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Exploring Experiences Encountered By Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) In Public Primary Schools in Harare, Zimbabwe

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Abstract: This study sought to explore experiences encountered by orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in public primary schools in Harare, Zimbabwe. Ten school heads, 10 teachers and 80 OVC in primary schools were purposively selected to participate in the study. The study further adopted qualitative phenomenological approach to explore the perceptions and lived experiences encountered by orphans and vulnerable children in public primary schools. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with school heads and teachers, while focus groups discussions were held with OVC. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to analyse data and four themes emerged: Lack of food and nutrition, lack of school fees and uniforms, lack of stationery and lack of psychological support. These reflected the nature of experiences and challenges encountered by OVC in public primary schools in Harare. The study recommends that the government should increase funds allocated for orphans and vulnerable children programmes for competency in conclusivity. The study further recommended that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should revive the School Psychological Services Department by making sure that it is well-stuffed and adequately funded to effectively carry out its responsibilities of assisting orphan and vulnerable children who face psychological problems.

Keywords: Orphans and Vulnerable Children, Public Primary Schools, School Counselling, School Counsellors, Psychosocial Support, Child Rights

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INTRODUCTION

Orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) face a variety of experiences and challenges in community, family and at school. Motsa & Morojele (2016) propounds that communities tend to stigmatise and discriminate against OVC because they associate them with social ills such as poverty and HIV/AIDS. Some OVC lost both parents and live in child-headed households and have to simultaneously address family responsibilities and meet school requirements (Nsiband, 2015). Orphans and vulnerable children are observable under emotional, physical, psychological and sociological perspectives (Boker, 2011). One of the building blocks towards the realisation of this dignified endeavor is to ensure that every child, particularly OVC in schools are provided with all the support services they need. This enables them to have access to education and other the provisions as a means to lessen the hardships and sufferings as a result of their orphan-hood and multiple vulnerabilities they encounter. Hence this study sought to explore experiences encountered by orphans and vulnerable children in public primary schools in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Purpose of the Study

This study sought to explore experiences encountered by orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in public primary schools in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Background to the Study

The National AIDS Council of Zimbabwe (2020) established that the number of children in Zimbabwe has been estimated to be around 5.6 million; of which 1.3 million are orphans. Furthermore, the National AIDS Council revealed that there are approximately 48 000 child-headed households in Zimbabwe, housing approximately 100 000 children. In addition to the foregoing statistics, the UNAIDS (2019) established that there is approximately 165 orphan and vulnerable children living with HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe which make worse the challenges of public primary schools cope with OVC 's experiences in schools.

According to Ringson (2022); & UNAIDS (2018) orphans are defined as children under the age of 18 years whose parent or both parents have died, while vulnerable children are children with unfulfilled rights. Similarly, the Zimbabwe National Orphan Care Policy (2000) defines orphans as those children age 0-18 whose parent or parents have died. Hence, vulnerable children are defined as children with unfulfilled rights and mainly identified as children with one parent or both deceased, children with disabilities and affected or infected by HIV/AIDS (Ringson, 2022). At the same time, the National Action Plan (2015-2020) adds that vulnerable children may also include the abused children, thus sexually, physically and emotionally and abandoned children, children living in the streets and married children. Furthermore, the Zimbabwe National Action

Plan (2015-2020) included children with chronically ill parents or parents and the destitute as vulnerable children who are in need of care and social support services.

The Zimbabwean Government as the signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) and also to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare on the Child (ACRWC) (1990) promulgated governing policies and instruments for child care and support. In line with international and regional instruments, the Zimbabwean Government came up with legislation and frameworks to support OVC in primary schools. Legislation such as the Children's Act (2001), which states that all children in need of care should be protected and placed in a safe environment that is conducive for their development, was crafted. The Education Act (2006) stipulates that all children are expected to go to school. The Sexual Offences Act (2004) protects children against sexual abuse. Furthermore, the Domestic Violence Act (2006) protects children from abuse and from being forced to engage in harmful cultural practices such as forced or early marriages, virginity testing and pledging of girls in marriage. The Public Health Act (1996) provides for free medical assistance for all children especially those who are below 5 years of age. A study by Masuka *et al.*, (2012) revealed that the Public Health Act (1996) also gives the provision for free medical treatment to orphan and vulnerable children. The Birth and Registration Act (1996) gives the right to identity as the law enforces the registration of all births and deaths of Zimbabwean nationals. In this regard, it is an offense not to process a birth certificate for a child (Masuka *et al.*, 2012). All these laws were made to make sure that children's rights are respected and honoured. Each of these pieces of legislation has built-in mechanisms to ensure that the rights of children in general, and OVC in particular are respected and protected (Chinyenze, 2018). However, literature showed lack of knowledge and awareness among school heads, teachers and OVC concerning OVC policies and legislation (Majoko, 2013).

Dekeza (2018) highlights that the Zimbabwe National Orphan Care Policy (1999,) provides basic care and protection guidelines for orphan and vulnerable children. In addition, Chinyenze (2018) states that policies help to make obligations for resources that strengthen opportunities to quality education and health services in general. The government introduced programmes such as Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM), which pays school fees for deserving OVC in schools; the programme is managed by the Department of Social Welfare. Furthermore, Chinyenze (2018) says, "The policy encourages a multi-sectoral approach, outlines guiding principles and strategies related to children affected by HIV and AIDS." In fact, the Orphan Care Policy includes the elements of protection, education and other supporting programmes for OVC, particularly when addressing issues to do with child abuse, stigma and counseling (Mahati *et al.*, 2016). The

aim of these policies was to attend to the challenges faced by OVC, since it has been established that OVC were not well looked after, hence, the government came up with various programmes meant to assist OVC particularly those in schools. Some of the programmes include public assistance to vulnerable families programme that assists with basic living costs and health cover (Chinyenze, 2018). In that regard more players are needed in complementing government's efforts in addressing OVC problems (Masuka *et al.*, 2010). However, in spite of having all the above mentioned instruments and policies of childcare and support services, there remains a gap concerning capacitating and empowering school heads and teachers at public primary schools level.

