision-making about their care. They have valuable viewpoints and insights on their own experiences, goals, and well-being. There is also accessibility and approachability to any of the staffs regarding an open discussion on any of the matter. The system promotes this flexibility which is very much important for the child in order to facilitate a family environment and a sense of belonging. The overall functioning of the agency is democratic in a manner that there is an equal contribution and responsibility from all the stakeholders which include the staff, Hope Mothers, children etc... this adds on to the efficiency of the system. *“The happiness is that we are dignified for our position when it comes to decisions regarding our child’s matters, which encourage us to continue in the system by contributing fully to its betterment,”* shared a mother in between the discussion. Along with the mothers the Children's voices are also valued and respected, and this helps the system establish dependable and enduring connections with them. Children are more likely to create open lines of communication and build trust with their carers when they feel heard and understood. This trust lays the groundwork for wholesome and loving connections, which can help them develop emotionally and generally.

Each child is different, and each one has different needs and experiences. Carers and experts can learn more about each child's history, preferences, and aspirations by listening to their voices. This information aids the system in developing individualised care plans and support systems that more effectively address each child's unique requirements. Children have the chance to actively participate in decision-making processes and gain important life skills. It improves their capacity for problem-solving and communication, teaches them how to express their thoughts and feelings clearly, and gives them more self-assurance. The system creates these abilities by guaranteeing the right to participation, which are crucial as individuals enter adulthood and learn to negotiate future relationships and obligations. Children feel respected, acknowledged, and accepted as essential parts of the system when their voices are appreciated and considered. This sense of belonging enhances their general wellbeing and leads to the development of a nurturing and supportive environment. The system ensures that the child must have age-appropriate, easily available ways to share their opinions, and their voices must be legitimately taken into account during decision-making processes. The

organisation does this by incorporating frequent check-ins, kid-friendly communication techniques, and include kids in the planning and evaluation procedures.

5.3. Challenges faced by the system

Funding

The provision of high-quality care to children in the system could be made possible only by enough finance. It makes ensuring that basic requirements are satisfied, including those for food, clothes, shelter, healthcare, and education. Only with sufficient money could the group foster care system secure the recruiting and retention of qualified and devoted staff members. In order for workers to have the skills and knowledge essential to offer effective care, the system ensures their continued professional development and training, which once again calls for an appropriate resource allocation. The system is funded by an UK based organisation which accounts a 60% of the total fund, the rest 40% should be managed by the organisation so as to ensure a smooth functioning of the system. Even though the government makes use of the facilities available in the organisation there is only mere support from the government which cater to the functioning of the system. If this lack of funding persists the safety and well-being of children in foster care might be jeopardised, as can the responsibility of carers and service providers which in turn affects the government and more over the life of the children. Thus, managing the fund of the system is a challenge for the system. Without adequate funding for ongoing improvement, the group foster care system may find it difficult to handle new problems, adapt to shifting demands, and give cared-for children the best results possible which the system as a whole never wants to compromise.

Changing laws and policies

Careful planning, proactive communication, and ongoing evaluation of the effects on the system of group foster care are necessary to navigate shifting policies and legislation. To make sure that the changing rules and laws promote the best interests and wellbeing of children in group foster care, it is crucial for programme managers, staff members, and stakeholders to keep educated, participate in advocacy efforts, and work together. While a sudden, unfavourable change in rules and policies could pose a threat to the system's ability to operate. The overall design and management of

programmes for group foster care might be affected by changes in laws and regulations. Modifications to administrative processes, paperwork, training protocols, and service delivery models may be necessary as a result of new legislation or mandates. To ensure compliance with the changed policies and legislation, this may necessitate changes to staffing, resources, and operating procedures. There will be a need for an enhanced safety standard, staff-to-child ratios, qualifications for caregivers and professionals, facility inspections, or reporting obligations. Changes in laws and practises also have posed difficulties for the system and affected how decisions are made about placing children in group foster care. It has challenges in funding sources and resource distribution for group foster care programmes impacted by changes in legislation and regulations. Changes in funding priorities, eligibility requirements, reimbursement rates, or grant opportunities may result from new legislation. A facility's capacity and financial stability as a group foster care facility can be directly impacted by changes in funding, which may have an impact on the resources available to provide children with high-quality care and assistance.

