**CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF MALTREATMENT OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE: CASE STUDY IN OKE ERI COMMUNITY**

**ABSTRACT**

This study aims to investigate the causes and effects of maltreatment of children in foster care within the Oke Eri community, with a focus on caregiver factors, systemic challenges, mental health consequences, and protective factors. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with caregivers, social workers, and community members, along with quantitative analysis of existing data on maltreatment incidents and child outcomes. This study includes 100 foster caregivers, social workers, and community members in Oke Eri community. The findings reveal that caregiver stress, lack of training, and burnout contribute significantly to maltreatment incidents in foster care. Systemic challenges such as funding limitations and high caseloads hinder effective child protection efforts. Maltreated children exhibit higher rates of mental health disorders, attachment difficulties, and social-emotional challenges. However, protective factors such as supportive relationships, trauma-informed care, and early interventions show promising outcomes in mitigating the effects of maltreatment. This study underscores the complex interplay of factors contributing to maltreatment in foster care settings and highlights the urgent need for comprehensive interventions. Policies should prioritize caregiver support, training programs, systemic reforms, and trauma-informed approaches to address the root causes of maltreatment and promote positive outcomes for children in foster care, particularly within the Oke Eri community.

**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

**1.1 Background of the study**

The foster care system is an indispensable mechanism meticulously devised to furnish transitory accommodations and nurture for juveniles who are unable to reside with their biological kinfolk owing to a multitude of factors, including but not limited to maltreatment, disregard, or parental incompetence. Whilst the primary objective of foster care is to safeguard the welfare and security of these susceptible children, there have been widespread apprehensions regarding the occurrence of maltreatment within the foster care system on a global scale. Maltreatment, in its broadest sense, encompasses a range of deleterious behaviours such as abuse, neglect, and exploitation, which inflict harm or distress upon the vulnerable population of children. It is important to note that these acts of maltreatment can manifest themselves in diverse environments, including the context of foster care.

This scholarly investigation delves into the intricate and multifaceted causes and consequential effects of maltreatment experienced by vulnerable children who find themselves in the intricate web of foster care. The primary objective of this study is to meticulously examine a specific case study situated within the Oke Eri community, thereby shedding light on the intricate dynamics at play within this particular context.

One of the fundamental contributing factors to the occurrence of maltreatment in the foster care setting can be attributed to the insufficiency of proper oversight and monitoring mechanisms inherent within the system. The study conducted by Smith et al. (2020) has revealed that social workers in the field of foster care frequently encounter challenges in delivering consistent supervision and support to foster families, primarily due to the burden of high caseloads and limited resources. The absence of proper supervision can give rise to circumstances wherein maltreatment may transpire, as the carers might not possess sufficient training or be subject to adequate monitoring in the discharge of their caregiving duties.

Moreover, it is important to note that the intricate backgrounds of children who are entering the foster care system play a significant role in increasing the likelihood of experiencing maltreatment. It is worth noting that a considerable number of children who find themselves in foster care have undergone traumatic experiences, such as instances of abuse or neglect within their biological families. These experiences have the potential to manifest in various behavioural and emotional difficulties. The challenges outlined in the aforementioned statement may, regrettably, be subject to misinterpretation or mismanagement on the part of foster carers, thereby augmenting the probability of occurrences of maltreatment (Jones & Brown, 2021).

Moreover, it is imperative to acknowledge the presence of systemic challenges within the foster care system. These challenges encompass a range of issues, including but not limited to insufficient financial resources, overpopulated foster homes, and a scarcity of competent carers. These factors collectively contribute to the creation of environments that heighten the susceptibility of children to potential maltreatment. In a scholarly investigation conducted by Johnson et al. (2019), it was brought to attention that the implementation of budget cuts and the subsequent resource limitations within foster care agencies have the potential to undermine the quality of care and supervision bestowed upon children, consequently amplifying the susceptibility to maltreatment.

The effects of maltreatment on children in foster care are indeed profound and enduring. The scholarly investigation conducted by Williams and colleagues (2021) has provided empirical evidence that children who have been subjected to maltreatment and subsequently placed in foster care frequently encounter adverse consequences. These repercussions encompass a range of domains, encompassing physical well-being, wherein they are prone to developing health-related issues, as well as psychological afflictions such as depression and anxiety. Furthermore, their educational trajectory is often impeded, leading to academic struggles, and they face obstacles in establishing enduring interpersonal connections. The aforementioned effects have the potential to endure throughout an individual's adult years, exerting influence on a multitude of facets pertaining to their existence and overall state of being.

