



## THE EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES FACED BY THE ORPHANS IN MANICALAND PROVINCE, ZIMBABWE

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### **Abstract:**

In Zimbabwe, many school-going orphans fail to attain their academic prospects because of gender inequality and child -insensitive society. This has negatively affected the orphans for the rest of their lives. This study was therefore conducted in order to unpack the orphans' academic challenges and to recommend strategies to improve their life. The study was carried out in Ward 10 with specific focus on 3 Primary and 2 Secondary schools in Mutasa District in Manicaland Province, Zimbabwe. The researcher employed the qualitative paradigm and adopted the case study design in an effort to gain more insights into the phenomenon. During the period of the study, the area had a population of 4000 people from which a sample size of 50 participants was selected using the purposive technique because the researcher wanted to work with the appropriate informants. The questionnaire, direct observation, interviews and documentary analysis were used to generate data which were then descriptively presented. The instruments enabled the researcher to generate rich data for the study. Ethical and legal issues were highly considered. The study revealed that gender inequality was threat to the orphans' welfare. Some educational programmes which were intended to benefit the less privileged were redirected towards benefiting the more privileged individuals. The study recommended that gender programmes should be intensified in communities to improve behaviour change for equal educational opportunities and to develop a child-sensitive society.

**Key word:** gender, attain, programmes, challenges, child-sensitive, redirected, behavior change

### **1. Background of the Study**

Orphanhood is a common problem among the African communities. It has different definitions depending on how the society interprets it. From a sociological perspective, Giddens (2011) defines an orphan as a child who lost both parents and can be under the

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custody of other family members. The gender definition by Sweetman (2010) concurs with the above view but goes further to include some elements of categorising the children into vulnerable and non-vulnerable. The two views therefore, suggest that orphanhood is a social construct which depicts a parentless child who is dependent upon external help. The psychological perspective is that an orphan is a child who exhibits some parental deficiencies such as food, love and security and is exposed to a weak vulnerability context (Schaefer, 2013). This implies that if a child lacks the basic needs and experiences an impoverished life he/she is an orphan. The social functionalist model also supports the same argument when it assumes that the function of a society is measured by the way it integrates all its systems for common purposes (Haralambos, 2011). Myers (2012) consolidates the above views when he states that if a child loses both parents but enjoys the benefits of life and contributes in one way or the other to the development of the society, then that child is not an orphan. For the purpose of this study the social constructivist model by Giddens (2011) blended with the gender perspectives by Komblum (2011) were adopted and they all purport that an orphan is a child who loses both parents and fails to enjoy the child rights.

From an African social philosophy, if a child was orphaned his /her life was not different from those with both or one parent because of the treatment that was rendered to every child of the family system. Educational, psycho-social and moral support was achieved through the value of “ubuntu” (Kanyowa, 2013). The extended family members were determined and sacrificed to educate the orphaned child despite the unfavourable conditions such as bias towards the elite group of the whites (Oxfam, 2014). Such family attitudes were necessitated by the family cohesion which was established during that time.

Today, the family system no longer supports the orphan for a number of reasons, chief among them being family disintegration, poverty, gender disparities and laxity of moral values. Relationship gaps within the family systems have made it difficult for the extended family members to take the burden of educating the children when their parents are no more. In fact, with the country’s economy melting down each day, many parents die leaving insufficient resources that can sustain their children’s life, let alone for their education. Sweetman (2012) and UNICEF (2011) argue that in most cases the orphans’ educational desires are blocked, thereby leaving the child with nothing else to do but to engage either in immature marriage or age inappropriate piece work in order to earn a living. Such situation has long term effects on the life of the orphan. Without education from which the child gains such skills as self-empowerment, self-advocacy and human rights knowledge, then the child’s future becomes blank (Marion, 2013). This suggests that such children will fail to be active participants in the development of their society. It was therefore, against this background that this study was carried to unveil more educational challenges faced by the orphans.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

The orphans' educational challenges have negatively impacted on the development of their future life.

### **2.1 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to improve the orphans' life with skills so that they improve on their quality of life.

### **2.2 Research Questions**

1. What are the educational challenges faced by the orphans?
2. How do the educational challenges affect the orphans' life?
3. What are the orphans' feelings towards the educational challenges?
4. How do the orphans cope with the educational challenges?
5. What are the society's attitudes towards the orphans' educational challenges?
6. What strategies can be employed to improve the orphans' future life?

### **2.3 Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study will encourage the family members to work together towards the orphans' well-being. The research findings will unveil the educational challenges faced by the orphans and this will make the society of what resources should be mobilise for the educational needs of the orphans. The research findings will empower the orphans to appreciate available resources for the benefit of their life and not to wait for charity. This will make them strongly advocate for their rights and promote their welfare. The research findings will motivate the communities to be sensitive of every child's needs. This will create a child-friendly environment in which children's self-concept, ego, and behaviours are well molded to shape a bright future.