Recruitment of staffs

The system often finds it difficult to assign professionals with the right training and experience to handle the variety of needs of children in group foster care. It is an area which needs special attention regarding the safety of the children in their physical, mental and emotional aspects. In order to keep children under control, to ensure their physical safety, and to offer them emotional support, staff personnel are essential. The danger of neglect, abuse, or accidents is lower when there is an adequate staff-to-child ratio that allows for individualised care, effective crisis management, and prompt attention to each child's needs. The Hope Mothers play a crucial role in the agency as they have a great responsibility to be carried out. Any drawback from their side may contribute to the malfunctioning of the system. The social worker may find it easier to personalise their methods and interventions if the mothers can establish relationships with the kids and comprehend their backgrounds and experiences. Meeting each child's physical, emotional, educational, and developmental requirements is more likely when there is enough staff. Experienced mothers, social workers, and other experts are frequently difficult to come by at the facilities. It can be difficult to designate enough employees to satisfy the needs of the children in care due to staff shortages caused by

the demanding nature of the work. Group foster care systems can better distribute employees to meet the needs of children and encourage positive results by addressing these difficulties. The system is efficient at implementing the multifaceted strategy that is necessary to address these problems which shall be discussed under the next objective.

Social Acceptance

Social acceptance is crucial for a system like this that look forward in creating a better future by accommodating the children who are in need of care and protection. But there is a serious challenge caused by lack of knowledge about the service being provided by the system. There was an initial apprehension that the initiative was aimed in promoting a religious charity and thus there was a lack of acceptance. The community also were not aware about the role of the professional social worker and the benefits of the system in moulding the life of a child. Thus, it was a great challenge in making the community aware about the series of activities taking place inside the system and the roles that the staffs play in ensuring well-being of the children.

5.4. Strategies to tackle the challenges

For the welfare and successful results of foster children, it is essential to address issues inside the foster care system. To give these kids a secure and caring environment, the system's problems must be resolved. By addressing the issues in various areas, including their safety, stability, education, emotional health, and successful transition to adulthood, as well as by advocating for legislative changes, we can build a foster care system that offers these kids the opportunities and support they need to flourish and realise their full potential.

Funding

For children in need to get high-quality care and assistance, it is essential to address the funding problems that arise in group foster care systems. The resources required to ensure the wellbeing of children in foster care must be funded. The foster care system ensures that there are enough resources available to satisfy the children's different requirements by addressing financing issues, fostering their overall development and favourable results. To deal with the same the system has come up with certain strategies

which have the potential to tackle the challenges posed by funding needs. The strategies adopted by the system include boosting their publicity among the people so as to mobilise funds through programmes like accepting their general donations. Sponsor a child is a programme that aims to attract people who have the potential to cater a child who is need of care and protection till an age of 18 or more if they wish by ensuring that their adequate needs are met. Offer a meal is yet another programme which have gained much attention as it encourages the people to contribute money so as to provide meal at the system according to their preference for arranging the breakfast or lunch. Certain warm-hearted people from the community have even take up initiatives in contributing for promoting education of the child which is an activity available at the system for providing support for higher education. Thus, the system has adopted certain strategies to tackle the challenges and managing to find their portion of 40% of fund as the system is aware that adequate funding is very much needed to ensure the quality of the system. As a result, by addressing financing issues, the system can offer the kids a constant and dependable support network, encouraging stability and good relationships. So that they continue to successfully meet the needs of kids in foster care and give them the assistance they need for their wellbeing and successful futures.

