

# Case Study on Vacation Foster Care Project in Kollam District

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## ABSTRACT

Vacation Foster Care provides temporary foster home to the children in need of care and protection during vacation period of school ending. This programme introduced to provide homely atmosphere to the foster children in Kerala. This study implemented to get the experience of both foster children and parents attending Vacation Foster Care programme. The study used qualitative approach and case study design. Data from 8 respondents were collected with convenient sampling from Kollam district. The result of the study pointed out that, foster care programme benefited both parents and children in physical, mental and social ways. Children got homely atmosphere and it helped their behaviour in a positive manner.

**Keywords:** *Vacation Foster Care, Foster Parent, Foster Child.*

## INTRODUCTION

According to Sikdar, as per the (Child Labour Prohibition and Regulation Act, 1986), a child is defined as the person who has not completed his 14 years of age (Sikdar, 2012). The (Plantation Labour Act, 1951) defines that child means a person who has not completed his fourteenth year (India, 1951). Adolescent means a person who has completed his fourteenth year but has not completed his eighteenth year. The child lives under the support of his/her family members, whenever a child found to be distracted with the family; children homes provide hospitality along with education. A children home is an institutional care home for children in need of care and protection. Children homes provide hospitality and education for children till eighteen years (Prezadu, 2016). In Kerala children homes are in the 14 districts, children living in these homes were reached in the institution due to several living circumstances. Most of the children in these institutions may not be satisfied with their past living conditions. Although the children living in the institutional care setup is provided with basic facilities, no institution can ensure the atmosphere of own home. So, in 2015 Kerala Government started a project titled Vacation Foster Care and is being carried out by the District Child Protection Units and Child Welfare Committees (THE HINDU, 2016). The prime objective of the project is to nurture and support children between the age of 6 and 18, residing in registered care homes in the state and provide them maximum non- institutional care (Raja,2018). Through this project children get a chance to know how a family system functions, how to mingle with each other in a family celebration and how to adjust with strangers. The foster care will end when the child turns 18 years of age if, till then, he has not been adopted. The foster family will also have the first right to adopt the child. The child welfare committee will periodically review each child's case

(Nair, 2015). The applicants of this programme are both childless couples and couples with children. The project first implemented in Malappuram and Kollam district of Kerala in 2015 and following which it was extended to the remaining districts in the following year (Mohammad, 2016). When considering the side of law, Juvenile Justice Act of 2015, pointed out that, child is required to stay with his or her foster parent for at least 5 years before legal adoption (Raja, 2018).

## BACKGROUND

Foster Care opens the possibilities of sharing family experience. The report after the project was highly satisfactory to the children under gone vacation foster care. Most of the districts were not much aware about Vacation Foster Care. To provide information on the project and its impact towards parents and children, the researcher focuses on particular topic. Hence it can also help other districts and states for implementing the programme. This study explains about the impacts of Vacation Foster Care programme in Kollam district jointly implemented by the CWC and DCPU, Kollam. This study can help the department of social justice for evaluating the project in the district, as a result it can be circulated towards different districts for knowing what Vacation Foster Care means and its benefits. The prime objectives of the study focused on the socio- economic background of the children, vacation foster care experience of children, foster parenting experience by comparing the cases and what opportunity they had got during the foster care period.

## METHOD AND MATERIALS

Study followed qualitative research approach and case study design. The research material consisted of 8 interviews with both parents and children by using convenient sampling. Foster parents were permanent residents from Kollam district. The primary and secondary data were collected with the help of the Child Welfare Committee and District Child Protection Office, Kollam, which also helped to select the interviewees. Interviewees gave their oral consent for the tap-record and the researcher explained to them that the collected materials would be used confidentially and presented in a way that confirm anonymity. This study used semi- structured interview schedule and primary details regarding foster care project collected from the Child Welfare Committee and District Child Protection Office, Kollam. As per the principle of confidentiality, name of the respondents was completely changed and the data were analysed with the help of NVivo Pro 11. The individual cases were compared using sources. Nodes were created and data were uploaded to each node on the basis of information provided by respondents. Word tree was generated for examining the most repeated incident from the conversations.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