### **2.4 Delimitation**

The study was delimited to three primary schools and three secondary schools in wards 8 and 10 in Honde Valley and these were Samaringa Primary & Secondary; Jombe Primary & Secondary and Honde River Primary schools. The study was focused on investigating the educational challenges faced by the orphans.

### **2.5 Limitations**

It was not easy to enter the area for research work because of the terrain. The researchers left their vehicle at a business centre and walked to the schools. Some of the participants were unwilling to release information for fear of victimization. The researchers emphasised the ethical issues of confidentiality and anonymity. Selecting the sample size was rather difficult since the schools were distance apart. The researchers used some codes to protect places and clients' names. This increased the relationship in the research.

### 3. Related Literature Review

Education is an important instrument in the development of a child. According to Fullan (2011) from birth to the adulthood age, the child is expected to invest much of his / her time in developing his/her life through education. Parents'/Guardians' role in this case is to support the child by providing the necessary resources that help to enhance the child's educational efforts. In fact, the strong assumption is that, the home is an important learning centre for the child's moral, social, cognitive spiritual and physical growth. Koler and Freeman (2010) also argue that the home should mould a child in a manner that seeks to promote the child's ability to fit in the environment around him/her. The home also makes effort to educate and reinforce child's all-round development. This implies that the education that the child receives from school should not be divorced from the home. The two systems are interrelated in that they lay the basic foundation upon which the child's later life is anchored.

Mfune (2012) further states that a home should not damage the children's future, but nurture the children to realise and appreciate themselves, others and their environments. This will make them function without the fear of others and their places. From a functionalist perspective, children who grow up in a system in which guidance and discipline are predominantly reactive in nature develop fear and insecurity, and their self-esteem is fractured (Melgosa, 2014). Usually fear results in mistrust of the environment and this leads to a life of confusion, loss of self-trust and dysfunctionality. According to Van Pelt (2012), the philosophy of education is that it must sustain the life of a person and to give light to the society. Fullan (2011) also argues that the purpose of schooling is to educate students in various academic, cognitive and social areas in order for them to acquire the relevant skills and knowledge for their life. Schooling helps to educate the students in the development of individual's social skills and knowledge necessary to function independently for their benefit and the society. From the social constructivist perspective, the belief is that through education a child should aspire to acquire life-skills, new knowledge and values, which enable him/her to interact with the environment with as much as confidence as possible (Giddens, 2011). Therefore, education has power to transform a child socially, morally, psychologically and spiritually. This view implies that the child should be provided with skills and opportunities to escape from the limitations of the social group in which he/she would operate. It therefore calls for the parents/custodians to support and reinforce the child's education through effective monitoring of all the school work. This will help in enhancing the child's self-esteem as well as strengthening his/her ego. An environment which is supportive of the child's education enriches positive cognitive, social, moral, physical and spiritual development of a child. It was against this philosophy that the researchers wanted to find out the extent to which the schools and communities were supportive of the orphans' educational aspirations.

Reporting in the journal of July 23, 2012 on their study at the Children's Hospital Boston, Sheridan and Nelson noted that there was a significant cognitive, social, moral, emotional and physical deficiency in children who were in Romanian educational

institutions. This was as a result of the decreased grey and white matter in their brains because they lacked stimulation, parental love, bond and care from their carers. According to UNICEF (2012), psychological and social deprivation has some measurable effects on a child's brain development. The research at the Children Hospital Boston indicated that when the orphans and vulnerable children left school for their homes, there was very little or no time to revisit school work until they returned to school the next day. This situation was attributed to by number factors. In most of the Romanian homes the ratio of caregivers to that of the children was 1:6. This situation made it very difficult, if not impossible, to carry out an effective assessment on the educational needs of every child. The other factor was that the caregivers themselves had little education; therefore, they did not know how to reinforce the orphans' educational needs from the learning institutions. The orphans were left alone in their rooms to do any kind of work, as long as they were safe in the institutions. Furthermore, the homes lacked learning resources such as books, radios and televisions for the children to expand their social, cognitive and language skills (Koler and Freeman, 2011).

According to Handley-Derry, Goldberg, Marcovitch, McGregor, Gold and Washington (1995) in the Romanians homes the caregivers had no time to interact with the children who were under their custody. When they were exposed to such environment which was insensitive to them, the orphans and vulnerable children developed deficits in cognitive, language and social functioning. There was also a marked increase in stereotypies, markedly elevated rates of anxieties, hyperactivity disorder, difficult with social functioning and even premature cellular aging. Therefore, it implies that when children experience profound neglect they become more prone to a behaviour which is known as indiscriminate friendliness. The belief in this behaviour according to (Marvin, 1977) is that the neglected child develops a tendency of indiscriminately socializing with anybody or objects. The implication here is that when children are neglected they do not question because they fear to be victimized; they simply wait for an opportunity to react negatively. Therefore, neglecting a child is a form of punishment which, according to Skinner (1974), can only suppress the behavior which resurfaces later. In the case of the orphans in the foster homes, when they suppress their emotions then, indiscriminately friendliness becomes a way of expressing their dire need for attachment. Therefore, a relational gap is created between the carers and the orphans. This is a big challenges faced by the orphans in the homes.

