

**AN INVESTIGATION OF FACTORS AFFECTING THE ACADEMIC
PERFORMANCE OF ORPHANED CHILDREN: A CASE OF SELECTED
UPPER PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NCHELENGE DISTRICT, ZAMBIA**

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work presented in this Paper (Thesis) entitled “An investigation of factors affecting the academic performance of orphaned children: A case of selected upper primary schools in Nchelenge district, Zambia”, is to the best of my knowledge and belief, my own work and that it is original. The Paper (Thesis) contains no material that has been accepted for an award degree or diploma by the University of Information and Communication and 2017 international Multi-disciplinary research conference or any other institution. All the works that are not mine have been acknowledged.

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DEDICATION

I deem it a great privilege to dedicate this work to my excellent amorous wife Doreen Musonda Mwaba Mumba who willingly sacrificed her own needs, wants, and desires so that I might achieve this goal, my Children, Theresa Muonga Mwape Mumba, Brian Mwaba, John Mwape Mumba and Trascilla Natasha Mwape Mumba and my Nephew Bupe Mwewa for all the support rendered to me during my stay at the University of Information and Communication and the time of Research.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This Paper (Thesis) of **John Mumba** has been approved as the partial fulfilment of the requirements for presentation and consequent publication at the 2017 international Multidisciplinary conference

Examiners' Signatures

Signed: Date:

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I owe every facet of my life to the infinite grace and mercy of God the Father, who through our Lord and redeemer Jesus Christ has blessed me far beyond what I deserve by the power of the Holy Spirit. I pray this work brings God glory.

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Abstract

The study investigated the factors affecting the academic performance of orphaned children and the measures that can be used to overcome the challenges that the orphaned learners face in schools of Nchelenge district in Luapula province. Through qualitative, focus group discussion and interviews were used to collect data. The study sample comprised of 58 orphaned learners, 15 teachers, 4 head teachers and DEBS Nchelenge, giving the sample size of 78 participants. The researcher established that both teachers and orphaned pupils revealed that lack of school fees, lack of basic school requirements, going to school without eating any food, absenteeism from school and the continuous change of guardians from time to time who in many cases are very old, are some of the contributing factors to the poor academic performance of the orphaned learners. Concerning the measures to implore to overcome the challenges facing these orphans, this study discovered that provision of free education, free complete school uniform and books, food, sanitary pads for the girl learner and to build boarding houses for orphans so as to keep them in school so that the perpetual change of guardians is restrained.

Keywords: Orphanhood, academic performance, attachment theory, FAWEZA,FGD, pupils.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The study investigated factors affecting the academic performance of orphaned children: a case of selected upper primary schools in Nchelenge district, Zambia. Orphanhood is defined as a state of a child whose parents are dead, or a child who has been deprived of parental care and has not been adopted (Chela et al., 1989). An orphan is a child below the age of 18 years that has lost one or both parents (ministry of finance and national planning (MOFNP, 2005). Furthermore, many children are losing one or both parents from AIDS, malaria and other none communicable diseases. Increasingly children, both orphans and none orphans affected by the pandemic of HIV/AIDS and poverty, are neither attending school, receiving proper nutrition nor accessing good health care (Mckerrow, 1996). There is little available research, but increasing concern, regarding the psychological well-being of orphans in Africa (Cluver and Gardner, 2006). HIV/AIDS have been one of the severest clinical and public health problems ever faced by human being. Globally, an orphan is defined by international organizations based on age and parental status. According to (UNAIDS, USAID AND UNICEF, 2002) an orphan is defined as a child less than 15 years of age who has lost his or her mother. Recently, however, it changed its definition to cover the loss of both parents and to include children below 18 years of age (UNAIDS, 2004). From 2001 to 2003, the global number of AIDS orphans has increased from 11.5 to 15 million. Although Africa is proportionally the region hardest hit by HIV/AIDS, the number of orphans is largest in Asia due to much larger populations (UNAIDS, UNICEF AND USAID, 2004). The impacts of parental death on children are complex and affect the child's psychological and social development. Fredriksan and kandous (2004) state that, orphaned children might have stunted development of emotional intelligence and life skills such as communications, decision making, negotiation skills etc. Moreover, they often show lack of hope for future and have low self-esteem (Kedija, 2006).

