

ANALYSIS OF PSYCHOSOCIAL & ECONOMIC SUPPORT ON ACCESS TO EDUCATION BY ORPHANED AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN OF KINGEERO, KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA.

By

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine the effects of psycho-social and economic support on access to education by orphaned and vulnerable children in Kiambu county. The study was guided by objectives such as; to determine the challenges orphaned and vulnerable children face, to assess the availability of psycho-social support services and how they help in the development of orphaned and vulnerable children. Education is important in the psychological development of any child.

Through education, a child is able to interact with the immediate world and comprehend the issues surrounding them. However, during the process of problem identification, the findings showed that there are a good number of children in Kiambu who are not able to access education and so, their general growth is inhibited in the long run. It is therefore important to note that, although they are in need of the psychosocial and economic support, education is a very important factor in life that cannot be ignored.

An analysis of various kinds of support that are already available to OVCs was done and how such support makes a difference to them.

Exploratory research design was used to describe the phenomenon into details and to analyze data. Probability Sampling was used to select the samples for the study, and purposeful random sampling used to come up with the sample size.

Recommendations were made on the steps that may be taken to end the plight of the OVCs that may lead to their growth in education and development.

Key words: orphans, vulnerability, psycho-social, economic, access

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Kenya's population is estimated to be 40 million people of which, approximately, 14.9 million are children below the age of 14 years (Kenya Integrated Household budget survey, 2005/2006).

The mean size of a Kenyan household is 5, with households in the rural areas having an average of 6 members while those in the urban areas have an average of 4 members (KIHBS 2005/2006).

The national absolute poverty is estimated at 46%. In rural area, overall poverty declined from 52.9% in 1997 to 49.1% in 2005/2006 while in urban areas, overall poverty declined from 49.2% in 1997 to 33.7% in 2005/2006. The ultra poor in Kenya are estimated to be 19.1%. Rural areas have the highest percentage (21.9%) while the urban areas have lower percentage (8.3%) of the ultra poor (National Bureau of statistics, April 2007).

Children are innocent and can be defenseless especially without the necessary support that should be given to them. There are several factors that can impact on a child's psychosocial wellbeing, including poverty, conflict, neglect and abuse. HIV and AIDS can compound these. As a result of HIV and AIDS, children might experience traumatic events such as the illness and death of parents, violence and exploitation, stigma and discrimination, isolation and loneliness, and lack of adult support and guidance. This was the situation with quite a number of the families in the area which left the children living in poor conditions and also not attending school. Something had to be done to ensure that these children would be able to enjoy their childhood just like all the rest of their friends.

Keeping in line with Kenya's Policies as enshrined in the children's Act, this study played a major role in ensuring that children in the area enjoyed their rights of being enrolled in formal schooling systems. In most cases, part of the community is not there or is not willing to give children the necessary support they need in order to enjoy their rights. Hence, this study was very important in promoting the enjoyment of these rights.

Early evidence for the impact on children's school attendance as a result of orphan hood came from Uganda; the financial strain led to households with orphans failing to raise funds to send their own children to school (Muller, 1990). Education is often disrupted when parents become sick, especially older girl children who are required to take over household and care giving chores. In Uganda, amongst children 15-19 years whose parents had died, only 29% continued their schooling undisrupted; 25% lost school time and 45% dropped out of school; school-age children with the greatest chance of continuing their education were those who lived with a surviving parent; those fostered by grandparents had the least chance (7%) (Sengendo, 1997). A study by (Ryan, 2007) revealed that an inclusive environment in which peers are supportive and there is emphasis on cooperation, effort and personal improvements influences motivation, enjoyment and psychological needs. When OVC feel their needs have been fulfilled they are more likely to improve in their participation in the school learning environment. To achieve this, teachers and guardians to OVC should build confidence in the learners and create an environment of hopefulness and instill positive attributes including better health, greater perseverance, flexibility and high confidence in OVC. However, failure to provide relatedness can be unhealthy and instigate negative consequences on the OVC's life. They only see the negative aspect of their lives, miss out on learning opportunities and fail to take action that

would otherwise improve on their effective participation in the learning process (Bauer et al., 1991)

Other studies by (Chua and Koestner, 2008) shows that when teachers find ways to promote children's relatedness during learning activities, they can successfully do so by promoting the value at task. This is by identifying the lesson's hidden value, and help OVCs understand why the lesson is genuinely worth their effort. This in turn leads to an increased frequency of learner participation in the learning process. This is through encouraging OVCs initiative, respecting them as individuals, listening to their perspectives, creating opportunities for choice and self-regulating, helping out when they are into barriers and providing positive and constructive feedback. This will encourage OVC participation in the learning process.

