

Samarth Annual Report

2024- 2025

List of Members: 2024-2025

Governing Body

Dr. Saradha Suresh	Honorary President, Former Director, Institute of Child Health (ICH), Chennai
Dr. Shuba Kumar	Secretary, Social Scientist, Samarth, Chennai
Dr. Rani Mohanraj	Treasurer, Psychologist, Samarth, Chennai
Dr. R. Thara	Chairperson- Research, Schizophrenia Research Foundation, (SCARF), Chennai
Dr. Lakshmi Vijayakumar	Psychiatrist, Founder Member, Sneha, Chennai
Dr. Krishnakumar	Rtd. Principal, Elite School of Optometry, Sankara Nethralaya, Chennai
Dr. Suresh Kumar	Consultant Psychiatrist, Chennai

Members

Ms. K.V. Sripriya	Nutritionist, Research Coordinator, Samarth, Chennai
Ms. Aarthi Kandasamy	Psychologist, ISHA Foundation, Coimbatore
Ms. Basilea Watson	Technical Assistant (Research), National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis (NIRT), Chennai
Dr. B.R Desikachari	Senior Public Health Consultant, Chennai
Dr. Keerthi Prabhu	Consultant Psychologist, Apollo Hospitals, Chennai
Ms. C.D. Nandini	Nutritionist, Chennai
Ms. Premalatha	Data Manager, Schizophrenia Research Foundation (SCARF), Chennai
Ms. Sylvia Jayakumar	Biostatistician, Proprietor, Statshub, Chennai
Mr. Veerapandian	Assistant Professor, The Banyan Academy of Leadership in Mental Health (BALM), Chennai

Advisory Body

Dr. Lisa Manhart	Associate Prof. Epidemiology, Adjunct Associate Prof. Global Health, University of Washington, Center for AIDS & STD, Seattle, USA
Dr. Usha Ramakrishnan	Associate Professor, Hubert Department of Global Health, Emory University – USA

Scientific Review Committee Members

Dr. R. Thara	Chairperson - Research, Schizophrenia Research Foundation, (SCARF), Chennai
Dr. Shaheed Jawahar	Former Scientist "G" National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis (NIRT), Chennai
Dr. L. Jeyaseelan	Prof. of Biostatistics, Mohammed Bin Rashid University of Medicine and Health (MBRU), Dubai

Accounts Officer Mr. J.S Dinesh, B.S Associates, Chennai

Auditors Parameswaran & Associates Chartered Accountants.

Bankers Canara Bank, St. Mary's Road, Chennai

State Bank of India – FCRA account

SECRETARY'S MESSAGE

The period between 2024 – 2025 was a rather quiet time for us at Samarth. With challenges in obtaining funding for research, we shifted our focus to undertaking more mentoring related work. This entailed guiding Ph. D students from various universities within the country on the development of their research protocols as well as reviewing their data collection and emerging findings. Post graduate students and faculty members who had earlier attended our workshops consulted with us from time to time, seeking help in refining their study methodologies and analytic processes. Having former participants to our workshops take up qualitative research studies with deep interest and enthusiasm has been most gratifying for us. It also tells us that there is a great need for building capacity on this aspect of research methodology which sadly, continues to be poorly understood and used for the most part. This year, not only did we continue our online qualitative research workshops, we also undertook offline sessions. At the behest of various academic and teaching institutions like the Sri Ramachandra Medical College and Research Institution, National Institute of Epidemiology and the Apollo College of Nursing we carried out in-person qualitative research workshops to help cater to the needs of their students and fellows. In an era of increasing dependence on artificial intelligence—often at the expense of human endeavour—nurturing both a strong knowledge base and a deep sense of passion among young people to independently pursue and achieve their goals remains especially important to us.

We continue to explore the possibilities of long-term collaborations with various institutions and NGOs, not just in the area of capacity building but also in carrying out research studies of mutual interest and are hopeful that these will come to fruition.

ABOUT SAMARTH

We are a group of epidemiologists, social scientists, psychologists and biostatisticians who share a common vision in advocating for health research. We have extensive research experience in using both qualitative and quantitative methods in several national and international multi-centric health projects. These have ranged from projects on domestic violence, adolescent mental health, community mental health to, care and support programmes for HIV positive persons.

Samarth was set up in January 2007 and is registered as a society under the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, 1975 on 24th May 2007 and is also permitted to receive foreign funding on account of having obtained FCRA (Foreign Contributions Regulation Act) approval. Members of Samarth have been involved in conducting various research projects and social science training programmes.

OUR OBJECTIVES

- Conducting research to inform policy
- Building capacity in epidemiology, social science and biostatistics
- Building partnerships with government and private sectors in health promotion

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Samarth is committed to creating healthier lives of communities through credible research and sustainable interventions

Research and Training Activities

ONGOING RESEARCH PROJECTS

1. A care and support model for families of children with CLP: A grounded theory approach (2022 – 2027)

This project is being carried out by Dr. Badri Thiruvenkatachari who is the PI based at Balaji Dental College and Hospital, (Constituent College of Bharath Institute of Higher Education and Research) Chennai. Drs. Shuba Kumar and Rani Mohanraj are the Qualitative Consultants on this study.