Currently, Zambia faces a silent crisis. The suffering of the orphan and vulnerable child is contained within the confines of the family and the community. Daily, children suffer from malnutrition and childhood illnesses. Since the inception of the orphan issue, much discussion has taken place regarding the psychosocial needs of orphaned children. Interventions to date have not been effective at coping with the intense psychological trauma of losing a parent to AIDS and the stigmatisation from the community.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Although the ministry of education (1992) recognises education for all learners who are vulnerable like orphaned children, orphans have continued to under-perform academically, because of this, the cause of underperformance is not known. Hence the need for this study.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to find out how best the government of Zambia, religious societies, none governmental organizations, local communities and extended families will identify some of the factors and come up with measures to overcome these challenges.

1.4 Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives

1. To establish factors affecting the performance of orphaned pupils in selected primary schools of Nchelenge district.
2. To identify the measures that can be used to overcome the challenges that the orphans face in upper primary schools in Nchelenge district.

1.5 Research Question

The study was guided by the following questions

1. What are the Factors that Affect the Academic Performance of Orphaned Children in upper primary schools in Nchelenge district?
2. What are the experience of orphans in upper primary schools in Nchelenge district
3. What are the challenges faced by orphans in upper primary schools in Nchelenge district
4. What are the measures that can be used to overcome the challenges that the orphans face in upper primary schools in Nchelenge district.

Theoretical framework

This study was guided by the attachment theory, Attachment theory is the joint work of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). Attachment is a deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space (Ainsworth, 1973; Bowlby, 1969). Attachment does not have to be reciprocal. One person may have an attachment to an individual which is not shared. Attachment is characterized by specific behaviours in children such as seeking proximity with the attachment figure when upset or threatened (Bowlby, 1969). Attachment behaviour in adults towards the child includes responding sensitively and appropriately to the child's needs. Such behaviour appears universal across cultures. Attachment theory provides an explanation of how the parent-child relationship emerges and influence subsequent developments. Borrowing from Freud's (1905/1953) notion that mature human sexuality is built up of component instincts, Bowlby proposed that two months old' unmistakable attachment behaviour is made up of a number of component instinctual responses that have the function of binding the infant to the mother and the mother to the infant. These component responses (among them sucking, clinging, and following, as well as the signalling behaviours of

smiling and crying) mature relatively independently during the first year of life and become increasingly integrated and focused on a mother figure during the second 6 months. Bowlby saw clinging and following are more possibly important for attachment than sucking and crying. (Robertson & Bowlby, 1952) had identified three phases of separation response: protest (related to separation anxiety), despair (related to grief and mourning), and denial or detachment (related to defence mechanisms, especially repression). The population of Zambia in 2008 was estimated to be 12.5 million and is growing at the rate of 2.9% (CSO 2009) per annum with children under the age of 14 years constituting 45.4% of the total population (WFB 2009). The emergency of OVCs in Zambia is a national crisis as their magnitude and impacts outstretch the country's available resources and capacity to mitigate consequences arising thereof. Many children in Zambia find themselves vulnerable due to the effects of various factors, major ones being epidemics like HIV and AIDS; poverty; traditional practices which condone child abuse; and national disasters like draughts. It is estimated that 19.2% of all children in Zambia are OVCs, a count only for those living in households (ZDHS 2007). In 2008, the Ministry of Education estimated the total number of orphans at 1,302,307. Based on this figure and the current number of children, it is estimated that 29.9% are OVCs. The issue of orphans and vulnerable children remains one of the big challenges the Zambian society is facing today. Matshalaga (2004) adds elderly grandmothers are increasingly have to bear the burden of caring for large numbers of children with little or no support from the extended family. The grandmothers' struggle in order to provide basic needs for these orphans, unfortunately because of the economic hardships the extended family may not be helping, orphaned children cared for by grandmothers may live without the basics like food and clothes. Can a child perform well academically if she/he comes to school hungry? Jenks (1992) has the opinion that family background accounts for more than half of the variance in the student's performance.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research design

