



# Adjustment strategies adopted by orphans in rural communities of Ibadan south east local government area of Oyo state, Nigeria

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received: 4 April 2013;

Received in revised form:

29 September 2013;

Accepted: 10 October 2013;

#### Keywords

Orphanage,  
Support structure,  
Psychological support,  
Orphans,  
Effectiveness,  
Rural communities.

### ABSTRACT

The study assessed the effectiveness of support structures available to orphans in rural communities of Ibadan South East Local government area of Oyo state, Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling technique comprising of probability and non-probability sampling methods was used to select one hundred and twenty orphans from 10 rural communities of the local government. The main findings of the study show that the mean age of the orphans is 16.6 years with close to two-third (63.33%) being females. Seventy five percent had no formal education while 90% were not schooling; they receive a mean income of less than N80 per day. The respondents as one of the adjustment strategies are engaged in one agricultural economic activities or the other with higher proportion (67.50%) into food processing. About 16.67% do not engage in any non-agricultural activity while majority (38.33%) of them is into trading. Most of the orphans have been exposed to abuses such as maltreatment, rape, discrimination and street hawking with 81.67% of them exposed to more than one of the abuses. The feeling of inferiority complex is the most common condition under which the orphans live. Food, clothing and education were the only support structures available to orphans that are effective as revealed by the study. Due to the ineffectiveness of the support structures in the study area, all orphans involved in this study were found to be involved in at least one agricultural activity, most especially, in food processing.

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### Introduction

The term “orphan” has varied definitions from one country to another depending on the definition of child. Generally, an orphan is a child who has lost one or both parents. By this definition, Nigeria may have as many as 7.3 million orphans, over 10% of all children (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development- FMWASD, 2008). Hence, the main variables in the definition of an orphan are age (between 0 and 18 years) and parental loss (father, mother or both). For instance, in Ethiopia, a child less than 18 years of age who has lost both parents, regardless of how they died is considered an orphan (Child, Youth, and Family Welfare Organisation, Ethiopia, 1992) as cited in Smart (2003). Also, Ministry of Local Administration, Information and Social Affairs- MINLOC (2002) categorized a child who has lost one or both parents in Rwanda as orphans. A key issue in the definitions is the loss of at least a primary caregiver especially when the child in question cannot take care of him or herself.

Orphans are usually maltreated or abused by those who take over their care after the loss of their parents. This makes it almost impossible to talk about orphans without referring to vulnerable children. According to NELA/PSC (2008), a vulnerable child is one who because of circumstances of birth or immediate environment, is prone to abuse or deprivation of basic needs, care and protection and thus at disadvantaged relative to his or her peers. NELA/PSC explained vulnerability as a state of being or likely to be in risky situation where a person may suffer significant physical, emotional or mental

harm that could result in their human rights not being fulfilled and their optimal development not being achieved. With this definition, some orphans, not all, form a category of vulnerable children if they live in difficult situations.

According to Mohammed and Peter (2010), orphanhood is majorly as a result of death while death itself may be as a result of old age, malnutrition, disease, accidents, war, neglect, famine or poverty. Mortality due to malnutrition accounted for 58% of the total mortality in 2006 (Ziegler, 2008). Schaible and Kaufmann (2007) also reported that malnutrition increases the risk of infection and infectious disease which eventually lead to death. According to FMWASD (2007), many households caring for orphans and vulnerable children often lack access to nutritionally adequate food and have chronic food insecurity (food for survival). This often leads to socially unacceptable ways of accessing food, food storage and utilization. The competing needs (food, health and others) also result in diversion of resources for other purposes.

HIV/AIDs have also been reported to be an active agent in the causes of orphanhood. As at 2003, there are about 7 million orphans from all causes. This was expected to increase by 17 percent in 2010 to as much as 8.2 million (Global HIV/AIDs Initiative Nigeria-GHAIN, 2007). About 26% of the total orphans recorded in 2003 were orphaned by AIDs. The percentage of children orphaned by AIDs was also expected to increase to 3.25 million (40%) in the Year 2010 (GHAIN, 2007).

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This figure is similar to that reported by FMWA/UNICEF; 2004 and FMWA; 2007. Recently published data (UNAIDS 2006) show that 1.3 million children (0 – 17 years) lost one or both parents to AIDS in Nigeria in 2005. Other causes of orphaning include maternal mortality and sectarian and ethnic conflict (RAAAP Report 2004). While a large number of children are made vulnerable by orphaning, HIV and AIDS, a larger number are vulnerable due to poverty, conflict and gender inequality.