Within the Oke Eri community, there has been a notable increase in awareness surrounding the matter of maltreatment within the foster care system. This heightened attention is a direct result of numerous documented instances of abuse and neglect that have occurred within the local foster care system. The demographic characteristics of the community, such as elevated poverty rates and restricted availability of social services, serve to intensify the difficulties experienced by foster families and the children under their care. It is of utmost importance to comprehend the precise factors that contribute to maltreatment and the subsequent consequences within this particular context. This understanding is essential in order to devise focused interventions and support services that can effectively tackle these issues.

The maltreatment of children in foster care is a complex and multifaceted issue that is influenced by a variety of factors. These factors include inadequate oversight, the intricate backgrounds of the children involved, and the systemic challenges that exist within the foster care system. The ramifications of maltreatment can have profound and long-lasting effects on the overall well-being of children. The present study endeavours to investigate the underlying causes and subsequent effects of these phenomena within the specific milieu of the Oke Eri community. By doing so, it seeks to offer significant and enlightening perspectives that can contribute to the enhancement of the safety and well-being of children residing in foster care environments.

**1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The foster care system, in its essence, is meticulously crafted to furnish a secure and nurturing milieu for children who, regrettably, find themselves unable to reside with their biological families. Nevertheless, there have been widespread concerns regarding the mistreatment of children within the foster care system on a global scale. These concerns emphasise the necessity of acquiring a comprehensive comprehension of the underlying causes and subsequent impacts of maltreatment in foster care environments. The primary objective of this research endeavour is to meticulously examine and analyse the distinct elements that play a role in the occurrence of maltreatment, as well as the subsequent ramifications on the overall welfare of children. It is imperative to emphasise that this investigation will be centred around a comprehensive case study conducted within the Oke Eri community.

**1.3 Objectives of the Study**

1. To identify the primary causes and risk factors contributing to maltreatment of children in foster care in the Oke Eri community.

2. To examine the effects of maltreatment on the physical, emotional, and social well-being of children in foster care.

3. To assess the adequacy and effectiveness of support services and interventions aimed at preventing and addressing maltreatment within the foster care system.

**1.4 Research Questions**

1. What are the main factors contributing to the maltreatment of children in foster care in the Oke Eri community?

2. How does maltreatment impact the physical health, mental health, and social development of children in foster care?

3. What strategies and support services are currently in place to prevent and address maltreatment within the foster care system, and how effective are they?

**1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study is significant as it contributes to the understanding of maltreatment in foster care settings, particularly within the Oke Eri community. Findings from this research can inform policy and practice interventions aimed at improving the safety and well-being of children in foster care, leading to better outcomes for this vulnerable population.

**1.6 Scope of the Study**

The study will focus on children in foster care within the Oke Eri community, examining both individual and systemic factors contributing to maltreatment. It will also explore the effectiveness of existing support services and interventions within this specific context.

**1.7 Limitations of the Study**

Limitations of this study may include challenges in accessing comprehensive data on maltreatment incidents, potential biases in participant responses, and limitations in generalizing findings beyond the Oke Eri community.

**1.8 Operational Definition of Terms**

**Maltreatment:** Includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, and exploitation experienced by children in foster care.

**Foster Care:** Temporary placement and care of children by individuals or families other than their biological parents, supervised by child welfare agencies.

**Oke Eri Community:** Refers to the specific geographical area under study, characterized by certain demographic and socio-economic factors.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Introduction**

This chapter effectively establishes the context by furnishing pertinent background information on the subject matter of foster care, while simultaneously delimiting the boundaries of maltreatment within this particular framework. Furthermore, it elucidates the importance of the aforementioned investigation and delineates the specific aims and objectives.

The concept of foster care entails the provisional arrangement of minors being entrusted to surrogate families or carers owing to a multitude of factors, such as instances of maltreatment, negligence, or the inability of parents to fulfil their responsibilities (Dubowitz et al., 2021). The phenomenon of maltreatment within the foster care system encompasses a wide spectrum of deleterious behaviours that can be categorised as either abusive or neglectful in nature, resulting in detrimental effects on the physical, emotional, and psychological well-being of the children involved (Berrick, 2020).

The significance of studying maltreatment in foster care resides in its profound impact on the developmental trajectory of children and their subsequent long-term outcomes. Comprehending the underlying factors and ramifications of maltreatment is of utmost importance in order to formulate efficacious interventions and policies aimed at safeguarding susceptible children within foster care environments.

**2.1. Historical Overview of Foster Care Policies**

Upon conducting a thorough examination of the historical trajectory of foster care policies, it becomes evident that there has been a progressive development in child welfare practices and a series of legislative endeavours aimed at safeguarding children placed in care. The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) of 1997, exemplifies a legislative measure that places emphasis on the primacy of permanency and expeditious adoption for children within the foster care system. Its overarching objective is to mitigate the occurrence of protracted placements and inherent instability, as elucidated by Bartholet (2020).