Children, who feel a satisfactory relationship with one or more teachers, tend to do better in school than those who don't. Studies by (Deci and Ryan, 2002) have shown that feeling a sense of relatedness is important others support learning relatedness. To realize this, teachers need to create an interactive program in which OVC set short and long term learning objectives and take responsibility of their own learning. Such positive attributes are conducive for learners' high participation in the learning process. Relatedness leads to the most optimal school engagement and adjustment (Kasser, 1996). This study also found that school performance was significantly poorer among children orphaned by AIDS and other causes.

1.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was founded on the theoretical framework of Maslow, (1998). He suggests that the most basic level of needs must be met for individuals to satisfy their desires. By connotation teachers, educators and parents need to start by providing OVC basic needs of food, shelter and clothing, if successful participation is to be realized. Personal needs of safety have also to be met because OVC cannot participate effectively where the environment is not safe in terms of security. It is difficult to concentrate on theoretical teaching when the environment has no security. To this step of the hierarchy, it is essential to create a safety learning environment that will enhance learner participation. **Belongingness:** The OVC need to feel that they belong to a

class or to a community and that they are accepted as members of the group if they are to reach the next level because interaction and belongingness helps them to feel more involved, which in turn leads to high participation. **Self-esteem:** Making OVC feel that they are making a contribution and they are valued as individuals goes a long way to helping them reach the level of self-esteem. Meeting OVC social needs lays a foundation for their participation and for their future. **Acceptance:** The OVC feel socially, physically and emotionally safe when adults in their lives care about them and supports them. For optimal learner participation to be realized OVC should be accepted as individuals with feelings, opinions, ideas, concerns, needs and wants. The OVC should also be treated in courteous, thoughtful, attentive and in a civil manner. It is therefore expected that after providing social needs OVC will develop the skills of problem solving, creativity, decision making, confidence and achievement. These needs are key components for the participation of OVC.

1.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The design adopted for this research was exploratory research design, because of its interactive nature and hence a qualitative advantage to the study. The test-retest technique was applied to test the reliability of the research instruments. During the interviews and the key informant interviews, similar questions were posed to the respondents and then repeated the same process again over a period of time, and compared their responses. The researcher also used constructed validity in checking the validity of the instruments.

2.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The research sought to determine the impacts of psychosocial & economic support on access to education by orphaned and vulnerable children. Respondents were sampled from different age groups as indicated in figure 2.1

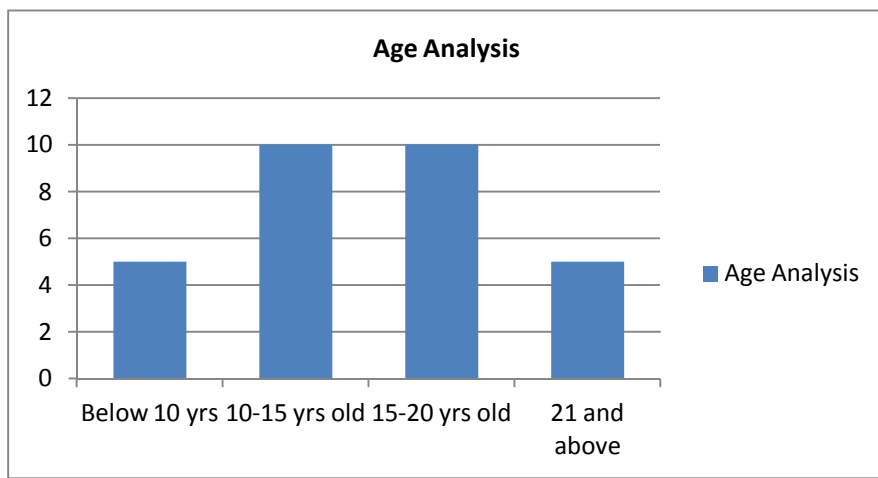
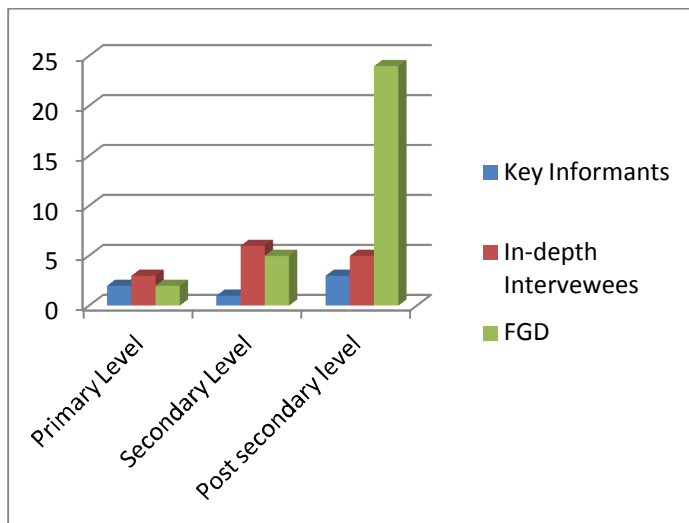


Figure 2.1: Age Analysis of Respondents

The younger respondents were helped to understand the questions and fill in the questionnaires by their caregivers or parents, or even the researcher where it was necessary. The respondents were grouped as above to access diverse information and for purposes of getting opinions from different players in this field.