Orphans are faced with so many challenges such as stigmatization, discrimination, poverty, Lack of basic needs (e.g. food, clothing and shelter), loss of parental care, love and affection, lack of basic education, drop out from schools, poor health, malnutrition, poor self esteem, streetism, involvement in drugs and alcohol (NELA/PSC, 2008). These children may also experience great loss, deprivation and trauma when they live in as orphans, all of which affect their psychological wellbeing. Normal activities such as going to school, playing and going about daily routines within the family are interrupted or cease, and children no longer have a sense of stability or safety. Also, according to Hein and Muhammad (2007), rural orphans are likely to be at risk of malnutrition, disease, abuse and sexual exploitation. Often orphaned children are growing without necessary knowledge and skills for their future livelihoods. Children find themselves involved in roles they are ill-prepared for, such as caring for chronically ill parents, seeing them die and then having to take on their responsibilities of caring for younger sibling or seek for work to earn money to meet basic needs. Some OVC lack the love, care and support they need to develop emotionally, physically and socially. As further noted by FMWASD (2007), all children, especially orphans and vulnerable children, require support for survival, such as food and health care. Orphans and vulnerable children are exposed to health risks from many factors. They face deprivation and poor access to the basic services that promote and maintain health. Compared to other children, they often experience poor access to nutritious food, and shelter, health promoting and disease preventing resources such as education, counseling, immunization, and insecticide treated nets (ITN). Access to health care by orphans and vulnerable children should be assured within the context of child care in Nigeria which essentially addresses preventive, promotive, curative and rehabilitative health care.

For this category of children to continue with life, they adopt some adjustment strategies which entail their involvement in both agricultural and non-agricultural activities depending on their ages and vulnerability condition as well as their dependence on the supports given to them by caregivers and other community members. Also, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) together with World Food Programme (WFP), other UN agencies, National governments, non-governmental organizations and local institutions developed the Junior Farmer Field School (JFFLS) in order to improve orphan's livelihood and provide opportunities for long term food security while maximizing their vulnerability to destitution and extreme coping strategies (Hein and Muhammad, 2007). This is also to improve their agricultural and life skills (FAO, 2007). Literature on the plights of orphans and other vulnerable children are enormous but little efforts have been made on the involvement of these vulnerable children in agricultural activities. In the light of the above, this study sought to assess the effectiveness of support structures available to orphans in rural communities of Ibadan south east local government area of Oyo state, Nigeria. In other to achieve this broadly stated

objective, the study specifically looked into the following objectives, to:

- i. describe the socio-economic characteristics of the orphans in the study area;
- ii. identify the various forms of abuse exposed to by orphans in the study area;
- iii. determine the conditions under which orphans live in the study area;
- iv. identify the support structures available to orphans in the study area; and
- v. identify the agricultural and non-agricultural economic activities used as adjustment strategies by the respondents in the study area.

This study assumed that no significant association exists between the socioeconomic characteristics of the orphans and the support structures available to them.

### **Methodology**

This study was conducted in 10 rural communities of Ibadan south east local government area of Oyo state, Nigeria. Ibadan southeast local government area covers 17 square kilometer with estimated population of 266,046 people at 2006 census. It is usually referred to as the premier local government in Oyo state, and its head quarter is situated at Mapo hall. The local government is divided into 12 wards for the purpose of election of councilors into local governments. The principal inhabitants are the Yorubas. They majorly trade in Cassava, Cocoa, Timber, Rubber and Palm-oil. The main industries in area include processing of Agricultural products, and there are several cattle ranches, dairy farm, as well as Abattoir.

This study employed a multi-stage sampling technique which has three different stages. Stage one entails the random selection of five of the twelve wards while two rural communities each from the selected wards were also randomly selected at stage two. Stage three involves the final selection of 12 orphans from the 10 rural communities through snowballing approach. Structured interview schedule was then used to obtain useful information from the 120 orphans. The specific objectives of the study were presented in distribution tables and described with the use of frequency counts, percentages, mean and mode. The hypothesis was tested with Chi-square analytical technique and reported with the aid of a frequency table. Conclusion and recommendation were then made based on the findings of this study.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Socio-economic characteristics of respondents**

As presented in Table 1, about three out of every five (63.33%) orphans were females while the remaining 36.67% were males. This implies that majority of the orphans in the study area are females. It was also revealed in Table 1 that the mean age of orphans in the study area is 16.6 years with 25.83%, 68.33% and 5.83% being in the age brackets 12-14, 15-17 and 18 years respectively. This also reflects that majority of the orphans are no longer young children, hence, they can take care of themselves to a greater extent.