Changing laws and policies

In order to ensure the system to be effective, responsive, and in line with the best interests of the children in care, it is imperative to address issues associated with changing laws and policies. In the context of altering laws and policies, the system apply child - centered strategies that emphasise their safety, stability, development, and overall positive results by addressing issues associated to shifting laws and regulations. It makes sure that the practises and processes of the system are in line with the advancement of knowledge regarding child welfare and practises. The system also adapts to new legislative requirements, stay up to date with legal frameworks, and ensure that the rights of children are upheld and protected. The system also encourages participation of stakeholders in the process fosters accountability, openness, and a range of viewpoints. The rules and regulations will ultimately result in more effective and long-lasting reforms as they are taking into account the collective knowledge and input of individuals involved in the foster care system. The agency also takes up initiative in providing platform to spread awareness, promote important reforms, and have an

impact on legislative and policy decision-making. By addressing these issues, the foster care system can help bring about broader socioeconomic reforms that advance the rights, opportunities, and well-being of children in care.

Recruitment of staffs

To ensure the system's efficient operation and the welfare of the children in care, it is imperative to address the difficulties encountered while hiring workers. Thus, the system provides a special attention in tackling the challenge by adopting means in ensuring that the staffs allotted have the potential to bring desired changes in the lives of children. This is being guaranteed through a proper interviewing process which shall affirm that the system opts only professional workers who are trust worthy and active enough to take up the responsibilities in the system in carrying out office works. The youngsters can be given the proper care and support catered to their unique needs by hiring staff members with specialised skills and knowledge. The Hope Mothers in the organisation play a pivotal role in making sure that the objective of the system is being fulfilled. Thus, that is an area which needs a great care while choosing the Hope Mothers so that the system remains effective in providing care to their children. The hope mothers are selected under certain criteria by publishing an advertisement which calls for the interested ladies to apply for the post. The Hope Mothers are selected after an interview process and additional trainings are provided based on the prepared module. In order to attract workers with different backgrounds and qualifications, the foster care system must overcome recruitment difficulties. This will improve the quality of the children's support. For the welfare, security, and growth of the children in their care, it is crucial to find and keep qualified, committed employees. Taking care of recruitment issues improves the outcomes for the kids and maintains a high standard of care. As a result, the system places a high priority on efficient hiring in order to create a welcoming and encouraging work environment for employees and the benefit of the kids. In turn, this promotes employee retention, motivation, and satisfaction. By attracting devoted professionals who are committed to the welfare of the children, the system's supportive culture promotes a collaborative and cohesive team.

Social acceptance

Foster children are more likely to be accepted and supported by the community when stigma and discrimination are reduced. Foster children who feel accepted are more likely to take part in community activities, have access to resources, and form good identities as contributing members of society. It encourages locals to actively support and advocate for the needs of foster children, cultivating a sense of civic duty among them. In order to ensure the support from the community the system has integrated different activities which promote participation of the community in addition to providing foster care for the children. The system also provides library facility for the community at fixed time which is being utilised by the members of the community especially youngsters. The system also has kindergarten facility which accommodate the children from the community at a reasonable fee and provide care and the facilities that have the potential to attract more children from the community. Thus, the system organises many outreach programmes by lending a helping hand for the needy which ranges from providing educational support for the neediest for ensuring the community participation. The system also promotes the transparency of its functioning by providing job opportunities for the people from the community. Thus, in all possible ways the system is tackling the challenge posed by the lack of social acceptance which has proven to have positive impacts to the overall functioning of the system. Social acceptance lays the groundwork for a successful course in their life after leaving the foster care system. Foster children thrive and realise their full potential when they are in an environment that values and accepts them as they travel through the foster care system and beyond which should be ensured by the system for their own upliftment and in bringing a potential change in the lives of their children.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1. Findings

What is the process Hope Community Village follow in the system?