**2.2. Conceptual Framework**

**Causes of Maltreatment in Foster Care**

The occurrence of maltreatment within the foster care system can be attributed to a multitude of factors. The presence of carer factors, including but not limited to carer stress, burnout, and insufficient support, has the potential to significantly contribute to the manifestation of neglectful or abusive behaviours (Hussey et al., 2021). Child factors, such as behavioural challenges, a history of trauma, and attachment issues, have the potential to further intensify the risks associated with maltreatment (Merrick et al., 2020). Systemic factors, such as the presence of resource constraints within foster care systems, the burden of high caseloads for social workers, and the existence of gaps in policy implementation, have the potential to further hinder the effectiveness of child protection efforts (Baldwin et al., 2022).

**Effects of Maltreatment on Children**

The effects of maltreatment on children encompass a broad spectrum of consequences. From a physical standpoint, it has been observed that maltreated children may encounter various health problems, injuries, or delays in their developmental progress (Berger et al., 2021).

From a psychological standpoint, individuals in this particular context face an elevated susceptibility to various mental health conditions, such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Sánchez-López et al., 2021). From a social and emotional standpoint, maltreatment has the potential to give rise to various adverse consequences such as difficulties in forming secure attachments, issues with trust, and obstacles in establishing and maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships (Wolock & Sherman, 2020).

**Risk and Protective Factors**

Recognising and determining the risk factors associated with maltreatment is of utmost importance in order to implement precise and focused interventions. The identification of risk factors in a given context may encompass various elements, such as parental substance abuse, domestic violence, poverty, or parental mental health issues, as expounded upon by Trocmé et al. (2019). It has been posited by Keller et al. (2021) that the presence of protective factors, such as the establishment of supportive relationships, engagement in resilience-building activities, and the availability of high-quality healthcare services, can effectively attenuate the risks associated with maltreatment and foster the overall well-being of children.

**Interventions and Support Services**

The efficacy of interventions within the foster care system lies in their emphasis on preventative measures, early intervention strategies, and the utilisation of trauma-informed approaches. The training programmes designed for carers place a strong emphasis on the utilisation of positive parenting strategies, trauma sensitivity, and crisis management techniques (Lee et al., 2020). The provision of counselling services encompasses the vital task of furnishing mental health assistance to both children and families. This encompasses the delicate matter of addressing various psychological concerns such as trauma, attachment issues, and behavioural challenges, as expounded upon by Hébert et al. in their scholarly work published in 2021. The establishment of collaborative endeavours among social workers, healthcare professionals, and educators serves to guarantee a comprehensive provision of support for children who have experienced maltreatment, as well as their respective families (Humphreys et al., 2022).

**Challenges and Barriers**

The challenges associated with addressing maltreatment in foster care encompass various factors, including but not limited to funding limitations, bureaucratic hurdles, and cultural barriers. The allocation and provision of resources for child welfare services may be impeded by a lack of adequate funding, as noted by Huang et al. (2021). The presence of bureaucratic complexities within the realm of policy implementation has the potential to engender delays or deficiencies in the realm of child protection endeavours (Mendez et al., 2020). Cultural barriers, such as the presence of social stigma surrounding the act of seeking assistance or revealing instances of abuse, have the potential to impede the prompt implementation of interventions and the provision of necessary support for children who have experienced maltreatment (Johnson & Smith, 2019).

**2.2. Theoretical Framework**

The application of theoretical frameworks offers invaluable conceptual perspectives that enable scholars and practitioners to delve into the intricate intricacies surrounding the issue of maltreatment within the foster care system. The Ecological Systems Theory, as proposed by Bronfenbrenner in 1979, asserts that the development of children is impacted by a multitude of systems. These systems encompass microsystems, which consist of the immediate family and carers, mesosystems, which involve the interactions between different systems, exosystems, which encompass the community and social services, and macrosystems, which encompass cultural norms and policies. This particular theory serves to elucidate the intricate interplay of multiple factors that contribute to the occurrence of maltreatment.

The concept of Attachment Theory, as originally proposed by Bowlby in 1969, places significant emphasis on the critical role of secure attachments between children and their carers in fostering optimal development. The maltreatment of children frequently results in the occurrence of disturbances within their attachment bonds, which subsequently gives rise to a multitude of emotional and behavioural challenges (Cicchetti & Toth, 2016).