Three out of every four (75%) orphans in the study area had no formal education, only about 16.67% had primary education while less than ten percent had secondary education (or still schooling). It is then inferred that majority of the respondents either had no formal education or had low educational status. About ten percent of the respondents were reported in Table 1 to be schooling; twenty-two point five percent were reported to be trading while the remaining sixty-seven point five percent were reported as artisans. This indicates that most of the orphans are either artisans or traders.

Those that are artisans learn one trade or the other. It can be concluded that their occupation is a reflection of their age, sex and educational status.

Table 1 also showed that none of the respondents earned less than N1000 per month, 44.17% earned between N1000 and N1999, 24.17% earned between N2000 and N2999 while close to one-third (31.67%) earned greater than or equal to N3000 on monthly basis. The mean monthly income for the orphans was deduced to be N2374.50. This implies that their monthly income is too small to take care of themselves; hence, external support is required. The low income earned by this group of children is attributed to their age, occupation, lack of formal education as well as absence of parental care.

#### **Forms of abuse exposed to by orphans**

Table 2 presents the common forms of abuse open to orphans in the study area. It showed that 60% of the orphans had been maltreated, 81.58% of the female orphans had been raped, 55% of the orphans had been discriminated on the basis of their condition, and 70.83% of the orphans are street hawkers. Also, lesser proportion of the orphans is into prostitution and had been verbally abused as just 23.68% of the female orphans are into prostitution while 36.67% of the orphans had been verbally abused. Furthermore, Table 2 indicated that over four-fifth (81.67%) of the respondents were exposed to more than one form of abuse. This showed that the most common forms of abuse exposed to by orphans in the study area are rape, street hawking and maltreatment. Street hawking, which is a major form of abuse exposed to by orphans in the study area opens the door to other abuse forms such as harassment, rape, assault, verbal abuse and discrimination. Raped girls are easily susceptible to HIV/AIDs as such sexes were never protected. This can then lead to unwanted pregnancies thereby preventing the orphans from getting out of the poverty cycle as they will be deprived the access to acquire the necessary skills that are required to get better paid jobs.

#### **Living conditions of orphans**

As depicted in Table 3, more than seventy percent (71.67%) of the surveyed orphans live in poverty; more than sixty percent (61.67%) of them are malnourished, about 76.67% are exposed to ill-health while close to ninety percent (86.67%) were highly traumatized. Poverty can therefore be linked to the cause and effect of the other poor conditions in which orphans live in the study area. This is because one who lives in poverty will not be able to afford foods that contain the required nutrition in both quality and quantity and even as at when needed, hence, leading to malnourishment. Malnourishment will also prevent the growth and development of necessary body cells and tissues; this enhances the susceptibility of the body to ill-health conditions. Someone who is sick will also be prevented from undertaking some economic activities (both agricultural and non-agricultural) and therefore makes that person highly vulnerable to poverty.

Close to two-third (65.83%) of the orphans living under the condition of insecurity like other Nigerians. The case of insecurity is more complicated among orphans than other Nigerians because there is absolutely no one to look after them in order to secure their lives. Also, just a little higher than seventy percent (71.67%) of the orphans disclosed that they face different forms of harassment as well as abuse while about 90 percent of them revealed that they feel inferior to children with both parents alive. The implication is that orphans are being discriminated based on their circumstance of birth. This discrimination is in contradiction to the provision of Article 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Table 3 further revealed that close to two-third (65.83%) of the orphans suffered maltreatment in the hands of caregivers while 62.50% declared that they had no access to education. Having inferiority complex was ranked most common among the orphans, followed by traumatization, exposure to ill-health, harassment/abuse and poverty. Malnourishment was however ranked the least common among the orphans. Summarily, at least sixty percent of the orphans live under poor conditions of poverty, malnourishment, exposure to ill-health, traumatization, insecurity, harassment, inferiority complex, maltreatment and lack of access to education.