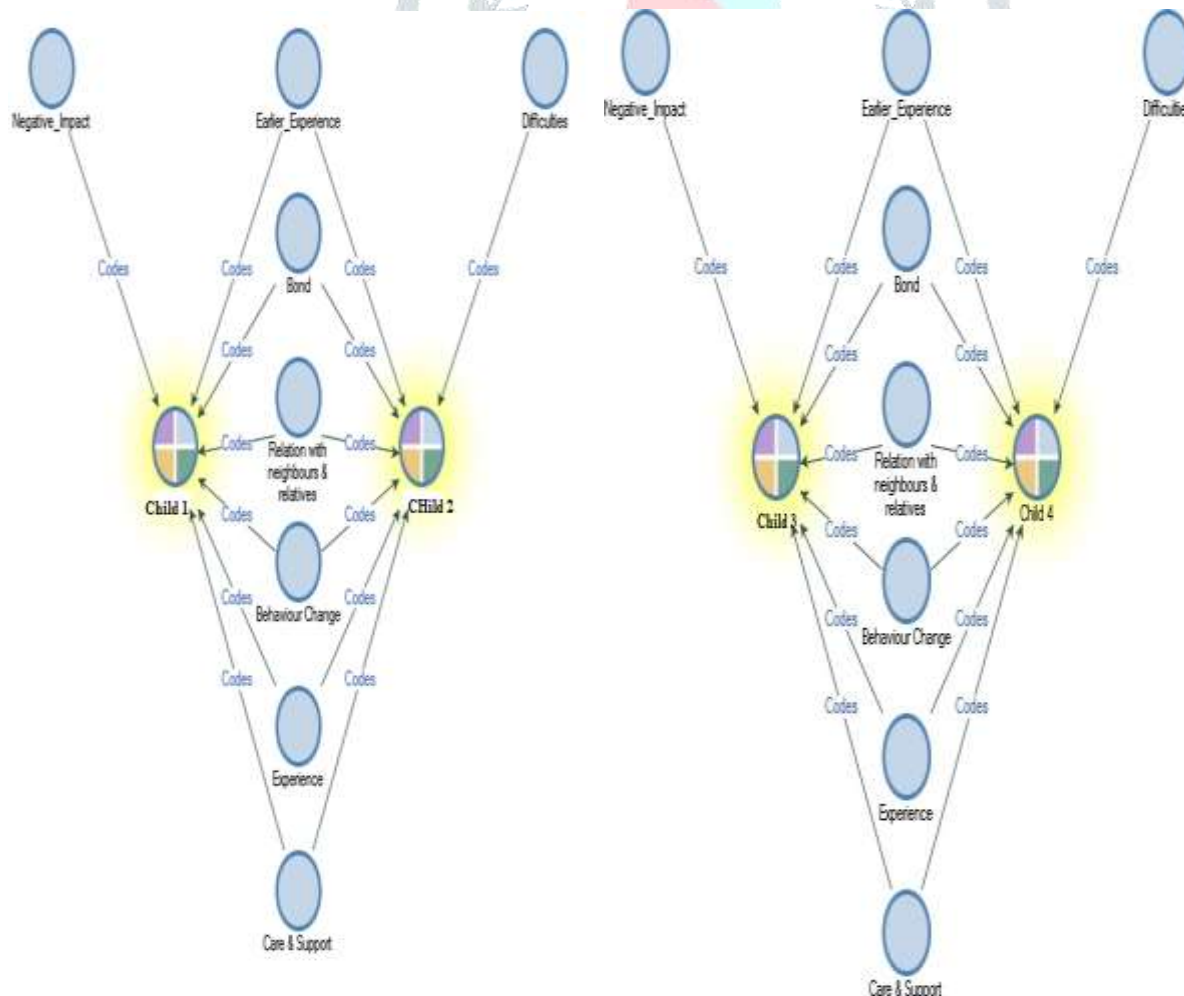
Case studies were done with foster children and foster parents, a sample of 4 foster parents and 4 foster children were taken for the study. Among the 8 respondents, 3 children were chosen from Anjanam

Children home, Kollam and 1 Child from Govt. Children’s home, Kollam. The foster parents were from Kottarakkara and Kollam taluk.

**Socio-Economic Background of the Child**

The researcher found that the socio-economic background of majority of the children are not highly safe. There are children with own families undergone vacation foster care programme. The own family direct a child to children home due to their economic difficulties in the family. They found difficulties in sending the child to school. So as to avoid this, parents brought the child before Child Welfare Committee and they provide hostel facility to the child at children home along with education. In some cases of an orphan child, they do not have a permanent shelter for residence. They were also admitted to the children home along with hostel facility and education. All these are children in need of care and protection. When these children loss an opportunity to experience a homely atmosphere with own parents, they were sending to foster homes for the school vacation to experience a homely atmosphere (Mohammad, 2016). The shared experiences of children are described below. The category first refers about the children and second category refer foster parents.