- the process that they follow in the system consists of intake through which the child recognised as Child in need of care and protection is admitted to the system.
- the system ensures the medical fitness of the child through medical examinations and provides a special attention to the child if she/he needs it.
- the child is welcomed to the organisation in a way that create a sense of belongingness to the child.
- further a need assessment is carried out to identify the basic needs which include attention to their shelter, health, clothing etc... if the child based on which the intervention will be planned.
- the system then intervenes into the life of that child as per the planned assessment through the prepared care plan, based on which the house, school etc... will be selected taking into account the most appropriate among the choices. Daily activities at the system which is planned to improve the skills of the child add on to the betterment of the child integrated into the system.
- the effectiveness of theses interventions is evaluated through daily observations which is recorded by the staff of the agency.
- when the child attains an age of 18 efforts to relink the child to the family is being taken up by the system if the child has a safe place to go. Or else the system has an after-care facility to accommodate the child.

The main objective of the system is in making the child independent by helping them to secure a job. The system is also flexible in the matters of finding life partner for the child according to marriage policy prescribed by the agency. Even though the child is re linked or is remaining in contact with the system a proper follow up is carried to ensure the well-being of the person nurtured in the system

How is the system beneficial to the child?

The system is seemed to be very beneficial to the child which was revealed through the data analysis by taking into account the opinions shared by the stakeholders of the system.

- The system gives a special attention to ensure that the right of the child is being protected. The provision for Quality Health Care, Age-appropriate nutrition and a safe place to live affirms that the child is getting opportunities to enjoy the right to survival through the facilities in the system that caters a family environment for the child rather than mere place for survival. Taking into account the importance of a family environment for a child it could thus be concluded that the system tries its maximum in ensuring the right of survival for the child.
- The right to protection is ensured by the agency through eliminating the threat caused by physical violence and psychological intimidation. Even if the system is asked to admit a child who has a background of being exploited the system takes care that the child victims are rehabilitated and reintegrated into society with dignity so that they can realise their actual potential and revive from their traumatic experience through interaction with the peer group, siblings and Mother at Hope Community Village. A special attention is provided in order to protect the child and offer care with respect to their ethnic background and religion by providing them opportunities for practicing their own religion. The right of the child regarding protection is ensured through Child Protection Policy of the system and the Child Protection Team who are invested with the duty to keep an eye on the protection of the children in the system.
- The system offers the child with a wide range of extra-curricular activities for gaining specialized skills and physical and mental abilities through which the system provides right to development by utilizing the opportunity according to the interest of the child. The system never takes control over the child's life instead the child is always provided with options to make decisions for their life.
- Even regarding the matters of the system, the child has a prominent role to raise their voice if they think that any of their rights are being violated. Thus, the

voice of the children is taken into account in order to ensure their right of participation.

This clearly reveals that the system looks after the child by providing all opportunities beneficial to the child in all way possible.

What are the challenges faced by the organisation?

- The system which works in the field of child-care are more prone to challenges.
- As it is a non -profit organisation the initial challenge is of mobilising funds needed to satisfy the growing demand of group foster system in providing the resources needed for the children. Even though the government is also benefitted out of this organisation as they find the system as appropriate in providing a safe place for the development and protection of the children, the help from the government regarding the matter of funding is nil. Even if the agency is funded by UK based organisation, 40% of the fund needs to be managed by the system itself. This exists as a great challenge. Thus, the government needs to actively take part in ensuring that the system likes these have access to resources and the government could support them to tackle with the issue which could be seen as a suggestion through this study so that it could work as a mechanism to tackle the challenge.
- The changing government policies are imposing a challenge to the system as the system needs to get adapted to the ever-changing policies of the government that may affect the functioning of the system. So, the government should take into account the functioning of these organisation and the benefit they are contributing to the life of children. Taking those into account the changing policies should be favourable for the Group foster care system so that the system can be flexible in adapting to the changes in the policies.
- Staff plays a crucial role in the success of the system, rather than mere staff the system looks forward to having staffs with professionalism, lack of this have paved way for challenge in the system. As a social work trainee, the researcher foresaw the potential of professional social workers in tackling with the issue as they have the skills and ability to combat with the issues of a group foster care system through a professional dealing.

