CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Adolescence

Adolescence is the period of transition, a distinct and dynamic phase of development in the life of an individual because during this period an individual is neither a child nor an adult. The inability to cope with the changes has a direct impact on adolescents' psychosocial health and development on interpersonal relationships. Stanley Hall (1844-1924), was the first psychologist to advance psychology of adolescence in its own right and to use scientific methods to study them. He defined this period to begin at puberty at about 12 or 13 years, and end late, between 22 years to 25 years of age. Hall also described adolescence as a period of “storm and stress.”

Foundations of adequate growth and development are laid during childhood and adolescence years. Children reach puberty at this age and girls attain puberty earlier than boys. This maturation marks the transition of a girl to a woman capable of begetting children. In boys its beginning is marked by the onset of voice change followed by rapid physical growth and psychological changes. The changes are happening due to development of secondary sex characteristics in body and its effect on mind because of hormonal changes. The child may not be aware about the changes happening to her or his body and mind. During adolescence they should be aware about their body and mind. When adolescents arrive at wrong conclusion, they need support and supervision of parents and adults to guide them and to learn from their experiences. It is very important that, parents should play a great role in determining the personality of their child during adolescence.
1.2. Importance of home and Psychosocial well-being of adolescents

Parents’ availability may serve as an indicator of guidance and structure to the adolescent but without elements of more explicit parental control that are often associated with negative adolescent outcomes. A positive standard of psychological well-being in adolescence includes both the development of an independent sense of identity and the maintenance of close relationships with parents (Bulanda and Majumdar, 2008). Consequently support, monitoring, and discipline are central dimensions of parental behaviors that are linked with the adolescent’s adjustment and well-being (Mullik, 1995). Thus the home and the family provide a protective and stimulating medium for the child’s physical, mental and spiritual growth and hence it is considered to be the ideal place for every child. But not all children are blessed with such continued care and protection from infancy to adulthood. Various emotional, social and economic causes such as the absence of one or both parents due to either unknown or death, separation or divorce, marital discord, being born out of wedlock, chronic or contagious illness, single parent families, displacement, disaster, communal riots, extreme poverty, unemployment, employment of the mother, migration, breaking up of joint families, abuse and misuse by the family etc., create situations where children cannot live with their parents. Under these circumstances alternative forms of care like, children’s homes and treatment for the child becomes inevitable.

1.3. Significance of Institutions for Care and Protection of Children

According to Indian Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 "Children’s home” means an institution established by a State Government or by voluntary organization and certified by that Government under section 34. (1) i.e for the
reception of child in need of care and protection during the pendency of any inquiry and subsequently for their care, treatment, education, training, development and rehabilitation. Majority of the children are admitted to children’s home at the age of 0-5 years belong to different family backgrounds irrespective of religion. These government or non-government institutions are run on grants or sponsorship which is not adequate to meet expenses to bring up the children in the children’s home, where authorities are forced to cut short many basic facilities to inmates.

1.3.1. Situation of Children’s home in Kerala

All the non-government children’s home are managed by either religious or private organizations have a minimum of 50 and a maximum of 175 children living in a space of approximately 30-40 occupants. Typical children’s home includes dormitory for sleep, living room cum study room, common dining room and common bathroom. Each institution has a director, who is generally a religious person or chief official of the non-governmental organization running the institution; there will be additional staff including a care taker and office staff. In Government children’s home, Superintendent and Deputy Superintendent are in charge of the home; a case worker, full-time care taker and office assistants are the additional staff. Both governmental and non-governmental children’s home are administered under the District social welfare officer and Director of Social welfare Department, Government of Kerala. The major factor leading to institutionalization of children in Kerala are economic problems, broken homes and orphan-hood (Jessy, 2008).

The way the children’s home are organized and run by the kind of socialization facilities, and care they are providing as per their objectives largely affect, mould and reflect the
personalities of the inmates. Lack of proper environmental support will affect negatively the quality of well-being of any individual. Physical facilities are not enough to accomplishing well developed personality in which psychological support could make the mission complete. While these children are attaining the age of adolescence, they lack a lot of necessary inputs for proper growth and development, like nutritious food, psychological support, positive environment, freedom, love, care etc suppose to be received by a normal child with supporting parent (Siddiqui, 1997). While the psychological changes happen, someone should be there to understand them, support and strengthen their ego and to divert their negative attitudes to positive attitude.

1.4. Background of the present study

The factors that prompted the researcher to take up this study among adolescent girls of children’s home have their roots quite deep. The childhood experience of residing nearby children’s home, regular visits, interaction with classmates from children’s home, persuaded researcher all time. Professionally the long association with adolescent girls has been for over 12 years now. Her interest to know more about them has been intensified during the course of continuous association with adolescent girls of children’s homes, institutions, communities and schools during her career, and this facilitated her to understand the real need among these girls. More she came to know about them, more she became curious and desired to get involved with whatever possible activity which could contribute their welfare.

Apart from this, reasons for the selection of girls from children’s homes as study group are the following:
• Children’s home authorities’ requests to researcher to conduct personality
development programmes for the inmates especially girls.

• Many adolescent girls are sexually active but lack information and skill for self –
protection.