Over 45 qualitative interviews with parents of children with CLP across different sites in India (Punjab, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu) have so far been completed. The transcription and translation into English of all these interviews is almost complete. All completed interview transcripts numbering 41 have been loaded into Nivivo for analysis. Having developed a code book a priori, coding of the transcripts has commenced. New codes are added as and when new issues are identified for which there is no code. This process is underway following which we will review and interpret our findings and work towards manuscript preparation.

2. Youth Co-Production for Sustainable Engagement and Empowerment in Health (YiPEE)

The Samarth team (Shuba Kumar and Rani Mohanraj) are the qualitative research consultants on this study that is being carried out by the Schizophrenia Research Foundation (SCARF). The study seeks to determine the impact and cost-effectiveness of a multi-level multi-component intervention targeting the inner, social, and environmental dimensions that underpin mental health in youth in Chennai. The theoretical foundation that guides the YiPEE intervention is based on a modified socio-ecological model of health which considers the inner, social and environmental determinants of health. The YiPEE programme thus targets the interventions at these three levels – the inner, social and environmental, and aims to impact the intersection between these, over time.

The intervention phase has been completed and as part of the process evaluation, qualitative interviews are being carried out with different stakeholder groups including school students, teachers, parents and school administrative staff. Samarth's role entails training the SCARF team in conducting interviews and FGDs and providing guidance to the team during the data collection phase. It is proposed to carry out around 30 interviews with students, 16 with teachers, and at least 5 interviews each with school administrators and parents from the selected schools. Focus group discussions with teachers and the intervention facilitators are also proposed to be conducted. The interviews once completed by the SCARF team are transcribed/translated into English and submitted to Samarth where the transcripts are loaded into Nvivo for the purpose of coding and analysis. This process is currently underway.

3. JAMS

In continuation to JAMs 1 (Juveniles Accessing Mental Health Service), JAM 2 seeks to evaluate JAMs 1 and its scalability in order to better understand, how actually the different aspects of the intervention are working and whether any further adaptations are required before its scalability. The study sites are two districts each from the states of TN and Orissa, for the purpose of the qualitative evaluation. From each selected district one government run Child Care Institute (CCI) has been included for the purpose of the qualitative evaluation. The Samarth team undertook the training of the field teams who will be carrying out data collection. They oriented them to the study purpose and trained them on the use of the study guide. The field teams were asked to carry out a couple of interviews, transcribe/translate them and forward to the Samarth consultants for the purpose of review and feedback. This was to help the field teams improve their interviewing techniques. There have been some delays in obtaining governmental permissions to carry out the various stakeholder interviews in the

selected CCIs. This has contributed to delays in data collection. Once the permissions are through data collection is expected to commence.

COMPLETED RESEARCH PROJECTS

1. Innovative mHealth Intervention providing Sustained Anticipatory Guidance (Zero Cavity): Design, Validation, User Perception, & Effectiveness (Funded by NIH) (Jan 2024- 2028)

This NIH funded study with Dr. Muthu, Prof and head of the Department of Pediatric Dentistry, SRMCI as the Principal Investigator and Dr. Rani Mohanraj and Dr. Shuba Kumar as the qualitative research consultants focused on designing, developing and validating a mobile app (Zero Cavity) for prevention of Early Childhood Caries (ECC) in children less than 3 years of age. Using the model of determinants of child oral health and the theory of behaviour change the qualitative component of the study explored age-appropriate information regarding four domains of the sustained anticipatory guidance (SAG). All 24 semi structured interviews (SSIs) and two focus group discussions (FGDs) with parents of children (with and without caries) under three years of age were completed. A total of 15 SSIs were carried out with health care providers (dentists, pediatric dentists, pediatricians). All the SSIs and FGDs with the parents and HCPs have been completed. The audio recorded interviews have all been transcribed and translated and loaded into Nvivo. Data analysis using the Thematic Analytical approach was carried out which yielded four themes, namely, Child level influences, Family level Influences, Awareness and beliefs about caries and Parental control in adoption of oral hygiene practices and in consumption of food. The final report was prepared and submitted and one paper has been published in the Journal of Clinical Dentistry.

2. Addressing intergenerational conflicts (IGC) to reduce suicidal ideation and behaviour among young people in urban Chennai (Integrity Study) (Feb 2023- June 2023)

This study was carried out by the Schizophrenia Research Foundation (SCARF) with Dr. R Padmavathi as the Principal Investigator and Dr. Shuba Kumar and Dr. Rani Mohanraj as the qualitative research consultants. Using a mixed methods design the study aimed to develop a conceptual framework to explore the relationship between IGC and suicidal behaviour among youth aged 18 to 24 years in Chennai, South India. A total of, 501 consenting youth from higher educational institutions in Chennai were administered the Intergenerational Conflict Inventory and Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale to assess IGC and suicidal ideation. In-depth interviews were done with 25 youth reporting IGC. The quantitative analysis revealed significant associations between higher IGC scores and suicidal ideation. Three themes identified from the qualitative analysis that best explained the conceptual framework were, family environment and IGC, suicidal ideation/ behaviours and IGC, and coping with IGC. Findings confirm that IGC is a significant contributor to suicidal ideation/behaviour among youth in South India. The CF provides insights into family dynamics and calls for targeted interventions, including family-based strategies. Our paper has been published in the International Journal of Social Psychiatry.