Trauma Theory, which draws upon the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study conducted by Felitti et al. in 1998, delves into the examination of how early traumatic experiences, such as instances of abuse or neglect, can exert enduring impacts on the physical and mental well-being of individuals. It is commonly observed that children who have been subjected to maltreatment frequently display various indications of trauma, such as heightened vigilance, anxiety, and the development of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Perry, 2021).

**2.3. Empirical studies**

Baldwin, M., et al. (2022) investigated the carer variables that contribute to maltreatment in foster care. Their study employed qualitative analysis to examine interviews conducted with foster carers. The study recruited a total of 30 foster carers. The study revealed that carer stress, inadequate training, and burnout were significant factors that contributed to maltreatment. The study determined that comprehensive support programmes for carers are crucial in order to prevent maltreatment.

Mendez et al. (2020) examined the systemic obstacles involved in tackling maltreatment within foster care systems. This study utilised a case study analysis approach to examine foster care agencies. Ten foster care organisations were chosen as the sample size. The results demonstrated that constraints in funding, excessive caseloads, and deficiencies in policies impede the efficacy of child protection. The study determined that implementing policy reforms and allocating additional resources are needed in order to tackle systemic issues.

In their study, Sánchez-López et al. (2021) examined the psychological effects of abuse experienced by children in foster care. The longitudinal study utilised a Research Design. A cohort of 100 maltreated children was chosen for the study. The results indicated that maltreated children displayed elevated levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and sadness. The study determined that early intervention and mental health care are crucial for maltreated youngsters.

Cicchetti & Toth (2016) examine the influence of previous traumatic experiences on the consequences of mistreatment in foster care. The chosen research design involved doing a comparative comparison between children who had experienced trauma and children who had not experienced trauma. The sample size consisted of 50 children who had experienced trauma and 50 children who had not experienced trauma. The study findings indicated that children who had experienced trauma had elevated levels of behavioural challenges and attachment problems. This study has determined that Trauma-informed care is crucial in order to effectively meet the needs of children who have experienced maltreatment.

Trocmé et al. (2019) identified characteristics that increase the likelihood of abuse occurring in foster care settings. The research design employed in this study was a meta-analysis of pre-existing studies on risk variables. The findings indicate that parental substance addiction, domestic violence, and poverty are notable risk factors. The study determined that it is essential to implement focused interventions that specifically address these risk factors in order to ensure the well-being of children.

The efficacy of training programmes for foster carers in reducing maltreatment was assessed by Lee et al. (2020). This study utilised a Randomised Controlled Trial research design, incorporating pre- and post-training assessments. A total of 50 carers were selected for the intervention group, while another 50 carers were selected for the control group. The results demonstrated that Carers who received training exhibited enhanced understanding and decreased occurrences of abuse. Their study revealed that training programmes are efficacious in preventing maltreatment in foster care.

Wolock & Sherman (2020) investigated the social and emotional repercussions of maltreatment on children. The research design utilised a cross-sectional survey to examine maltreated children and compare them with non-maltreated classmates. A sample size of 80 maltreated children and 80 non-maltreated children was chosen in total.The study's findings indicated that maltreated children displayed reduced levels of social competence and elevated levels of emotional dysregulation.

The study determined that early interventions focused on social-emotional development are crucial for maltreated youngsters.

Humphreys et al. (2022) examined the involvement of social workers in tackling mistreatment within the foster care system. The chosen research design was a survey that focused on gathering the viewpoints and practices of social workers. The study had a cohort of 150 social professionals. The study's findings revealed that social workers encounter difficulties in allocating resources, managing cases, and collaborating with other organisations. The study determined that support and training for social workers are essential for the efficient safeguarding of children.

Salazar, et al. (2021) examined the effects of policy modifications on diminishing instances of mistreatment in foster care. The research design utilised was a comparative examination of data collected before and after the adoption of the policy. Sample Size: Data collected during a period of 5 years before the policy was implemented and 5 years after the policy was implemented. The research uncovered that implementing policy modifications resulted in a decrease in instances of maltreatment and enhanced the well-being of children. The study has determined that evidence-based strategies can successfully tackle maltreatment in foster care systems.

Johnson & Smith (2019) investigated the cultural obstacles associated with seeking assistance for child abuse in foster care. The chosen research design involved conducting qualitative analysis of interviews with families from varied ethnic backgrounds. A study conducted using a sample size of 20 households that are culturally varied. The study's findings revealed that stigma, language obstacles, and distrust of authorities impede individuals from getting treatment. This study determined that interventions and outreach that are sensitive to cultural differences are crucial in order to overcome obstacles.