Most of the respondents that were interviewed were primary school and secondary school students. 15% were university graduates, and most of them formed the Key Informants and the In-depth interviewees. 50% were from primary school, 65% from secondary schools, while 35% never attended school. In total 2 FGDs were conducted each consisting of 15 respondents. The level of education for each group of respondents is presented in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: Education Background Analysis per Respondent Groupings

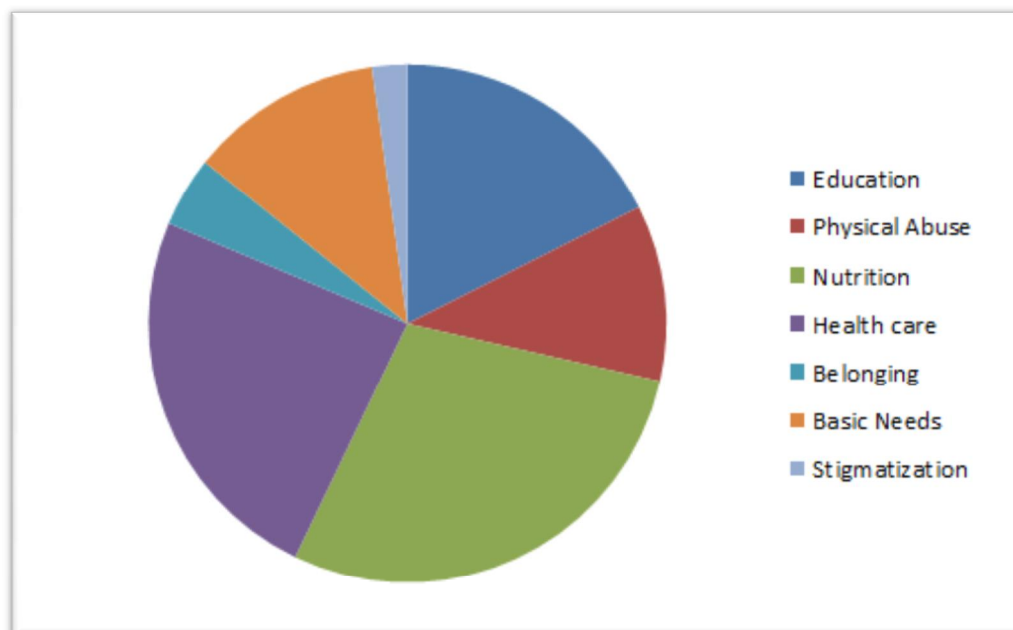


This research also had to determine what the main challenges are that hinder the OVCs in accessing proper education. The most profound included the following and were rated according to severity as follows:

1. Inaccessibility to proper education institutions and other educational services- 16 respondents
2. Physical abuse- 10 respondents
3. Lack of proper nutritional care and enough food (at least 3 meals every day)- 26 respondents
4. Lack of proper health care- 22 respondents
5. Lack of love and a sense of belonging- 4 respondents
6. Stigmatization- 2 respondents
7. Lack of enough basic needs- 11 respondents