McNally, Eisenberg and Harris (1991) and Sarason & Sarason (1996) also argue that lack of parental sensitivity to important resources such as self-efficacy, self-reflection and self-regulatory, seriously damages the child's capabilities confidence in him/herself, the environment and the future life. This is why some of the orphans chose the street life, while some opted to be trafficked because they had no other alternative. Therefore, when children lack basic life-skills, self-confidence and self-direction, which are gained through effective education and parental guidance, their future life becomes blank. The purpose of this research was to establish the educational gaps which make the orphans fail to be productive in their own communities.

#### 4. The orphans' feelings

On June 1991, McNally, Eisenberg and Harris conducted a research in Bangladesh to establish the orphans' feelings towards their life in the institutions. The orphans were coded using numbers and their feelings were recorded using direct quotes. The following were their responses:

Orphan 1: *"What we understand is that our lives are shuttered, although we would love to share our hopes and desires with those closer to us. Unfortunately, no-one cares for us."*

Orphan 2: *"With age going by ..... who will be there in my old age?"*

Orphan 3: *"I think every day I meet people who show me no love. I will go about building my own life."*

Orphan 4: *"My thoughts focus on some basic questions: what am I supposed to say to people when I meet them for the first time? How am I supposed to face the society? No-one guides me."*

Orphan 5: *"I have little care and from my most people in my community; I only enjoy socializing with other orphans who share their problems with me; and I feel economically deprived."*

Orphans 6: *".... Being an orphan I know that I will have no one to be on my side and support me."*

Such feelings are just shocking and heart breaking, especially when one feels that these were expressions from the orphans who expected to enjoy life in their own members. The expressions contain almost the same sentiments that all was not well with the orphans. The implications are that the orphans were experiencing serious deficiency of their rights and they were aware of such deprivation but they could not change anything because they were not empowered to advocate for their rights. Their experiences in their homes and schools made them lose hope for life. As Van Pelt (2012) puts it, when hope for life is lost, then one thing will remain and this is death-wish. From the existentialist point (Yalom, 1980) it is important to empower such individuals with skills to rebuild their self-worth and to create meaning out of meaninglessness of life.

The testimonies above clearly indicate that the orphans lacked guidance, stimulation and proper nurturing to empower them to be creative and assertive in life. The hope that is lost is rebuilt and the damaged ego is revitalized, thus guidance and resources influence the orphans to develop self-advocacy skills. The orphans' feelings suggest that they were deprived of their rights to enjoy life as children. To them, being an orphan would mean a human being without purpose in the society because this was what they were experiencing.

##### 4.1 Society's attitudes on the orphans

Brousard and Decarie (1971) carried some studies in the Democratic Republic Congo, Haiti and Bangladesh on the attitudes of the guardians towards the orphans. The studies revealed that the situation in the countries was almost similar. The guardians had little interest in the welfare of the orphans. The orphans' health and social problems

were not attended to on time such that some of the orphans escaped from the orphanages and joined the street life. From the constructivist angle, the guardians' negative attitudes on the orphans suggest that the society itself is the source of such attitudes (Giddens, 2011). The societies had their own values and beliefs systems which could not be changed by circumstances. The guardians' attitudes towards the orphans in the countries above could not be changed by the circumstances of being the custodians of the orphans. According to Rose (1982), these negative perceptions were a replica of their societies' behaviours and beliefs on the orphans. The implications of such scenarios are that culture has strong influence towards one's personality and social development. The socialization process which identifies cultural phenomenological context is carried into some systems/institutions such as homes and schools and influences the means and characters of administering such institutions. Therefore, to a greater extent, the negative attitudes by the guardians on the orphans were largely influenced by their cultural backgrounds. However, given the fact that child rights are universal (UNICEFF 1991) the carers were bound to give priority to the orphans' rights and demonstrate some high degree of concern on these innocent beings. Such behaviour was necessary to increase some attachment between the orphans and the carers. This would reduce some feelings of threatening life for the orphans. Mpofu (2011) suggests that it is imperative for societies to accept change so as to transform certain behaviours which tend to promote hatred and enmity among themselves. The gap that exists between the society and the orphans makes it possible for the orphans fail to join their families. It, therefore, suggests a perpetual life cycle of suffering by the orphans in which their families and the carers ill-treat them.