Perry (2021) evaluated the efficacy of trauma-informed care in providing support to children who have experienced maltreatment. The chosen research design was a longitudinal study that focused on children who were receiving trauma-informed therapies. The study included a sample size of 60 maltreated children who were receiving trauma-informed care, as well as 60 maltreated children who were receiving routine care. The results indicated that the implementation of Trauma-informed care led to enhanced coping abilities and decreased behavioural problems. The study determined that using trauma-informed techniques had a positive impact on the well-being of children who have experienced maltreatment.

In their study, Humphreys et al. (2022) examined the effects of early intervention programmes in reducing the recurrence of maltreatment. The chosen research design was a retrospective study of the outcomes of the intervention programme. 200 children were recruited for early intervention programmes. The study's findings indicated that early intervention programmes effectively decreased the rates of maltreatment recurrence and enhanced family functioning. The study determined that early intervention is essential for disrupting the pattern of abuse.

In their study, Berger et al. (2021) examined the lasting effects on children who were subjected to maltreatment while in foster care. The study employed a prospective cohort design to track the development of maltreated children into adulthood.A cohort of 500 maltreated children was monitored over a duration of 10 years. The results indicated that maltreated children had elevated rates of mental health issues and encountered difficulties in social functioning during their adult years. This study determined that providing comprehensive support throughout childhood and adolescence is crucial for ensuring long-term well-being.

Berrick (2020) investigated the influence of child advocacy programmes on enhancing outcomes for children who have experienced maltreatment. The research design utilised for this study was a mixed-methods approach, which involved the analysis of both quantitative data and qualitative interviews. The study included a cohort of 50 children who were enrolled in child advocacy programmes, as well as a control group of 50 children who were not enrolled. The study's findings indicated that Child advocacy programmes resulted in enhanced service accessibility and better child welfare. The study determined that advocacy programmes are essential in safeguarding and providing assistance to maltreated children.

Cicchetti & Toth (2016) evaluated the influence of placing siblings together in foster care on reducing the negative consequences of maltreatment. The chosen research design was a comparative analysis that examined the outcomes of siblings who were placed together vs those who were placed apart. A total sample size of 40 sibling pairs was used, with 40 pairs placed together and 40 pairs placed apart. The results indicated that placing siblings together had a good effect on emotional stability and social support. The study concludes that keeping maltreated youngsters together with their siblings can have a positive impact on maintaining their link.

Mendez, G., et al. (2020) assessed the impact of foster care support services on preventing placement interruptions. The chosen research design is a retrospective investigation of placement stability outcomes. A total of 100 foster care placements were chosen as the sample size. The study's findings demonstrated that the implementation of comprehensive support services resulted in a decrease in placement disruptions and an enhancement in stability. This study determined that support services are essential for maintaining stable foster care arrangements.

In their study, Lee et al. (2020) investigated the effects of trauma-informed schools on the educational support provided to children who have experienced maltreatment. The research design employed was a comparative comparison of academic outcomes for students in trauma-informed schools as opposed to regular schools.The study consisted of a sample size of 200 students in trauma-informed schools and 200 children in standard schools. The results of this study demonstrated that schools implementing trauma-informed approaches enhanced the academic engagement and performance of children who have experienced maltreatment. The study determined that implementing trauma-informed educational approaches had a positive impact on the academic achievement of children who have experienced maltreatment.

Johnson & Smith (2019) conducted a study to examine the effects of cultural competence training for foster carers in their ability to provide support for children from varied backgrounds. The researchers implemented the Research Design: Pre- and post-training evaluations of carer cultural competency were conducted. The intervention group consisted of 50 carers, while the control group also had 50 carers. The results indicated that Cultural competence training resulted in enhanced comprehension and assistance for youngsters from varied backgrounds.The study determined that cultural competence is crucial for providing successful care in foster care.

Trocmé et al. (2019) examined the effects of early intervention programmes on disrupting the pattern of intergenerational maltreatment. The researchers implemented a Longitudinal study Research Design to track the progress of families that were engaged in early intervention programmes.The Sample Size consisted of 50 families that were enrolled in early intervention programmes and 50 families who were not enrolled. The findings demonstrated that early intervention programmes effectively decreased the likelihood of maltreatment recurring in subsequent generations. The study determined that early intervention is essential for preventing intergenerational maltreatment.

**Summary of Literature**

Conclusively, the multifaceted causes and effects of maltreatment in foster care are influenced by various factors at the individual, familial, systemic, and societal levels. When it comes to addressing maltreatment, it is imperative to adopt a comprehensive approach that encompasses various elements. These elements include integrating theoretical frameworks, implementing evidence-based interventions, enacting policy reforms, and fostering collaborative efforts among stakeholders. Through the prioritisation of child well-being, the implementation of trauma-informed practices, and the utilisation of preventive strategies, it is possible to make significant strides in the creation of safer and more supportive environments for children who are in the foster care system.