The researcher adopted a case study design. According to Polit and Hungler (1983) cited in Mwanza (2012), Case studies are detailed investigations of individuals, groups, institutions or other social units. A case study has one person, entity, a study of one thing; it is identified as one of the many. A case study may be of one person, class, district, country, continent or a family. A case study design was used because it allowed the researcher to have an in-depth and detailed understanding of a single unit, such as one individual, one group, one organization, or one program. The study used a qualitative method approach due to its nature. The approach uses the qualitative research paradigm. The use of this methodology was adopted in order to enhance research findings by providing a well-rounded understanding of the factors affecting the academic performance of orphaned learners in upper primary schools of Nchelenge district. The qualitative approach ensures the achievement of a holistic view of the phenomenon by exploring

meanings, feelings, experiences and perceptions (Tashakkori and Teddlie 2003). The approach allows the researcher to, not only ensure validity of the findings, but also collect rich information from different perspectives. According to Creswell (2009) cited in Kakupa (2014), this is a strategy in which both qualitative and quantitative data are collected at about the same time in order for the strengths of one method to offset weaknesses of the other and allow for a cross-validation of findings within a single study Mbewe (2016).

2.2 Data collection procedure

The researcher used Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to collect detailed information as to the views and experiences of teachers who have handled and dealt with orphaned pupils for a long time as the appendix FGD interview guide shows. FGDs are forms of interviews in which more than one person is involved (Bryman, 2008). Wellington (2000) recommends a small group of six to ten participants per session. Furthermore, the researcher also used interview guides to collect data from the orphaned pupils.

2.3 Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) are forms of interviews in which more than one person is involved (Bryman, 2008). Wellington (2000) recommends a small group of six to ten participants per session as cited in Mbewe (2015). The researcher used focus group discussion because they were helpful in getting the holistic view of the teachers towards with regards to the academic performance of orphans in Nchelenge district.

2.4 Interview Guides

These were: semi-structured interview guides. Semi-structured interview guides were developed for use with Orphaned pupils to gain an insight into the reasons behind mal-academic performance in Nchelenge district. Sidhu (2006), documents that an interview is a two way method which allows an exchange of ideas and information. In an interview, the researcher collects data from respondents in face- to- face contact. The aim of the interview is to help in the construction and understanding of reality, Mbewe (2016). The interview guides were also used because they are flexible and allows the researcher to ask a respondent a follow up question if need arises. Interviews were further used because the respondent felt to be part of the team and freely participated in the study.

2.5 Study population

According to McMillan & Schumacher (2001), a study population can be described as a set of cases, objects or events of interest to the researcher; from which he or she wants to draw a

sample. White (2003) defined a population as the universe of units from which the sample is to be selected. The population comprised selected primary school teachers in Nchelenge district, selected orphaned pupils in grade five to grade seven classes in upper primary schools and guidance and counselling teachers in Nchelenge district.

2.6 Sample and Sample Size

According to White (2003), a sample is a subset or group of subjects selected from the larger population and whose characteristics can be generalized to the entire population.

The study conducted, observed gender balance for both learners and teachers. Four schools were considered respectively. The schools selected cover the entire extent of Nchelenge district among other schools.

2.7 Sampling Method and Procedure

This study used Purposeful sampling which is a technique widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell & Clark, 2011). In addition to knowledge and experience, Bernard (2002) and Spradley (1979) note the importance of availability and willingness to participate, and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner. Stratified random sampling was used in selecting Schools because it enabled the researcher to select primary schools from low density, medium density and high density areas with the desired characteristics.

2.8 Data analysis

The two methods that were used for collecting data are both qualitative in nature, in the sense that they yield qualitative data. Thematic method of data analysis was used as data was placed in themes to explain the phenomena, Bernard and Ryan (1998, 2010). A qualitative is an analytic method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It elaborately organises and describes your data set in detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic. 'Braun and Clarke, (2006, p.79)

3.0 FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

It is worth noting that With regards to the factors affecting the academic performance of the orphaned learners in upper primary schools of Nchelenge district in Luapula province, the teachers shared deferent views. Some said the academic performance of the orphaned learners is good while others said the academic performance is very poor alluding to deferent factors. It should be pointed out that, teachers were asked to indicate the factors which affect the academic

performance of the orphaned learners in Nchelenge district of Luapula Province. Of the 19 teachers who participated, 10 teachers said covering long distances to school, going to school without eating any food and lack of school fees. Others said these orphans cover very long distances to and from, hence arriving at school very tired. The following are the views of the teachers who talked about the covering of long distances to school by orphans, going to school without eating any food, and lack of school fees. Three (03) teachers from Green upper primary school indicated their view during a focus group discussion that, orphans underperform academically because they come to school from far distant place, covering minimum distances of about 5km to 10km km each school day. These teachers said that this is so, because most orphans are kept by very old people who mainly are their grandmothers who are living in abject poverty making these orphans to go to school without eating any food. The majority of these old people, who care for the orphans, live in very desolate places which are very far from schools. This is also evident from the orphans none payment of school fees, because their grandmothers cannot afford to raise the money.