## 5. Conceptual Framework

According to Conelly (1980), the problem of orphanhood is neither new nor is it confined to a certain portion of the world or society. In Europe during and after the Second World War, nearly 10000 children had lost both parents (Connell, 2001). Nearly half of these orphans were in some orphanages where conditions were unfavourable. Food, clothing and education were serious problems for the orphans. In Jamaica, a research was conducted in 1996 to establish the rate of orphanhood in that country. It was revealed that there were 18000 orphans some of whom were either in the streets, churches, orphanage institutions or living alone (Angeli, 1996). This suggests that orphans experience varying problems depending on their immediate resource bases.

In 2004 a research which was also conducted by Oxfam revealed that the Indian community had an estimated number of 20 000 orphans. Some of them lived on the streets, some in Care Homes (orphanages) and some just lived by themselves, while some stayed with relatives or friends. The majority of these children lived under impoverished and violent conditions which made them vulnerable to all sorts of abuse. Whether in some Care Homes or with relatives, friends and churches, orphans in these countries received inadequate parental nurturing, guidance and counselling and this made their future life more difficult.

In Africa, a United Nations Agency called Rapid Situation Assessment (RSA) carried a research to find the number of orphans in some parts of the continent. For example, in Egypt between 1995 and 1999, Cairo and Alexandria had a quarter of the orphans between the ages 0-15 years in some rehabilitation centres where they received some care and support. It was revealed that major resources such as identity and reintegration programmes were inadequate, which means that such orphans lacked some of the most valuable values for life. Lack of adequate reintegration processes and identity make the orphan leave the orphanage blank of what life in the community is all about. This makes him/her fail to have a decent future.

In Nairobi, Kenya, the number of orphans rose from 4 500 to 10 000 between 1990 and 1994 (Khanyi, 1996). Only 20% of these were in some orphanages where the resources such as financial, physical, cognitive and life skills were minimal. An article by Mugisho (2010) also shows alarming figures of orphans in Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo of 100, 000 and 2150,000 respectively and, with the rate at which parents are dying; it is believed that the figures will have trebled by 2020. In both countries, only a third of the orphans were in orphanages. Their challenges were almost similar ranging from lack of financial, spiritual, cognitive, material and other relevant skills/resources to prepare the orphans with a better future. With the economic hardships and political unrest that continue to cause panic and uncertainty in these developing countries, the life of orphans increasingly becomes threatened. Their potentials are not identified and their future is not even groomed. Very little career guidance and counselling seem to be given and this becomes another serious challenge for such children.

In Zimbabwe, just like other developing countries in Africa, the population of orphans rose tremendously with the advent of HIV and AIDS. According to the African culture, Zimbabwe in particular, the philosophy behind the orphan's life was that, when a child lost both parents he/she remained under the guardianship of the extended family members whose roles were to nurture the orphan (Murdock, 1994). Because material, psychosocial and moral resources were adequately shared, the life of an orphan was made easy (The Times Magazine, 18 July 1985). From a Zimbabwean perspective, when families are compatible, homeostatic balance and collectivism are achieved (Kanyowa, 2003). The concept of "Ubuntu" which means, "I am because we are" becomes evident from a societal point of view. Such attitude reinforces self-confidence and positive self-concept as core attributes and ingredients for nurturing an African child (Kanyowa, 2003). From the symbolic interactionist theory, the language used in nuclear institutions would never isolate the less privileged because a culture of "weness" was deeply inculcated in the society (Katiro, 2010). Therefore, an orphan who was brought up within such accommodative environment would feel very comfortable and warm. As one of the family members, participation in community activities and household chores as a grooming and training process was nurtured. Compatibility within the nuclear family in which the orphan lived would encourage children to be focused and determined for self-actualisation. Despite insufficient financial resources, however, love, respect and unconditional positive regard of self and others were



sufficient to constitute a strong familyhood as the social capital. Every elderly member of the family system was sensitive to the needs of all children. Life within the families was characterised by uprightness of moral values and human dignity; integration and reciprocity prevailed. From the principle of stratified diffusion stand, Young and Willmott (1975) argue that values, attitudes and expectations permeated from the elders to their off-springs. Berger and Berger (1983) also advocate that when parents invest their resources for the welfare and future life of their children, it is possible that the children will continue to be functional in the society, even when they become orphans. The above views suggest that life-skills development empowers the children (orphans) to be self-directed and self-disciplined and such children would experience joy and comfort in their life in the extended families. This also suggests that parents were conscious of their children's future life when they made efforts to inculcate and maintain self-contentment and integration for the sustenance of family harmony, unity and balance. As Hernandez (1984) rightly puts it, the parents spared a portion of their time with their children, guiding and counselling them to be functional members within the society. The values of collectivism and humanity, 'ubuntu', were the characteristics of the society and these were evidenced in the up-bringing of the orphan, where every member had a role to play. In this context, therefore, the orphan belonged to all members and the society was the orphan's institution from which he/she would continue benefiting the morals, belief systems, cultural values and ethics.