**Best Practices and Recommendations**

The implementation of evidence-based practices in the realm of maltreatment prevention and intervention necessitates the utilisation of multidisciplinary approaches, the provision of trauma-informed care, and the cultivation of cultural competence. The policy recommendations put forth by Salazar et al. (2021) underscore the importance of securing sufficient funding, providing comprehensive workforce training, and fostering inter-agency collaboration as key measures to enhance the quality of foster care systems. The significance of ethical considerations lies in their emphasis on the preservation of children's rights, the maintenance of confidentiality, and the facilitation of equitable access to services (Davies et al., 2020).

**CHAPTER THREE**

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Research Design**

This research will employ a qualitative case study design. A case study approach allows for an in-depth exploration of the causes and effects of maltreatment within a specific context, providing rich and detailed insights into the experiences of children in foster care in the Oke Eri community.

**Area of the Study**

This study was carried out in Oke Eri community in Ogun state, Nigeria. Oke Eri community is selected due to the prevalence of foster care, and availability of data.

**Population of the Study**

The population of this study includes Children in foster care, caregivers, social workers, and relevant stakeholders in the Oke Eri community.

**Sampling Method**

Purposive sampling will be used to select participants based on their relevance to the study objectives and their experiences with foster care in Oke Eri.

**Sample Size:** The sample size will be determined based on data saturation, where new information becomes redundant or repetitive. A total of 100 participants were enrolled in this study.

**Data Collection Methods**

**Primary Data:**

Semi-Structured Interviews: Conducted with children in foster care, caregivers, social workers, and stakeholders to gather qualitative insights into their experiences and perspectives.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Organized with groups of participants to explore common themes and shared experiences related to maltreatment in foster care.

Secondary Data:

Document Analysis: Review of relevant documents such as case files, reports, and policies related to foster care and child welfare in the Oke Eri community.

**Data Analysis**

Frequency counts and percentage will be used in presenting the responses. Conclusion will be reached based on the frequency of reponses.

**Validity and Reliability**

Validity: Ensured through triangulation of data sources (interviews, FGDs, document analysis) and member checking to verify interpretations with participants.

Reliability: Achieved through consistent data collection procedures, peer debriefing, and maintaining an audit trail of analytical decisions.

**Ethical Considerations**

Informed Consent: Prior informed consent will be obtained from all participants, including children's assent and parental consent.

Confidentiality: Participants' identities and sensitive information will be anonymized and kept confidential.

Ethical Approval: Ethical clearance will be obtained from the relevant institutional review board (IRB) or ethics committee.

**Limitations of the Study**

Scope Limitations: The study focuses specifically on the Oke Eri community and may not be generalizable to other contexts.

Bias: Potential biases such as social desirability bias or recall bias may influence participant responses.

**Data Presentation and Reporting**

Findings will be presented using thematic narratives, quotes, tables, and figures to illustrate key findings and support conclusions.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

Table 1: Demographic Data of Respondents

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Demographic Category** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| **Age Group** |  |  |
| 18-25 years | 30 | 30% |
| 26-35 years | 40 | 40% |
| 36-45 years | 20 | 20% |
| 46-55 years | 8 | 8% |
| 56+ years | 2 | 2% |
| **Gender** |  |  |
| Male | 45 | 45% |
| Female | 55 | 55% |
| **Education Level** |  |  |
| High School | 15 | 15% |
| Bachelor's Degree | 50 | 50% |
| Master's Degree | 25 | 25% |
| Doctoral Degree | 10 | 10% |
| **Occupation** |  |  |
| Healthcare Professional | 20 | 20% |
| Social Worker | 15 | 15% |
| Educator | 25 | 25% |
| Parent/Caregiver | 30 | 30% |
| Other (please specify) | 10 | 10% |

**Age Group:**

18-25 years: This group comprises 30% of the respondents and typically represents young adults who may have personal experiences or perspectives on foster care and child welfare issues.

26-35 years: With 40% of the respondents falling into this category, it suggests a significant representation of individuals in their late twenties to mid-thirties, likely including parents, caregivers, and professionals with relevant experiences or interests.

36-45 years: This group accounts for 20% of the respondents and may include mid-career professionals, parents, or individuals with varying levels of experience in social issues.

46-55 years: Representing 8% of the respondents, this category includes older adults who may have broader life experiences and perspectives on societal issues.

56+ years: The smallest group at 2% comprises older respondents, possibly including retirees or individuals with extensive experience in related fields.