**Case Comparison of Foster Children**



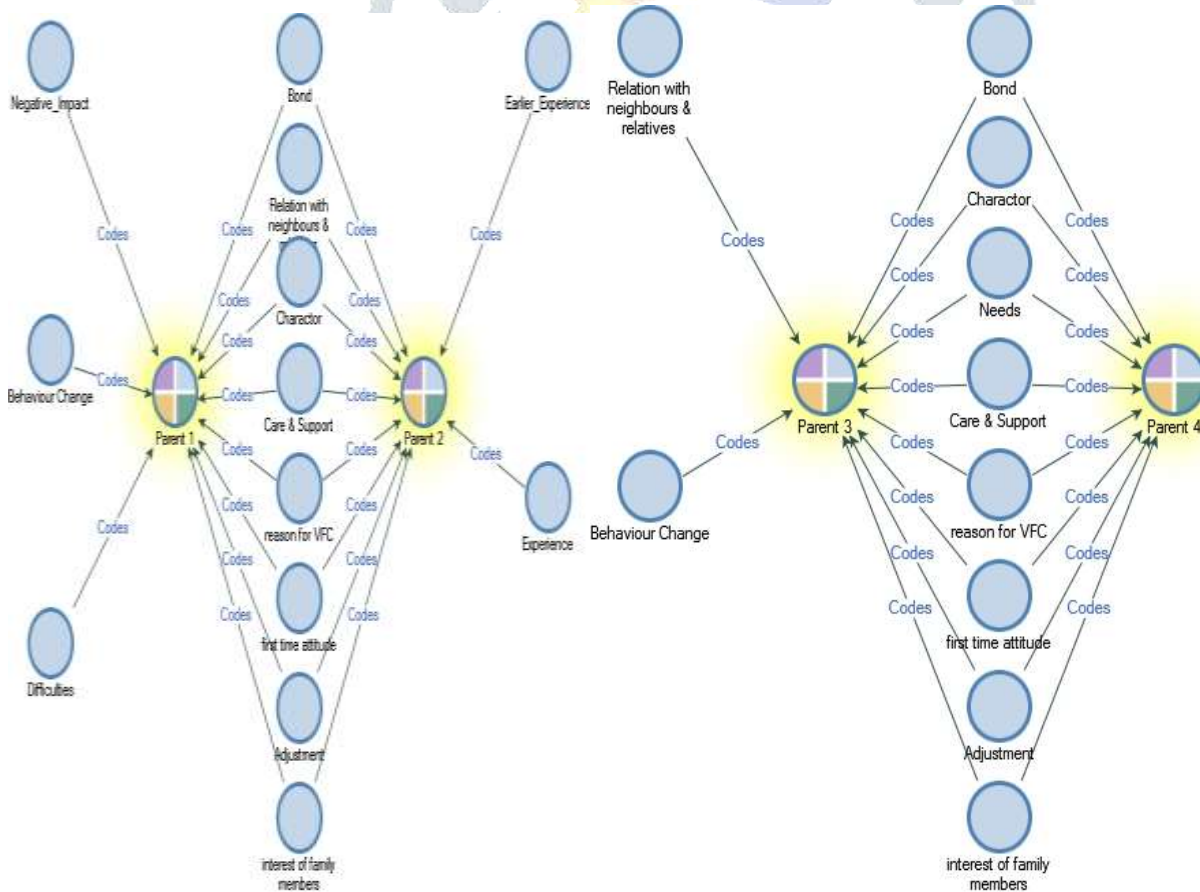
**. Fig.1: Comparison of foster and 2**

**Fig. 2: Comparison of foster experience of child 1 experience of child 3 and 4**

Figure 1 shows that; the child 1 and 2 experienced a good bond from the family and the family found very cooperative for children. Both of the children maintained a good relationship with the foster family. Thus, it can be proved that both of the respondents experienced a similar foster experience. Figure 2 shows that, both the child 3 and 4 commented on earlier experience, bond, relation with neighbours and relatives, behaviour change, experience, care and support. Respondent 3 commented that he had no foster experience in the past and he came from own family to the children home. The respondent 3 also commented on behaviour change, respondent said that she/he tried to wake up earlier in the morning. It was a change happen to the respondent during those days at foster home.