The social life in Zimbabwe has, however, completely changed. So many factors have negatively influenced the family life with each member struggling for survival. Economic meltdown, high rate of unemployment, drastic increase of orphans as a result of HIV and AIDS pandemic and gender inequalities have made the life of many orphans unbearable. Many children in Zimbabwe experience orphanhood long before their parents die, as the "time lag" between the infection and death of parents progressively reduces their capacity to be productive and provide care for their children. During this period, child-parents relationship may be altered seriously often characterised by children caring for their parents in their stages of terminal illness (UNAIDS, 2010). This may suggest that such children start assuming adult roles prematurely and this may deprive them of receiving proper education. It is also most likely that such children seriously lack the expected guidance and counselling to prepare them for future life. If they are lucky to attend school, their participation is poor, resulting in reduced academic performance. According to Bowlby (1953), parent-child relationship creates fertile ground for mental health on the child. Many children have been starved of this very important ingredient and are forced to re-establish it with some extended family members who may also be over-burdened with their own problems. In such scenarios, the orphans' presence may be a threat to the family's life. The orphans live in misery and sorrow. This situation makes the orphans choose to be in the orphanages or in the streets. In the context of this research, it is important to understand why some orphans fail to make it in their lives.

## **6. Methodology**

### **6.1 Research Paradigm**

The qualitative paradigm was employed in this study because it enabled the researchers to collect in-depth information on what the community say or do in their natural settings, (Borgdan and Biklen, 1990). The design involved in-depth study of the phenomena by focusing on the affective, cognitive and behavior domains of the participants on the educational challenges faced by the orphans in wards 8 and 10 in Mutasa District, Manicaland Province. The question of perceptions and attitudes is an abstract concept and requires direct inquiry so as to unravel perceptions because they lie at the heart of the respondents (Barbie, 1998). Punch (2009) also argues that qualitative paradigm involves intense contact with life situations which are normal and reflective of the everyday life of the society. The researchers' role was to obtain a holistic overview of the context under study. Marshall and Roseman (2006) contend that in qualitative paradigm, the researchers explicate the way people in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action and manage their daily situations. In this case, therefore, the researchers were able to obtain in-depth information on the orphans' educational challenges from the participants in their natural environment. Although this approach was successfully used, the researchers experienced some difficulties because of multiplicity of perceptions resulting from the multiplicity of cultures in this area. To overcome this short coming, the researchers borrowed some quantitative techniques in data presentation, analysis and interpretation.

### **6.2 The Method**

For the purpose of this study, the researchers employed the case study method in order to establish the orphans' educational challenges in the schools in ward 10 in Honde Valley in Mutasa District. Stake (1994) in Punch (2009) defines case study as a bounded system that emphasizes the unity and wholeness of that system, but confining the attention to those aspects that are relevant to the research problem at that time. A further definition of a case study by Theordoson and Theordoson (1969) in Punch (2009) is that it is a method of studying phenomena using a thorough analysis of an individual case among many. Marshall and Rossman (2006) also contend that a case study provides a unitary character to the data being studied through triangulating facts that are derived from a variety of instruments. Therefore, the richness of a case study lies in its ability to provide in-depth understanding of important aspects of a new problematic area.

### **6.3 Population**

During the time of study, the population of wards 8 and 10 was 9000. The statistical numbers were provided by the ward councilors.

## **6.4 Sample and Sampling Procedures**

The researchers had 50 participants (28 males and 22 females). The researchers worked with different communities and educational institutions and this made them use stratified, systematic, random and purposive sampling techniques to select the sample. Using the systematic sampling technique, every 100<sup>th</sup> school pupil was selected and they were later randomised to give a sample size of 36 (18 males and 18 females). The sample constituted pupils from grade 7 to Form 6. Purposive sampling was used to select 5 school heads, 5 School Development Committee Members (SDCs) and 2 Ward Councilors because of their positions and influence in the community.

## **6.5 Research Instruments**

In order to collect data the researchers used the questionnaire, direct observation and interviews to generate data.

### **6.5.1 Questionnaire**

The questionnaire had closed and open-ended questions to solicit in-depth understanding of the phenomena (Borgdan and Biklen, 1992). Questionnaires were easy to complete because they were self-administered. Each participant received a questionnaire to complete at his or her own time. The participants were given ample time of seven (7) days to complete the questionnaire. This gave them enough time to attend to all the items on the questionnaire. The researchers collected the completed questionnaire from the selected participants.

### **6.5.2 Direct Observation**

According to Hill (2005), observation allows the researcher to collect data in participants' natural environment. This is rich because it enabled the researchers to record what was happening in the real world of the respondents (Johnson, 2007). The researchers also observed the orphans of different age groups struggling to get some resources for educational purposes. This facilitated for accurate and unbiased data.