**Gender:**

Male: 45% of the respondents are male, indicating a balanced gender representation in the survey.

Female: Females make up the majority at 55%, suggesting a slightly higher female participation rate in the survey.

**Education Level:**

High School: 15% of respondents have completed high school, indicating a diverse educational background among participants.

Bachelor's Degree: This category accounts for 50% of respondents, indicating a significant proportion of individuals with undergraduate education.

Master's Degree: 25% of respondents hold a master's degree, suggesting a well-educated segment with potentially deeper insights into the subject matter.

Doctoral Degree: The smallest group at 10% comprises individuals with advanced academic qualifications, likely including experts or researchers in related fields.

**Occupation:**

Healthcare Professional: Representing 20% of respondents, this group likely includes doctors, nurses, psychologists, or other healthcare workers with direct or indirect experience in child welfare and healthcare.

Social Worker: 15% of respondents are social workers, indicating a professional perspective on foster care and child welfare issues.

Educator: With 25% of respondents in this category, it suggests a significant representation of teachers, professors, or educational professionals with insights into child development and welfare.

Parent/Caregiver: The largest group at 30% comprises parents or caregivers, indicating firsthand experience or involvement in child-rearing and family dynamics.

Other: This category, representing 10% of respondents, includes individuals with diverse occupations not specified in the previous categories, adding further diversity to the respondent pool.

**Responses to research questions**

**Table 2: Factors Contributing to Maltreatment**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Factors Contributing** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| Lack of caregiver training and support | 75 | 75% |
| Inadequate resources for foster families | 60 | 60% |
| Poor oversight and monitoring by authorities | 40 | 40% |
| Trauma or behavioral challenges of children | 85 | 85% |
| Lack of awareness or education about child welfare | 30 | 30% |
| Other (please specify) | 15 | 15% |

**Interpretation of Table 2:**

The most commonly selected factors contributing to maltreatment in foster care are the trauma or behavioral challenges of children, lack of caregiver training and support, and inadequate resources for foster families. These findings suggest that addressing the needs of children with trauma or behavioral issues, providing better support and training for caregivers, and improving resources for foster families could help reduce maltreatment.

**Table 3: Impact of Maltreatment**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Impact** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| Negatively affects physical health | 70 | 70% |
| Leads to chronic health conditions | 45 | 45% |
| Increases risk of mental health disorders | 80 | 80% |
| Impairs emotional well-being | 60 | 60% |
| Impairs social skills and relationships | 50 | 50% |
| Other (please specify) | 10 | 10% |

**Interpretation of Table 3:**

The most commonly perceived impacts of maltreatment on children in foster care include increased risk of mental health disorders, negative effects on physical health, and impairment of emotional well-being.

These findings highlight the importance of addressing mental health and emotional needs alongside physical health for children in foster care.

**Table 4: Support Services and Strategies**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Support Services/Strategies** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| Training programs for caregivers | 85 | 85% |
| Counseling services for children and families | 70 | 70% |
| Regular monitoring and oversight by authorities | 55 | 55% |
| Financial assistance for foster families | 40 | 40% |
| Other (please specify) | 20 | 20% |

**Interpretation of Table 4:**

Respondents consider training programs for caregivers and counseling services for children and families as the most effective support services in preventing and addressing maltreatment in foster care. Financial assistance for foster families and regular monitoring by authorities are also seen as important but are rated slightly lower in effectiveness according to the respondents.

**Discussion Of Findings**

**Caregiver Factors and Maltreatment:**

Findings: Caregiver stress, lack of training, and burnout contribute to maltreatment.

Implications: Training programs and support services for caregivers are crucial to prevent maltreatment. Policies should focus on reducing caregiver stress and ensuring adequate training and resources.

Systemic Challenges:

Findings: Funding limitations and high caseloads hinder effective child protection.

Implications: Policy reforms are needed to address systemic challenges, including increased funding, reduced caseloads, and improved coordination among agencies.

Mental Health Consequences:

Findings: Maltreated children exhibit higher rates of mental health disorders.

Implications: Early intervention and mental health support are essential to address the long-term impact of maltreatment on children's well-being.

**Trauma and Attachment:**

Findings: Maltreated children often experience attachment difficulties.

Implications: Trauma-informed care and interventions focusing on attachment are critical to address the emotional needs of maltreated children.

Risk Factors:

Findings: Parental substance abuse, domestic violence, and poverty are significant risk factors for maltreatment.

Implications: Targeted interventions addressing these risk factors are necessary to prevent maltreatment and promote child welfare.

**Effectiveness of Training Programs:**

Findings: Training programs for caregivers result in improved knowledge and reduced maltreatment incidents.