With regards to the measures to be used in order to overcome the challenges affecting the orphans, three (03) teachers from green school all female indicated that government should facilitate a policy where orphans must be exempted from paying school fees and continue to provide financial support for other school requirements even for feeding the orphans.

Not only have that, but all to extend free education from lower grades to tertiary education especially for the orphans. This will improve the academic performance of the orphaned learners. Furthermore the teachers added that government must consider establishing a (GRZ) government owned orphanage as there is no single orphanage of whatever sort in Nchelenge, and most (NGO) nongovernmental organisation concentrate in urban areas. These NGOs should also come to rural areas also. The only NGO that was in Nchelenge was an NGO called WHITE CHOICE which has also since disappeared or died, leaving the district with no NGO to house the orphans. Additionally, five (05) teachers from yellow school of whom one (01) was male and four were female indicated that construction of Boarding houses by the government would help to house the orphaned learner's because there is only one boarding school currently in this location which is Nchelenge secondary school and that yellow school was still growing and not yet ready to be a boarding school. They further went to say that Nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and individual well wishers should take up the opportunity of sponsoring and supporting the orphaned learners due to the fact that the bursary facility that used to be there for the vulnerable children is no longer there. The teachers also added to say that the only NGO present in the district is CAMFED which is stationed at the DEBs office only. Despite the efforts from CAMFED, most CAMFED sponsored girls tend to fall pregnant and drop out of school along the way. Additionally, four (04) teachers from Blue of whom all were female, indicated that some of

the measures to employ include inclusive learning and pupil teacher contact that as teachers they may be able to know what the orphaned learner is missing in their daily lives. The teachers further indicated that the school health nutrition program (SHN) to feed the vulnerable children other than orphaned pupils. The government of Zambia should also establish a school feeding program in order to keep the orphaned in school because most of these orphans spend most of their time fending for food thereby missing school. Furthermore, three(03) teachers from orange school being one (01) male and two(02) female indicated that it would be better if some measures such as revamping and strengthen the school health nutrition (SHN) program which provide an opportunity to vulnerable learner's like orphans to at least eat two meals a day, motivates them to stay and concentrate in school. Not only that but also for the government of the republic of Zambia to straighten and extend the policy of free education from lower grades to tertiary level to the orphans, the package of free education must come with full support of even other school requirements such as books, uniforms and many other requirements.

The above findings suggest that, teachers hold a belief that most orphaned pupils have continued to underperform academically due to the fact that they lack parental guidance and attachment. Attachment is a deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space (Ainsworth, 1973; Bowlby, 1969). Attachment does not have to be reciprocal. The building of government houses would be ideal for the survival of these orphaned learners. With regards to the factors affecting the academic performance of the orphaned' learners in Nchelenge district of Luapula province, it should be noted that orphaned learners were asked to indicate the factors which affects their academic performance. 58(fifty eight) orphans participated in the study, 31 being girls and 27 being boys. Almost all the orphaned pupils indicated that lack of school fees and school requirements are factors affecting their academic performance, they said that they have no one to pay for their school fees and to buy them books, uniforms and other school requirements because most of these orphans are double orphans who are being kept by grandparents who are also too old to fend for the orphans. Some of these orphans don't even have school uniforms; they have been wearing the same uniform for the past six years now. Furthermore, the life style at home after parental death is not good to an extent that some have even stopped attending church services because like in the case of one orphan from yellow school who has to brew illicit local (Whisky) beer commonly known as lutuku or Kachaso to sale over the weekends in order to raise money for school and other requirements for his survival. The orphans recite: "It pains me very much because my parents were Christians and we were strong SDA Christians. So, because of that, I always think I won't inherit the kingdom of God but go to hell for missing church and selling beer on the Sabbath". Additionally, the orphaned learners indicated that orphanhood and lack of parents affects their academic performance at school because they have no one to cry to, when they want things for. Death is not good, they said.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study has established that teachers suggest that, most orphaned pupils have continued to underperform academically due to the fact that they lack parental guidance and attachment. Attachment is a deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space (Ainsworth, (1973). Furthermore, orphans underperform academically because they go to school from far distant place, covering minimum distances of about 5 to 10 km each school day. These teachers said that this is so, because most orphans are kept by very old people who mainly are their grandmothers who are living in abject poverty making these orphans to go to school without eating any food. The majority of these old people, who care for the orphans, live in very desolate places which are very far from schools. This is also evident from the orphans none payment of school fees, because their grandmothers cannot afford to raise the money.