### **6.5.3 Interviews**

The interview questions were prepared to guide the researchers on what to ask the interviewees. The questions semi-structured questions enabled the researchers to generate in-depth information on the phenomena (Marshall and Roseman, 2007). However, because the issue seemed to be sensitive, some participants were not willing to release information for fear of victimization. In this case, anonymity and confidentiality were assured. Each interviewee had a code.

### **6.5.4 Documentary Analyses**

Documents were obtained to assess the orphans' home backgrounds, intra/interpersonal attitudes, learning problems and records of donations. Codes were also used for security reasons. The documents enabled the researchers to solicit some accurate data on the phenomena in question.

### **6.5.5 Data Collection Procedures**

The researchers sought permission from the Provincial Education Director (PED), the school heads, Ward Councilors and School Development Committee Chairpersons. The data were collected using questionnaire, direct observation and semi-structured interviews.

## **7. Theoretical Conceptualisation**

- Realism (Bryman, 1992) which emphasizes that in order to study a particular community, the researcher should see the community in its real life state and observe the real activities that the community is doing.
- Functionalism (Durkheim, 1982) which assumes that society should be seen as an integral whole, its parts are interdependent; social institutions exist and they do have effects; society is structured and the social structure directs the human behaviour. It also assumes that the function of a society depends on its beliefs, norms values and morals. In this case the orphans should be seen as functional in the community.
- Grounded theory which assumes that in qualitative paradigm the researcher has to triangulate instruments to generate data. This will facilitate gaining new ideas and knowledge for use in the research (Flick, 2011).
- Interpretivism which assumes that in qualitative research one of the researcher's role is to interpret meanings of the participants' behaviours, cognitions and affect because these lie in the mind and cannot be measured. Therefore in this study, the researchers used this theory to assess the orphans' and society's perceptions on the challenges faced by the orphans (Carson, 2001).

### **7.1 Ethical Issues**

In this study, the researchers sought permission from the relevant authorities of the areas in order to collect data. Issues of confidentiality, anonymity and autonomy were highly considered before, during and after the research.

### **7.2 Trustworthiness**

According to Guba and Lincoln (1985), trustworthiness aims to support arguments that the findings of the research are worth paying attention to. In qualitative research, four issues of trustworthiness are considered to be very important to achieve the aspect of trustworthiness and these are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These were detailed below.

### **7.3 Credibility**

Chisaka (2006) asserts that credibility criteria involve establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participants in the research. Guba and Lincoln (1985) also argue that credibility is an awareness of whether or not the research findings represent a credible conceptual integration of the

data that was drawn from the participants. In this research, the aspect of credibility was achieved through triangulation of methods such as observation, interviews, questionnaire and documentary analysis. This provided comparison of data from different sources but making use of participants in each orphanage. The researcher had enough time to interact with the participants and he was the main actor in the research. This prolonged the engagement with the participants in their natural environments provided the researcher with the opportunity to take note of the various attitudes, feelings and cognitions, and create more meanings out of these behaviours. Marshal and Rossman (2006) believe that the researcher's intense interaction with the participants also increases respect to each other, checking the data as group and finding new ideas from the research. *"This corroborative approach allows transparency, accountability and ownership of the study by both the researcher and the participants"* conclude Rudestam and Newton, 2007; Creswell, 2007 and Punch, 2009). Therefore, the research results were credible.

#### **7.4 Transferability**

Transferability is the degree to which the findings of the research can apply or transfer beyond the bounds of the project (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). Punch (2009) also contends that transferability is a process that is performed by either the reader or the researcher to suit other situations. In order to achieve transferability, the researcher carried out intense, direct, open observations and interactions with the participants so as to obtain sufficient data. The data were linked to the assumptions that were central to the research. These data were also critically analyzed in order to get clear meanings out of them.

#### **7.5 Dependability**

Guba and Lincoln (1985) define dependability in qualitative research as the assessment of the quality of the integrated process of data collection, data analysis and theory generation. In order to achieve dependability in this study, the researcher intensively used interviews with semi and un-structured questions, observations, questionnaire and documentary analysis to generate data. The data were analyzed over and over to check for some errors and to obtain specific aspects of the findings. Strauss and Corbin (1990) state that analyzing data over and over help to link certain aspects from the study to create specific meanings. Conclusively, dependability of the research study lies in its ability to yield results which effect change and generate new insights, knowledge and skills for the improvement of people's lives (Punch, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1990 and Berg, 2004).

#### **7.6 Confirmability**

Borgdan and Biklen (1992) confirm that confirmability is a measure of how well the enquiry's findings are supported by the collected data. Cresswell (2007) goes further to suggest confirmability as the degree to which the research results can be confirmed by others. In order to achieve confirmability, the researcher considered checking and

rechecking the data throughout the study to remove some potential bias or distortions. This was done through the help of the research participants who were knowledgeable qualitative research data. According to Denzin (2005), the idea of involving others in checking research data helps to improve the quality of research findings because errors will be eliminated. The researcher further checked the final data to confirm their correctness and accuracy.