• Incidences of sexual exploitation and abuse in the society towards girls

1.5. Statement of the problem

The institutionalized children lack adequate opportunities to form enduring emotional
relationships, which are basic to the adaptation of an individual’s personal and social
needs. As a result their basic needs will be thwacked as they grow up with poor mental
health. The deprived children were less adjusted with low mental capacity, low self
esteem, and weak super ego (Jose, 2008., Nayak, 2000., Goldfarb, 1945). The adolescent
girls in Children’s Home are generally less informed on developmental changes during
adolescence, life skills and access to services needed for positive outlook in life. Besides,
the following factors related to institutional environment also contributing the difficult
situations among adolescent girls.

• Lack of sufficient functionaries at children’s home to provide individual attention
for the girls and lack of training for the functionaries to guide the inmates.

• Early maturity prevalent in girls and lack of proper guidance and care during
adolescence from functionaries of the children's homes.

• Lack of seriousness towards education and future among these girls.
- Lack of nutritious food and hygiene in the children’s homes
- Lack of exposure to the realities of life and society among these girls.
- Lack of expression of personal feelings, capacity to take decision on their future once leaving the children’s home after 10th standard.

In reality adolescent girls in children’s home have more threats to face after completion of their 10th standard. The authorities are sending these girls back after 10th standard, with whom they claim as their relatives, parent/s or other legal claimants. Some of these girls may go to other institutions or get married soon or may continue their study. Some of them may go for job and rests have to serve virtually in the homes of their relatives or employers. Some of them unfortunately fall in the hands of criminals, traders of flesh and beggars. In case of orphan girls they may stay back in the children’s home till they get married or get into jobs like assisting the authorities or till they sent to other institutions where they can get admission above 18 years of age.

As per Indian Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 of children’s home, the children can stay till the age of 18 years. But all non-government children’s home authorities in Thrissur have taken a common decision to send them back after 10th standard because of the previous experiences former inmates’ elopements, love marriages, sexual abuse, cheatings, and ignorance while they interact with the outer world. To survive in these conditions adolescent girls in children’s home are required to build confidence and to equip them to face the situations and challenges in their life.

Although social workers, students of social work and educators have been visiting Children’s Home in India for several decades, very few significant research studies have been conducted among adolescent girls in the Children’s Home. Moreover, there is very
little attention given through intervention by researchers among adolescent girls in the children’s homes and most of the studies are conducted among adolescent girls from schools, and communities in India.

Under these contexts the want for formulating a need based intervention programme for the adolescent girls in the children’s homes, was felt by the researcher. Amidst these observations experiences and interaction with both inmates and functionaries of children’s homes, the research idea of conducting systematic study for the psychosocial well being of adolescent girls in Children’s Home evolved.

1.6. Research Questions

The study aims to find answers to the following questions –

1. How are these adolescent girls in children’s home living, growing, and the kind of education being received and the status of their health?

2. What is the level of awareness of these adolescent girls regarding developmental changes during adolescence, related issues and its management?

3. How is their level of subjective well-being?

4. How positive is their self esteem?

5. What kind of adjustments difficulties are they facing?

6. How do they perceive their future life?

7. Whether an intervention programme can help the adolescent girls in improving their psychosocial well-being?

1.7. Significance of the study

The situations of the adolescent girls in Children’s Home are not much exposed to the society, social planners and NGOs. Researcher believe that this research study will bring
out the situation of the adolescent girls in the children’s home to the notice of the social planners, social workers, policy makers who are dedicated to bring up and highlight the psychosocial well being of these neglected population of our society. The results of this study can be used as evidence data - guide line and frame of reference to adolescent girls in Children’s Home for bringing appropriate policy changes at the institution and government level by the policy makers and social workers.

Researcher hopes this study would help the adolescent girls in a small number of non – governmental children’s homes of Thrissur District, Kerala to facilitate psychosocial well-being among them. This study would evolve a need based systematic social work intervention programme, intervention package and evaluation procedure especially for adolescent girls of Children’s’ homes, which can be utilized in other parts of the State.

1.8. Chapterisation

The present study “PsychoSocial Well-being of Adolescent Girls: An intervention study” is presented in five chapters.

A brief general introduction of the study is given in the Chapter 1. It includes the background of the study the statement of the research problem, research questions, significance of the study and Chapterisation.

An extensive review of the conceptual and empirical literature relevant and related to the study is given in Chapter 2

Chapter 3 presents the research methodology adopted for the study includes objectives, hypothesis, definition of concepts, research design, universe of the study, sampling, inclusion and exclusion criteria, tools, collection of data, analysis of data, limitation and ethical considerations.
Chapter 4 consists of the analysis and interpretation of the study deals Socio demographic profile of the respondents, Pre – Intervention test results of the study group on various tools used, Post – intervention test results of the study group on various tools used, Results on the comparison of total mean scores of the tools applied among respondents of experimental group in three phases of intervention and Effect size calculation.

Chapter 5 consists of the major findings, constructive suggestions and conclusion put forward to the light of the study.

Chapter 6 describes Contribution of the present study to Social work Education and Social work practice

Bibliography is given after Chapter 6

Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 - the supporting documents to Chapter 3 and they enumerate Tools of data collection and Intervention package respectively.

Appendix 3 - copy of consent letter given to Children’s Home authorities and adolescent girls for the intervention study.

Appendix 4 - photos of the intervention programme session activities