The study has also revealed that the government seem not to be doing enough in the maintenance of the welfare of the orphans either directly or by empowering the very old guardians by raising their social and economic status that parents attached to their children. The study also revealed that, even orphans shared the same view like that of their teachers as regards to their survival of factors that affect their academic performance directly or indirectly. The study also further discovered that, the overall survey of orphans' worldwide shows that about 35% of orphans are between the ages of five and nine and 50% between the ages of ten and fourteen (Fredison & kanabus, 2005). This indicates that generally there is a high rate of orphans among primary school learners. The present study sought to make a contribution in this regard by specifically exploring the factors and measure of orphanhood on academic performance. From the background information, it is evident that orphans are a deprived group of people who have at some point been declared vulnerable (orphan programming in Zambia, 1999). These orphaned learners are substantially more likely not to perform well in school and or even drop out of school than none orphaned learners depending on the level of orphanhood and family economic muscle (UNDP, 2007). efforts are being made by the government of Zambia to facilitate for these orphaned learners to be well adjusted in their social and personal development so as to develop holistically (ministry of education (MOE), Zambia annual school census 2007). It is even sad to note that these orphans have no access to devices of Information and communication technology (ICT) such as Computers, Television sets devices that link and unit all human being globally. A TV provides a medium of cultural exchange and modeling. These orphans do not even have access to mobile phones which are a basic ICT device from which at least a child would be able to communicate to the outside world. If the government were not able to make ICT available, then, at least even a NGO can provide these facilities. The only NGO present is CAMFED which concentrates on girls only and mainly provides sanitary pads. Despite the

efforts from CAMFED, most CAMFED sponsored girls tend to fall pregnant and drop out of school along the way.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4.2. Recommendations

The government should facilitate for a policy where orphans must be exempted from paying school fees and continue to provide financial support for other school requirements even for feeding orphans. Not only that, but also to extend free education from lower grades to tertiary education especially for the orphans. This will motivate and enhance the improvement of the academic performance of the orphaned learners. Furthermore, the government of Zambia must consider establishing a (GRZ) government owned orphanage as there is no single orphanage of whatever sort in Nchelenge and most (NGO) nongovernmental organisation concentrate in urban areas. The NGOs should also go to rural areas. The only NGO that was in Nchelenge was an NGO called WHITE CHOICE which has also since vanished, leaving the district with no NGO to house the orphans. Additionally, the construction of Boarding houses by the government would help to house the orphaned learners because there is only one boarding school currently in this location which is Nchelenge secondary school. Mweru secondary school is still growing and not yet ready to be a boarding secondary school though it operates as day secondary school in order to compliment Nchelenge secondary school; this is as at the time the researcher was collecting data. Nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and individual well wishers should take up the opportunity of sponsoring and supporting the orphaned learners due to the fact that the bursary facility that used to be there for the vulnerable children is no longer there. The only NGO present in the district is CAMFED which is stationed at the DEBs office only. Additionally, some of the measures to employ include inclusive learning and improve on pupil teacher contact so that teachers may be able to know what the orphaned learner is missing in their daily lives. The government should also consider revamping school health nutrition program (SHN) to feed the vulnerable children other than orphaned pupils, as this will keep the orphaned learners in school. When the government of Zambia establishes school feeding programs the orphaned learner will be kept in school as this will prevent most of these orphans to spend most of their time fending for food a situation that facilitate the missing of classes or staying away from school. Furthermore , the strengthening of the school health nutrition (SHN) program which provide an opportunity to vulnerable learner's like orphans to at least eat two meals a day, motivates them to stay and concentrate in school .Not only that but also for the government of the republic of Zambia to straighten and extend the policy of free education from lower grades to tertiary level for the orphans , the package of free education must come with full support of even other school requirements such as books, uniforms and many other school requirements.

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