## 8. Research Findings, Discussion and Conclusions

### 8.1 Orphans' Educational challenges

Delays in fees payment by the donors and pupils are forced to pay in advance with a hope to be refunded	90%
No official documents for participation in sporting activities or to sit for public examinations	85%
Donations are redirected to pupils from well-up backgrounds	90%
No assistance on homework because the guardians are either illiterate or unwilling to help	90%
Some stay with step parents who give them a lot of work	90%
Some positive orphans are stigmatized because they are poor	90%
They are stressed as a result of poverty and poor health	90%
Poor diet and clothing inhibit effective educational participation	90%
Transfer from better schools to poor schools when parents die	90%

The responses above are a clear indication that the orphans are overwhelmed by sad educational experiences. According to Johan (1991) when children have such pressures around them chances are very high that they lose focus of their future life. When school authorities fail to show concern for the welfare of the orphans it means they also fail to honour their obligation as the custodians of the pupils. This induces fear on the victims who have no power even to ask when their refunds will be realised. Therefore, they keep quiet and remain silent, but pained. Granum (2002) asserts that such behaviours by some school authorities make the affected children's life more impoverished leading to a blank future life. Komblum (2000) views such attitudes as gender inequality at its height which leaves the unfortunate vulnerable souls hopeless and helpless. Because no one stands for them, the orphans' educational donations are redirected to some pupils with health backgrounds. This suggests that the orphans' life is endangered by the members of their own community. It also creates doubts whether such people would want the orphans to survive. Therefore, one would conclude that the orphans' educational problems are socially constructed and this calls for attitudinal transformation by the society for community development.

## 8.2 Effects of the Educational Challenges

Unfulfilled aspirations for life	100%
Early marriages	65%
Dependent	85%
Life-cycle of poverty	100%
Deficiency of life-skills	90%
Develop anti-social behaviours	85%

From the social constructivist stand, Newman (1995) says that education is key to any form of development in the modern society. When the orphans fail to fulfill their educational aspirations because of poverty they also fail to compete with the ever changing standards of life. According to Myers (2002), failure to compete with life interprets to weak life-skills. This makes the orphans succumb to some external pressures. Marion (2005) argues that when children are not educated, they lack self-empowerment, self-direction and self-concept which are strong drivers for challenging pressures around them. *“The reason why some of the orphans easily give into some temptations is because of the weak ego”* concludes Newman (1995). They also become vulnerable and experience a perpetual life-cycle of poverty, abuse, dependence and misery (UNICEF, 2001). When they roam about in the community, the orphans get attracted to some social evils such as drug and substance abuse as well as promiscuity leading to early marriages. Indeed, lack of education translates into a life of servitude for the orphans.

## 8.3 Perceptions of the orphans on the educational challenges

Dejected	79%
Useless in the society	80%
No hope for life	90%
Highly vulnerable	85%

The orphans’ perceptions on the educational challenges suggest a life of watching as others enjoy the benefits of life. From the interpretivist opinion, there seem to be two groups of people in one community: the watching and the watched; the less privileged and the more privileged; the hopeful and the hopeless (Giddens, 2011). From a gender perspective when such gaps are socially constructed, then there is great need for the

change of the mindset in order to achieve total political, spiritual, social and psychological transformation (Schaefer, 2003). This will yield hope for life and sense of belonging for the less privileged and marginalised group in the society. According to Mead (1981) cited by Giddens (2011), divisions within systems seriously affect efforts for sustainable development. In fact, people cannot talk of development or a functional community when gender disparities continue to exist. It is therefore important that such gender gaps are addressed so as to empower the orphans to view themselves as important contributors towards the development of their community.

#### 8.4 Orphans' coping strategies

Selling the little resources they may have	89%
Borrowing from the community	75%
Exchanging sex for resources	70%
Stealing	65%
Taking drugs to reduce stress and strengthening the ego	66%
Working for educational resources	95%

The above views from the participants of this research indicate several implications on the part of the orphans. Firstly, the orphans assume entrepreneurship at an early stage of life. This suggests a life of struggle and desperation especially given the economic situation that is prevailing in our country today. One would also wonder the type of resource that is sold when perhaps most of the property is shared among the relatives (kugowa nhaka) when the parents passed away. Secondly, according to UNICEF (2001), early care and nurturing have a decisive and lasting impact on how children grow to adulthood and how they develop some abilities to learn and capacity to regulate their emotions. In the case of the orphans, the coping mechanisms here indicate a serious deficiency of adult guidance and role model leading to continued poverty and misery. Thirdly, from the realism angle Myers, (2002) some of the orphans develop some anti-social behaviours such as drug and substance abuse as a way of gaining some courage to rob the community of its property. Some engage in promiscuous behaviours leading to contraction of sexually transmitted diseases or early pregnancies. This suggests that some female orphans become mothers prematurely and we see a situation where a child (mother) nursing a child. What a sorrowful scenario. This also means that the orphans' backgrounds lack guidance and this will affect their future life.