- Initially the organisation has faced challenge due to the lack of social acceptance, but which is now not at all an issue because of the gaining attention about the activities carried out by Hope Community Village as a Group Foster Care system which contribute positively in the life of Children in Need of Care and Protection.

What are the strategies used by the system to tackle the challenge?

The system has their own way of dealing with the challenges which have added on to the success of the agency.

- In order to tackle with their problems regarding funding they have implemented strategies like Sponsor a child, Offer a meal, Support for Higher education, General donations which have the potential to combat to the issue by gaining the support from good hearted people who have the will to contribute for the betterment of the children.
- The system also easily get adapts to the changes brought about by the government through its policies and programmes through new initiatives. The system thus manages to advocate for their rights and frame their own provisions which will be bound to the rules laid by the government.
- Through proper interview process and allotting qualified staff the agency manages to tackle with their problem of lack of staffing.
- Social acceptance is gained by the agency by extending their activities to outreach programme and improving the transparency in all their works. Thus, the agency plays a very much notable role as a group foster care system.

6.2 Suggestion

The researcher hereby put forward a suggestion that the system doesn't have a written steps or procedure to be carried out for the admission of a child to the agency. Instead, they are working on the basis of their previous experience. If there are a written and clearly laid down frame work of process of intake that is time bound and realistic, it could have added on to the ease of administration while admitting a child to the system. The researcher has listed it under different methods of social work which could exist as a suggestion that could be adopted by the agency if they feel it as relevant.

6.3 Social work Implications

Children's experiences in group foster care are influenced not just by the care system, but also by broader societal issues, personal situations, and existing support networks. Efforts to enhance the standard of group foster care and offer all-encompassing support might reduce potential negative effects and encourage favourable outcomes for kids. Thus, there is an importance in social work for the selected topic which helps in knowing in depth about the functioning of the system that takes up a leading role in providing group foster care. Knowledge of the foster care system in relation to child welfare can assist decision-makers, social workers, and organisations involved in child welfare to devise sensible interventions. Studying the organization's procedures, guidelines, and results can provide information on the benefits and drawbacks of managing a foster care system. Advocacy activities and policy creation targeted at bolstering child protection measures can be informed by evaluating if the rights of children in the system are being protected and whether suitable protections are in place. The system of group foster care also looks forward for family reunification and preservation which cater to the need of identifying the importance of providing a family environment and the ability to children to adapt to it. Foster parents, social workers, and other professionals participating with the foster care system can benefit from comprehensive policies, guidelines, and training programmes that are created with an overall in-depth understanding of a group foster care system which will be the outcome of this study.

6.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, Kerala's system of group foster care is a crucial tool for preserving the rights and general welfare of children who require care and protection. This study has examined the Group Foster care system of Hope Community Village by taking into account many facets and shed light on how important it is in giving vulnerable kids a homelike atmosphere. It is clear as we traverse the difficulties of child welfare that a strong and supportive system, like group foster care, is necessary to safeguard these children's futures. The results of this study highlight how crucial a family atmosphere is for kids who haven't had access to a secure and nurturing home. The group foster care paradigm acknowledges that family extends beyond blood relatives. This approach successfully meets the emotional, psychological, and developmental requirements of