Figure 2.3 illustrates the responses

Figure 2.3: Main Challenges faced by OVCs in Kingeero

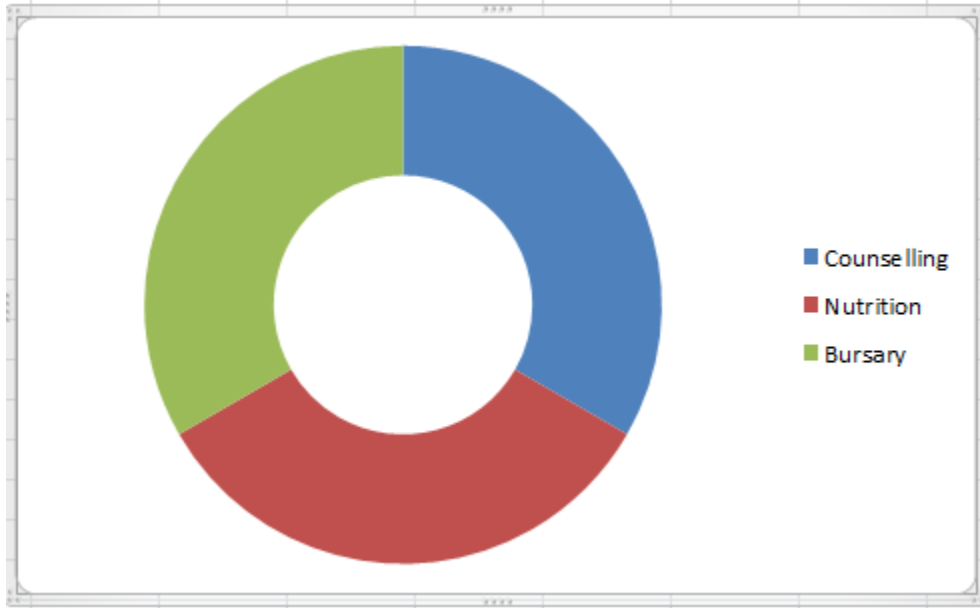


During the Key informant interview, a local administrator was asked what challenges are ranked as highly reported at his office, which face OVCs in his area of jurisdiction. He had this to say;

Many parents and caregivers here in Kingeero always approach this office to seek for funds for their children to go to school with. This is especially among the parents whose children are in high school, colleges and university. The moment they learn that the bursary funds, or CDF funds have been released, I receive numerous calls with each trying to petition for their own children to have an allocation to them. Actually, there has always been so much need, more than my office can fully satisfy. Many other care givers usually have more pressing needs like food and money for healthcare. When it is too much, I just send them to our social development office for further advice, because, we really cannot end all problems immediately.

The OVCs in Kingeero are already benefiting from various types of support to them from various organizations including the government. This research pointed out that counseling services, nutritional care through consultation and provision of monthly rations, and the bursary funds/CDF funds are the ones that are most common in the area. Others like legal services for OVCs are but scantily available. The availability of the psycho social services can be attributed to the presence of regular visits from NGOs, churches and government support to the needy families. The main services available for OVCs are nutritional care, counseling and bursary funds as shown in figure 2.4

Figure 2.4: Main Types of Support Available to OVCs in Kingeero



Source: Field Data

Clearly, the government has put in measures to ensure that every child in this rural area is adequately supported so that they are easily able to access education.

When asked whether the government supports them to complement the local NGOs, one respondent had this to say, "I can say the government supports us, because it gives the CDF funds and bursary, which my grandmother uses to pay for my school fees. Also, apart from the government, we have other NGOs which really support us in many ways."

Further to this question, a field officer with an NGO said,

We also offer legal services to the OVCs in our programme. We stand in their place in a case, where, the court may require evidence. In instances of child abuse, we are normally contacted early enough through our hotline, and follow up on issues like these ones. Also, we help the victims in the process of filing a case of violence/abuse against them, whenever we are called upon to do so.

The area administration also confirmed the data collected, that they give regular rations to the needy, bursary funds and also legal services in conjunction with the local NGOs who are their partners.

The Framework (2004) gives five key strategies that will be beneficial in OVC care and support:

1. Strengthen the capacity of families to protect and care for orphans and vulnerable children by prolonging the lives of parents and providing economic, psychosocial and other support.
2. Mobilize and support community-based responses.
3. Ensure access for orphans and vulnerable children to essential services, including education, health care, birth registration and others.
4. Ensure that governments protect the most vulnerable children through improved policy and legislation and by channeling resources to families and communities.
5. Raise awareness at all levels through advocacy and social mobilization to create a supportive environment for children and families affected by HIV/AIDS.

During the study, it came out quite clearly that community members have over a long time been benefiting with one or more psychological and social services availed to them. It is also good to realize that children have been benefiting and therefore, their access to education made easier.

3.0 Conclusions and recommendations

In Kenya, the Children's Act further observes the child rights to education in Section 7(1), which states that; *Every child shall be entitled to education, the provision of which shall be the responsibility of the government and parents* While Section 7(2) affirms the right and entitlement for every child to free basic education which shall be compulsory in accordance with article 28 of the UN Convention on the rights of the child (GOK, 2002). Most parents and caregivers in Kingeero have been able to abide by this law, albeit not fully. Periodically, orphans have been withdrawn from school and other services like sports, due to financial constraints.

Child protection services have the responsibility of educating communities and raising their awareness about their responsibility over the welfare of children, and ensuring that no child within the community suffers from neglect and abuse (Children's Act 2001). However, despite the enactment of children's Act 2001 by the Kenyan government, cases of child abuse in the country are still rampant due to lack of effective implementation of the legislation. The

children's Act has immensely improved the lives of many Kenyan children plagued with high illiteracy levels, frequent rape cases and child labour since it guarantees children the right to health and medical care, provision of which is the responsibility of the parents, the extended family and the government.

Therefore, the analysis clearly shows that there is need to educate the public on the importance of them as individuals taking action and protecting all orphans in the community, so that, just like the rest of the children, orphans may enjoy a happy life. The laws that are already present may be used to give better output by the public, government and other relevant stakehold

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