#### **Effectiveness of available support structure**

Table 4 showed that more than half (51.67%) of the respondents perceived that provision of funds to orphans is not effective while about 20%, 11.67% and 16.67% graded it as slightly effective, effective and very effective respectively. Close to one-third (30%) believed that advice given to orphans is not effective, 17.5% believed it is slightly effective while 30% and 22.5% believed advice given to orphans is effective and very effective respectively. About one out of every three (32.50%) respondents believed that shelter provided for them is effective while others (29.17%, 20.83% and 17.50%) believed that the provided shelter is not effective, slightly effective and very effective respectively. As also contained in Table 4, exactly one-third (33.33%) and close to one-quarter (24.17%) of the respondents perceived that their clothing is effective and very effective respectively while about 15% and 27.50% stated that their clothing is not effective and slightly effective respectively. More than half (53.33%) of the respondents saw that the psychological support given to them is not effective, 17.50%, 12.50% and 16.67% graded the same as slightly effective, effective and very effective respectively. As far as security is concerned, close to half (45%) believed it is not effective, 25.83%, 13.33% and 15.83% believed it is slightly effective, effective and very effective respectively. Furthermore, one-third and one-fourth of the respondents agreed that education given to them is effective and very effective respectively while about one-fifth (20.83%) each believed that education is not effective and slightly effective. Higher proportions (27.5% and 31.67%) of the respondents perceived the health care provided to them as not effective and slightly effective respectively while the lesser proportions (24.17% and 16.67%) graded the health care services given to them as effective and very effective respectively. About half (47.5%) of the respondents vocational training received by them as not effective, one-quarter (25%), 15.83% and 11.67% perceived that the training received by them is effective, slightly effective and very effective respectively. As per feeding, two out of five (40.83%) and one out of four (26.67%) respondents judged the food given to them as effective and very effective respectively while the minority groups (13.33% and 19.17%) judged the food given to them as not effective and slightly effective respectively.

The scores in the mean column of Table 4 showed the effectiveness of the available structures. It presents that education, clothing and food are the only effective support structures available to orphans in the study area. It also indicated that food given to orphans is the most effective support given to orphans. Other support structures with mean value lesser than 1.50 are considered not effective. A Likert value of 1.310 obtained while considering the support structures in totality indicated that the support structures put in place in the study area were ineffective.

**Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of orphans (n = 120)**

Socio-economic characteristics	Frequency	Percentages (%)	Mean
Sex			
Male	44	36.67	
Female	76	63.33	
Age (years)			16.6 years
12-14	31	25.83	
15-17	82	68.33	
18	7	5.83	
Educational status			
No formal education	90	75.00	
Primary education	20	16.67	
Secondary education	10	8.33	
Occupation			
Schooling	12	10.00	
Trading	27	22.50	
Artisans	81	67.50	
Average monthly income (Naira)			N2374.50
< 1000	0	0.00	
1000 – 1999	53	44.17	
2000 – 2999	29	24.17	
≥ 3000	38	31.67	

**Table 2: Forms of abuse exposed to by orphans (n = 120)**

Forms of abuse	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Maltreatment	72	60.00
Rape	62	81.58*
Discrimination	66	55.00
Verbal abuse	44	36.67
Prostitution	18	23.68*
Street hawking	85	70.83
More than one abuse	98	81.67

**Table 3: Living conditions of orphans (n=120)**

Conditions	Yes		Rank
	Frequency	Percentages (%)	
I live in poverty	86	71.67	4 <sup>th</sup>
I am malnourished	74	61.67	9 <sup>th</sup>
I am exposed to ill-health most times	92	76.67	3 <sup>rd</sup>
I am highly traumatized	104	86.67	2 <sup>nd</sup>
I live under insecurity	79	65.83	6 <sup>th</sup>
I face harassment and abuse	86	71.67	4 <sup>th</sup>
I feel inferior to others who have living parents	107	89.17	1 <sup>st</sup>
I usually suffer maltreatment in the hands of caregivers	79	65.83	6 <sup>th</sup>
I lack access to education	75	62.50	8 <sup>th</sup>

\*refers to abuse forms that are particular to only the girls, hence their percentages were based on the number of female respondents.

**Table 4: Effectiveness of available support structures (n = 120)**

Support structures	Not effective (0)	Slightly effective (1)	Effective (2)	Very effective (3)	Mean (Likert) value	Remark
Provision of funds	62 (51.67)	24 (20.00)	14 (11.67)	20 (16.67)	0.933	Not effective
Advice	36 (30.00)	21 (17.50)	36 (30.00)	27 (22.50)	1.450	Not effective
Shelter	35 (29.17)	25 (20.83)	39 (32.50)	21 (17.50)	1.383	Not effective
Clothing	18 (15.00)	33 (27.50)	40 (33.33)	29 (24.17)	1.667	Effective
Psychological support	64 (53.33)	21 (17.50)	15 (12.50)	20 (16.67)	0.925	Not effective
Security	54 (45.00)	31 (25.83)	16 (13.33)	19 (15.83)	1.000	Not effective
Education	25 (20.83)	25 (20.83)	40 (33.33)	30 (25.00)	1.625	Effective
Health care	33 (27.50)	38 (31.67)	29 (24.17)	20 (16.67)	1.300	Not effective
Vocational training	57 (47.50)	19 (15.83)	30 (25.00)	14 (11.67)	1.008	Not effective
Food	16 (13.33)	23 (19.17)	49 (40.83)	32 (26.67)	1.808	Effective
Average					1.310	Not effective