### 8.5 Society's perceptions on the orphans' educational challenges

Sympathetic and helpful	80%
Do not care at all	70%
They are a burden	65%
Jealousy	65%

From the interpretivist point, Newman (1995) argues that the responses show a society with mixed perceptions on the orphans' life. Those who sympathise are also helpful and those who are jealousy are also uncaring. From a gender stand, Giddens (2011) such high levels of inequalities and attitudes within a society make the orphans feel inadequate to be part of the community. A divided system therefore cannot function effectively and development is inhibited. A community which is insensitive of the orphans' needs also lacks focus for its own future. According to Marion (2005), the reason for the orphans to steal from the community is because they are aware that the resources are available there. Therefore, they develop some means to access such resources. This suggests that the community is to blame for the development of the anti-social behaviours in the orphans.

### 8.6 Strategies to promote the orphans' welfare

The research participants identified some strategies which can be used to promote the welfare of the orphans. These were as follows:

The community needs to be educated on the effects of gender inequalities. This will reduce the imbalances that exist between the less privileged and the more privileged members of the community. Schools should be encouraged to have income generating projects that aim to support the orphans. Such initiative will make the orphans feel accommodated in the system. Family members should be encouraged to be responsible for the orphans.

The responses indicate that some of the members of the society are quite positive towards the orphans' life. It is a society which is against negative social constructs as these create biases in the community and inhibit development (Myers, 2002) It is a society which would want the orphans to be included in all forms of development and enjoy their rights just like any other child (UNICEF,2001). As the custodians of the orphans (Komblum, 2000) argues that the family members need to restore unity and harmony among its members. This effort will promote a child-sensitive system and will also encourage a life of hope for the orphans.

## 9. Conclusions

From an analytic point Giddens (2011) and Newman (1995) concur the orphans have a lot of educational problems. For quite some time the orphans have experienced a perpetual life-cycle of misery and anguish as they watch their colleagues accomplishing their educational goals and enjoy their life. Even if they stay with some guardians, some of the orphans still face problems which make them fail to achieve their academic desires. It is believed that some of the guardians prioritise their own children's educational need to the detriment of the orphans. This is why the orphans' educational resources from the NGOs are sometimes re-directed to the less privileged children. Janah (1991) in his research in Bangladesh concluded that many orphans fail to get their resources because they are illegally channeled to benefit children from well-up backgrounds. One very serious challenge is that of corruption in which some school authorities would want some bribe for one to get a place at an institution, for example when one a place for training. It is sometimes very difficult for an orphan to get a bribe when resources are unavailable. This forces the orphan(s) to give in for sex in order to get the place.

The orphans' educational challenges stem from three assumptions: that their own parents left no property because they were either poor or the property was sold to get money for their medication when they fell ill; that the property was shared among relatives when the parents died and the orphans were left with very little resources or nothing at all to sustain life; that whoever was left to be the guardian the family would make sure that the orphans had no voice on the deceased's property. If the custodian had bitter relations with the deceased, the situation would be even worse as he/she would take it as the opportunity to revenge and punish the children. From the social conflict angle Schaefer (2003), states that the orphan should not suffer because of the sour relations that existed between his/her parents and the relatives as this will eventually create neurotic behaviours. From a sociological perspective, Rowlands (1997) feels that when family conflicts are not solved, then the gap gets wider and affects even the innocent souls within the families. Dysfunctionalism is created and also affects the community because the family is part of the community system.

When the orphans fail to achieve their educational goals, they feel less empowered and develop low self-concept. Oxfam (2004) argues that low self-concept in the orphans leads to deficiency of advocacy skills, thereby increasing chances of developing dependence syndrome and succumbing to some of the external pressures. With the rate at which orphanhood is rising in Zimbabwe (85% between 2004 and 2010-UNICEF 2012), we may soon have a sub-structure society with begging behaviour Giddens (2011). Therefore, efforts should attempt to focus on transforming the community attitudes towards the orphans' life.

## 10. Recommendations

The following recommendations were based on the findings of this research:

- Community led total transformation programmes should be encouraged in order to educate, encourage and empower the community to invest its efforts towards developing the future life.
- The family members should be encouraged to take the responsibility of caring for orphans in order to promote family integration and harmony. This will lead to the development of systems which are sensitive to the needs of every child.
- The local leadership should encourage the community to engage in income generating projects which focus to promote the welfare and educational needs of the orphans.
- School authorities should encourage life-skills development programmes in order to equip the pupils with knowledge of self-concept. This will strengthen their ego to able to challenge some external pressures.
- School authorities should develop child- sensitive learning environments in order to make every child gain from education.

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