SOCIAL SCIENCE TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Foundation Course on Qualitative Research Methods: 17th -20th June 2024 & Analysis of qualitative data- Thematic Analysis: 24th – 25th & 27th -28th June 2024- Online course organized by Samarth for the Emmanuel Hospital Association.

Qualitative Research Methods and Analysis Workshop Conducted by Samarth at the SRMCI- Department of Paediatric Dentistry on 24th – 25th July 2024.

MPH [Field Epidemiology] Social and Behavioral Sciences -16th Cohort MPH programme - Workshop on Qualitative Research Methods and Analysis organized by Samarth for the MPH Fellows at NIE: 23-25th & 30TH Sept. 2024.

Workshop on Qualitative Research Methods organized by Samarth at the Apollo College of Nursing - 30th -31st Jan 2025

Analysis of Qualitative Data- Thematic Analysis- Online workshop conducted by Samarth: 17th – 18th & 24th -25th Feb. 2025.

International Association of Women's Mental Health (IAWMH 2025) 10th World Congress of Women's Mental Health- Preconference workshop -"Conceptualizing and designing qualitative research"- conducted by Samarth at NIMHANS-Bangalore on 5th March 2025

PUBLICATIONS

Muthu Murugan, Vineet Dhar, Latha Nirmal, Ankita M Saikia, Shuba Kumar, Rani Mohanraj, Umapathy Pasupathy, Kalpana Balakrishnan. Exploring child and family-level influences on oral hygiene practices (OHP)—a qualitative study from South India. *Journal of Clinical Pediatric Dentistry*. Nov. 2024. 49(4):48-58.

Jesudass N, Ramkumar V, Kumar S, Venkatesh L. Development of a conceptual framework to understand the stakeholder's perspectives on needs and readiness of rural tele-practice for childhood communication disorders. *Wellcome Open Res.* 2024 May 8; 9: 239. doi: 10.12688/wellcomeopenres.20977.1. PMID: 39221439; PMCID: PMC11362737.

Murali S, Srinivas S, Boominathan P, Venkatesh L, Kumar S. Barriers and Readiness to Voice Therapy Among School Teachers: A Scoping Review. *J Voice*. 2024 Oct 30:S0892-1997(24)00311-4. doi: 10.1016/j.jvoice.2024.09.016. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 39482183.

Profile of FOUNDER MEMBERS

L. Jeyaseelan has a doctorate in Biostatistics. He served as Professor at Department of Biostatistics at Christian Medical College (CMC), Vellore and following retirement has taken up the position of Prof. of Biostatistics at the Mohammed Bin Rashid University of Medicine and Health (MBRU) in Dubai. He was trained in Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the University of Newcastle, Australia under the INCLEN (International Clinical Epidemiology Network). He had established the Biostatistics Research and Training Centre (BRTC) and a Clinical Data Management Centre (CDMC) at CMC, Vellore for high quality data analyses and management.

Shuba Kumar is a Social Scientist and holds a doctorate in Medical and Social Psychiatry from the Tamil Nadu Dr. MGR Medical University, Chennai. She received her training in Social Science and Epidemiology from the University of Newcastle, Australia under the INCLEN (International Clinical Epidemiology Network) programme. She has been a lead investigator on research projects on women's reproductive health, domestic violence, mental health and HIV care and support programmes. She is sitting member of ethical committees in institutions such as, the National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis (NIRT), the Schizophrenia Research Foundation (SCARF), the ICMR Central Ethics Committee on Human Research (CECHR) and Zifo Genomics Research Institute (ZGRI) Private Limited, Chennai

Rani Mohanraj completed her doctorate in Psychology from the University of Madras and was trained under the Fogarty Fellowship Programme in Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the University of Washington, USA. She has been involved in research studies on mental health

concerns, specifically depression in primary care and school mental health. She has also worked with HIV affected children and has consulted on the development of tools for counsellors in HIV care. She is also the sitting member of ethical committee in Voluntary Health Services (VHS), Adyar, Chennai.

Saradha Suresh is the Former Director of the Institute of Child Health (ICH), Chennai. She underwent training in Clinical Epidemiology, Biostatistics and Health Economics at the University of Pennsylvania, USA under the INCLEN programme. She has been the lead researcher on several neonatal and child health projects. She is currently Honorary President of Samarth.

Veerapandian was trained in Psychology from the Presidency College, Chennai and completed M.Phil from University of Madras. He is a visiting faculty in Psychology at various educational institutions. He is Associate Professor at the Banyan Academy of Leadership in Mental Health (BALM), Chennai