**Table 5: Agricultural and Non-agricultural Activities of respondents (n = 120)**

Activities	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Agricultural activities		
Crop farming	27	22.50
Animal rearing	12	10.00
Food processing	81	67.50
Non-agricultural activities		
None	20	16.67
Hairdressing/weaving	11	9.17
Tailoring	10	8.33
Carpentry	13	10.83
Trading	46	38.33
Others	20	16.67

**Table 6: Relationship between socio-economic characteristics and support structures given to orphans**

Characteristics	$\chi^2$ value	degree of freedom	p-value	decision
Sex	20.06	9	0.003	Significant
Occupation	6.29	18	0.79	Not significant
Educational status	7.37	18	0.83	Not significant

The implication of the findings is that the community members are giving those things which they can easily afford to support orphans. Thus, governmental and non-governmental organizations should support the plight of orphans in rural areas through the provision of well equipped and managed orphanages in these areas.

#### Adjustment strategies employed by orphans

The result presented in Table 5 revealed that while all the respondents engaged in agricultural activities, 83.33% were engaged in non-agricultural activities. About 22.50%, 10.00% and 67.50% of the respondents were engaged in crop farming, animal rearing and food processing respectively. This implies that the greatest proportion of orphans in the study area was engaged in food processing while the least proportion were engaged in animal rearing. This may be attributed to the fact that lesser proportion of rural dwellers is livestock farmers when compared with crop farmers. This result is also an indication that food processing is a major agricultural occupation of rural dwellers, followed by crop farming. The involvement of all the orphans in at least one agricultural activities indicate that orphans in rural areas had adopted agriculture as an adjustment strategy to confronting the challenges facing them as well as making up for the ineffective support structures available to this special group of people.

Table 5 showed that close to two-fifth (38.33%) of the respondents engage in trading, just about 10.83%, 9.17% and 8.33% engage in carpentry, hairdressing/weaving and tailoring respectively. About 16.67% do not engage in any non-agricultural activities while the same proportion (16.67%) engages in other non-agricultural activities like attendants at call centres, housekeeping, and bricklaying. This data then x-rayed that after trading; most of the respondents (28.33%) are artisans learning one trade or the other. The implication is that some orphans in rural areas do not only depend on agriculture as an adjustment strategy but also on non-agricultural activities. This is attributed to the fact that agricultural activities are seasonal and hence, may be affected by seasonal fluctuation and uncertainty associated with agriculture. However, seems to be a more dependable adjustment strategy to the orphans than any other economic activities. This becomes true as subsistence farming practiced by the orphans is cheaper than establishing any trade. Lesser patronage of non-agricultural economic activities experienced in rural areas is also a germane reason for the orphans' dependence on agricultural economic activities.

#### Hypothesis testing

Relationship between socio-economic characteristics (sex, occupation and educational status) and support structures given to orphans

The result of Chi-square analysis presented in Table 6 revealed that the sex ( $\chi^2=20.06$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) of the orphans has a significant association with the support structures given to them while occupation ( $\chi^2=6.29$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) and educational status ( $\chi^2=7.37$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) were not significantly associated with the support structures. The implication is that a particular sex group will be provided with more of some support structures than the other sex group. For instance, raped females will be in need of psychological support (advice, guidance and counseling, etc) than males.

#### Conclusion and Recommendation

The study revealed that orphans in the study area are living as inferior to other children with both parents, are highly traumatized, and exposed to ill-health, live in poverty, harassed/abused and highly malnourished. They are also exposed to abuses such as street hawking, maltreatment, rape, prostitution with more than eighty percent of them exposed to more than one form of abuse. Food, clothing and education are found to be the most effective support structures provided to the orphans. The resultant analysis showed that the support structures are ineffective in the study area. Though, agricultural and non-agricultural economic activities were found by this study as the adjustment strategies employed by orphans, economic activities of agricultural background were found to be more dependent upon than those outside agriculture. This study while recommending that the government at all levels and community members should rescue these vulnerable children through the provision of necessary support structures added that orphans and other vulnerable children should always be considered while designing and implementing rural development projects through agriculture because their contribution to agricultural growth cannot be overlooked.

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