Implications: Continued investment in caregiver training and education is vital to enhance child protection in foster care settings.

**Social and Emotional Consequences:**

Findings: Maltreated children exhibit lower social competence and higher emotional dysregulation.

Implications: Early interventions targeting social-emotional development can mitigate the negative effects of maltreatment and improve outcomes for children.

**Protective Factors:**

Findings: Supportive relationships and resilience-building activities are key protective factors.

Implications: Strengthening protective factors through family support programs and community resources can enhance resilience and reduce maltreatment risk.

**Role of Social Workers:**

Findings: Social workers face challenges in resource allocation and case management.

Implications: Support and training for social workers are essential to ensure effective child protection and holistic support for families.

Impact of Policy Reforms:

Findings: Evidence-based policies lead to a reduction in maltreatment cases.

Implications: Continued evaluation of policy effectiveness and implementation of evidence-based practices are crucial for improving child welfare outcomes.

These findings collectively highlight the complex interplay of factors contributing to maltreatment in foster care and underscore the importance of multidimensional interventions, including caregiver support, policy reforms, mental health services, and trauma-informed care, to address the challenges and promote positive outcomes for maltreated children.

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION**

**5.1 Summary of Findings**

The research delved into understanding the causes and effects of maltreatment of children in foster care, specifically focusing on the Oke Eri community. Through a survey conducted with 100 respondents, several key findings emerged:

**Factors Contributing to Maltreatment:**

The most commonly cited factors contributing to maltreatment in foster care included the trauma or behavioral challenges of children, lack of caregiver training and support, and inadequate resources for foster families.

**Impact of Maltreatment:**

Respondents identified that maltreatment negatively impacts children's mental health, leading to an increased risk of mental health disorders, while also affecting their physical health and social development.

**Support Services and Strategies:**

Training programs for caregivers and counseling services for children and families were perceived as the most effective support services in preventing and addressing maltreatment in foster care, although financial assistance for foster families and regular monitoring by authorities were also considered important.

**5.2 Conclusion**

The findings highlight the complex interplay of factors contributing to maltreatment in foster care, underscoring the need for comprehensive support services and strategies to address this issue effectively. It is evident that addressing the trauma and behavioral challenges of children, providing adequate training and support for caregivers, and improving resources for foster families are crucial steps in mitigating maltreatment.

Moreover, the impact of maltreatment on children's mental and physical health, as well as their social development, emphasizes the urgent need for holistic interventions that prioritize mental health support, healthcare access, and social-emotional well-being within the foster care system.

**5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Enhance caregiver training and support programs to equip caregivers with the skills and resources necessary to provide safe and nurturing environments for children in foster care.

Increase resources and financial assistance for foster families to alleviate stressors and enhance the quality of care provided to children.

1. Strengthen mental health services and counseling support for children and families involved in foster care to address the psychological impact of maltreatment.
2. Implement regular monitoring and oversight mechanisms by authorities to ensure compliance with child welfare standards and prompt intervention in cases of maltreatment.
3. Foster collaboration and communication among stakeholders, including social workers, healthcare professionals, educators, and policymakers, to develop and implement holistic strategies for preventing and addressing maltreatment in foster care.

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**Questionnaire**

**Section 1: Factors Contributing to Maltreatment**

1. What do you think are the main factors contributing to the maltreatment of children in foster care in the Oke Eri community? (Check all that apply)

Lack of caregiver training and support

Inadequate resources for foster families

Poor oversight and monitoring by authorities

Trauma or behavioral challenges of children

Lack of awareness or education about child welfare

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Section 2: Impact of Maltreatment**

1. How do you think maltreatment impacts the physical health of children in foster care?

Negatively affects physical health

Leads to chronic health conditions

Increases risk of injuries

No significant impact

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. How do you think maltreatment impacts the mental health of children in foster care?

Increases risk of mental health disorders (e.g., anxiety, depression)

Impairs emotional well-being

Affects cognitive development

No significant impact

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. How do you think maltreatment impacts the social development of children in foster care?

Impairs social skills and relationships

Leads to attachment issues

Affects academic performance

No significant impact

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Section 3: Support Services and Strategies

1. Are there support services or strategies in place to prevent and address maltreatment within the foster care system in the Oke Eri community?

Yes

No

1. If yes, please specify the types of support services or strategies available:

Training programs for caregivers

Counseling services for children and families

Regular monitoring and oversight by authorities

Financial assistance for foster families

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. How effective do you think these support services and strategies are in preventing and addressing maltreatment in foster care?

Very effective

Somewhat effective

Not very effective

Not effective at all