Regarding care, support and overall experience, the respondent 3 commented that Vacation Foster Care provided an opportunity to gain great homely atmosphere. The respondent did not experience any negative impact. According to respondent 4, Vacation Foster Care was a new experience. The respondent commented that there was a good communication between the foster family members and relatives of the family and child did not experience any difficulties during the foster period. All the four respondents completed 60 days at foster homes. Each respondent individually commented that they did not receive any bitter experience from the foster family. None of the respondents commented negatively towards the foster care experience. Except one respondent, all others were interested to stay with the foster families again. Thus, it can be proved that, Vacation Foster Care provides a positive impact for the majority in experiencing the atmosphere of a family.

**Case Comparison of Parents**



**Fig. 3: Case comparison of parent 1 and 2**

**Fig. 4: Case comparison of parent 3 and 4**

Figure 3 shows that, both parent 1 and parent 2 commented on the bond of child with the foster family. The foster child from both families maintained a good relationship with the neighbours and relatives. Both parents commented on the character of the child. As stated earlier, parent 1 experienced few difficulties with the child's code of conduct. But parent 2 was highly satisfied with the behaviour of foster child. Both of the respondents commented on the node character, each parent commented entirely different from the others. Regarding care and support, the respondents commented about their inner feelings while taking care of a child. Both of the respondents have entirely different reason for fostering a child from children home. Parent 1 took the child when they heard about the past situation of the child. Figure 4 shows that, both of the parents commented on the node: bond, character, needs, care and support, reason for vacation foster care, first time attitude, adjustment and interest of family members. While comparing both cases, it was found that one of the respondents didn't comment much related to the relationship of child with the relatives of family members and behaviour change.

According to parent 2, the child behaved in the family very well. There was a good bond between the child and the family. The child's code of conduct was satisfactory. They did not have a child, so they applied for vacation foster care. The child did not face any issue when she/he arrived at the home for first time. Child had a good bond with the members of foster family. When comparing the cases again with other respondents, each respondent had entirely different experience. All the four respondents showed their interest to next Vacation Foster Care programme. Hence it can be proved that the Vacation Foster Care programme was success among those foster parents.

### **Experience of Foster Children**

The Children were happy with the atmosphere of all the foster homes. As per the information provided by the respondents, the foster parents cared them very well. The researcher found that majority of children got an outing tour opportunity with the foster families. Regarding children without own family background, they experienced a new life within the foster home. They got an opportunity to call the foster parents as father and mother. They also experienced the daily routine of the family. Some of the children got an opportunity to play with the nearby children. One of the foster children birthday was celebrated by the family, and it was a first-time experience for the child. The foster parents guided the children regarding their education, health and hygiene.

### **Foster Parenting Experience**

Majority of the foster parents were happy with the child's attitude. The applicants of vacation foster care programme include families with and without a child at home. Here two respondents were from family without own children, but there was no difference found between the care and support provided by the foster parents. In each residence, foster parents care the child like their own family member. The foster child thus has a good relation with the foster parents, their children, grandparents and even with the

relatives of the family. Majority of the parents were highly satisfied with the experience of being a parent for the foster child.

### Change in the behaviour of child

The aim of vacation foster care was to provide a homely atmosphere to the children at foster homes. The researcher found that the foster parents tried to motivate the children in the field of education. For girl child, majority of the foster parent teach them regarding the menstrual hygiene management and their bodily changes, because most of them were unaware about the major reason for physical changes. This made a great change in the girls after Vacation Foster Care programme. Each child gained different individual foster care experience from the family.

### MAJOR FINDINGS

- Majority of the respondents did not have a child in the family. So, they were attracted to apply for Vacation Foster Care programme
- All the foster families were interested to provide a safe home for the foster child
- Children got an opportunity to access resources which is required for the wellbeing of the family, such as education, wellness, health, etc
- Foster care helps to make changes in the attitude of the child and add-on new habits to the children
- Vacation foster care develops a bonding with the family. It cherishes both the foster parent and child

### CONCLUSION

Through this study the researcher proved that, vacation foster care can make changes to the children living in institutional care for a long period of time. The relation with the foster child and parent even made minute changes in the life of both. It was found that each child undergone vacation foster care programme was highly satisfied with the surroundings they lived in. Vacation foster care can develop intellectual changes to the child, it provides an opportunity to know about the importance of building a structured family in life. The child learn about how a family should be and can understood about the family dynamics and opportunities provided to its members in the family. So, it can be concluded that foster care experience is something entirely different from the life at institutional care. Vacation Foster care was a new practical living experience to the child with foster family, in which the child gains the importance of family life through live learning experience during 2 months of summer holidays.

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