these kids by encouraging a feeling of community, support, and direction. Additionally, the research emphasises how group foster care benefits children's overall development. They are given the individualised care, instruction, and medical attention they require within a familial setting, giving them the abilities and emotional fortitude, they will need to succeed in their future lives. It gives them the ability to end the cycle of vulnerability and disadvantage, empowering them to contribute positively to society. The group foster care system in Kerala lays the groundwork for a more promising and inclusive future by providing opportunities for mentorship, education, and skill-building. The group foster care system's adaptation to religious practises is another factor in its effectiveness. Community values are incorporated into the system to guarantee that children receive care while also maintaining a connection to their history and traditions. Their feeling of identity and pride are fostered by this all-encompassing approach, which also raises their self-worth and self-esteem. The kids are better able to positively impact their communities as a result and are more likely to grow up with a strong feeling of belonging. It is important to recognise that there are difficulties in putting group foster care into practise. The provision of high-quality care depends on providing carers with sufficient training and support, allocating sufficient resources, and conducting ongoing evaluations. The system's viability and efficacy are ensured by collaboration with governmental entities, non-governmental organisations, and communities more closely. It can be ensured that the rights of every child in need of care and protection are protected by consistent efforts. In conclusion, group foster care system of Hope Community Village serves as an example of a progressive approach to child welfare by providing children in need with a homelike atmosphere. This study highlights the value of this system in giving children who have experienced hardship in their young lives love, security, and support. Group foster care opens the way for a more compassionate and just society by supporting their overall development, nourishing their potential, and giving them the tool, they need to break free from the chains of vulnerability. Stakeholders must keep funding the expansion and improvement of the system for group foster care as we move forward. Every child needs to grow up in a supportive setting where their rights are upheld and their dreams can come true. Thus, it is important to build a brighter, more equitable future for Kerala where every child can thrive and make a meaningful contribution to society by prioritising the well-being of these kids and fighting for their rights

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APPENDIX

Discussion Guide

Respondent Profile-

Category of respondent:

Date:

Duration:

(General Instructions will be provided to the participants regarding the purpose and objectives of the study, ethical considerations with regards to securing anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants.)

Category of respondent:

Childhood

1. What are the activities that the system provides you in ensuring education?
2. How does the agency ensure the healthcare of your family member at Hope?
3. What according to your opinion is the service that you find as most useful?
4. What is your opinion about Hope mothers?
5. How is the attitude of the staffs towards you?
6. How good is the family environment created here?
7. Explain the instances at which you get opportunities for enjoyment
8. How are your interest being safeguarded by the organisation?

Adolescent girls

1. Explain the way by which you got admitted to the agency
2. What are the activities that the system provides you in ensuring education?
3. How does the agency ensure the healthcare of your family member at Hope?
4. What is your opinion about Hope mothers?
5. How is the attitude of the staffs towards you?
6. How good is the family environment created here?
7. What according to your opinion is the service that you find as most useful?
8. In what way does the agency addressed the menarche?
9. How does the agency deal with love affairs that may takes place at this age?

10. How does the agency help you in planning the future career?

11. Are there any potential challenges or areas for improvement within the system that you would like to highlight?

Category of respondent: Mothers

1. How do the mothers in the agency contribute to the well-being and development of children?

2. How does the system involve foster mothers in the decision-making process regarding the child's well-being, education, and healthcare?

3. How does the system support foster mothers in managing the emotional challenges that may arise when caring for children who have experienced trauma or loss?

4. What according to your opinion should be improved at the organisation?

Documentary evidence

https://www.instagram.com/p/Cumkj_vhnA7/?igshid=MzRIODBiNWFIZA==

Interview guide

Date:

Duration:

(General Instructions will be provided to the participants regarding the purpose and objectives of the study, ethical considerations with regards to securing anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants)

Category of respondent: Staff

1. How do you think the system helps in the development of the child?
2. How does the system support reunification with biological family when it is deemed appropriate?
3. What are the procedures undertaken to admit a child to the agency?
4. How does the agency ensure that children's basic needs are adequately met?
5. How is the agency legally bounded to the protocols as suggested by the authorities?
6. What steps does the foster care system take to protect children from neglect, abuse, or dangerous living situations?
7. What kind of support and training are provided to foster mothers to help them navigate the unique challenges and responsibilities of caring for children in foster care?
8. What is the scope for development you find at this organization?