Research Question

What are the experiences encountered by orphans and vulnerable children in public primary schools in Harare, Zimbabwe?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was largely informed by Bronfenbrenner's (1977; 1979) Ecological Systems Theory. The source of the Ecological Systems Theory is that the environment affects every person's development. In this study, these developing persons were orphaned and vulnerable children in public primary schools whose environment was divided into five different systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem and the chronosystem (Donald *et al.*, 2010). The microsystem comprises the child's relationships with others in the more immediate natural environment, such as at home, school, and in after school groups (Chinyenze, 2017; Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner, 1994; & Dawes & Donald, 2004). The interconnections between several microsystems, for instance the home, school, clinic or general practice make up the mesosystem. When there are issues at home, OVC at the mesosystem may require psychosocial help from the school, a neighbor or classmates to enable them to cope (McLoyd & Wilson 2017). At the exosystem, other organisations may also offer psychosocial support to OVC who may not be receiving the support they need from the schools. The macrosystem entails the interaction between the developing child and the larger subsystem such as policies, culture and the economy among other factors that the child has no influence over (Lemeyu, 2022). All the mentioned ecological systems levels directly or indirectly influence child development depending on the nature of the impact. Using the Ecological Systems Theory in this study enabled the researcher to establish the relationship between the school, the home, the health centre and other related systems in their efforts to support orphan and vulnerable children in public primary schools. In the same way, Swick & Williams (2006) state that the Ecological Systems Theory seeks to provide a platform to explore the situation of vulnerable children's educational needs in relation to the different socio-economic and cultural factors. The above explanation is in line with the purpose

of this study, which sought to explore experiences encountered by orphans and vulnerable children in public primary schools in Harare, Zimbabwe. The theory further appreciates that international and regional instruments, as well as national legislation and policies, national programmes, cultural and religious beliefs, local communities and families, friends and peers, have an impact on child development, particularly on OVC in schools (Hayes *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, Meadows (2008) suggests that OVC in schools experience discrimination at different levels of their ecology and that could affect their education and development. This study considered Ecological Systems Theory as the most suitable theory as it provides an understanding of the interaction between OVC and those who are better placed to provide their needs in terms of psychological, educational and material support.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative research approach using the phenomenological research designed underpinned by the phenomenological philosophy. This philosophy by Van Manen (1990) is based on the lived experiences of research participants in this case OVC in public primary schools in Harare. Similarly, Nigar (2020); & Van Manen (2014) state that phenomenological philosophy is attached on the idea that the real-world experiences of research participants is the best way of understanding problems which human beings face in their everyday lives.

A sample of one hundred participants was purposively selected and data was collected using in-depth interviews with school heads and teachers and 10 focus group discussions with OVC in schools. This study used an interpretative ontological position which emphasises that there are multiple realities; hence, the researcher in this current study was to appreciate the subjective views, feelings, awareness, knowledge and experiences of OVC in public primary schools. Mumby & Putnam (2002) view hermeneutics as one of the many schools of thought that focus on conversational, behavioural and etymological patterns and as an approach that focuses on the individual, methodological and epistemological issues oriented towards society and cultural critique. Therefore, the use of hermeneutics philosophy enables the researcher to critically view the phenomenon from different perspectives such as the hermeneutic/interpretive perspective (Ricoeur, 2005). The data analysis of this current study is therefore interpretive in nature because it makes use of the hermeneutic phenomenology to critically explore experiences encountered by OVC in schools. The researcher also selected hermeneutic phenomenology as the research philosophy for this study because research questions were concerned with gaining insight into the lived experiences of OVC in public primary schools. Furthermore, the researcher was the main instrument of data collection and has played a very critical role in creating an environment that allowed participants to

express their thoughts and feelings about quality education and support services received by OVC in public primary schools. According to this phenomenology, life experience can be viewed by multiple people with multiple perceptions of reality (Mark, 2010). In this study, the researcher interacted with participants in their school environment in order to gather data on experiences faced by OVC in public primary schools.

Hermeneutic phenomenology stresses the use of qualitative research techniques such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and observations (Cunliffe, 2006). In the present study, the researcher interviewed school heads and teachers and held focus group discussions with OVC in primary schools. These interviews and FGDs were in line with hermeneutic phenomenology, which allowed the researcher to explore OVC's lived experiences in schools. The aim of the researcher in this study was to totally depend on research participants' views on experiences faced by OVC in schools. The researcher had to listen very carefully to what respondents were saying since the researcher wanted to get the truth of the experiences, opinions, and views expressed by the people who were directly involved in education and support services for OVC in public primary schools. Coll (2000) noted that knowledge is established through the meanings attached to the phenomenon being studied. Therefore, this opened up opportunities for the researcher to get to primary schools and interact with the participants and allowed them to tell their stories which are an important aspect of phenomenological research. The participants were able to describe their experiences, options and views of reality that helped the researcher understand their life better. Gilberts (2001) states that phenomenology is based on the ontological assumption that reality is constructed from individual interpretation of a given situation and is not free from bias and influence of values. More importantly, since the study involved human participants both adults and minors, relevant ethical issues were taken into account prior to and during the course of the study.

FINDINGS

Interpretative phenomenology analysis was employed and four themes emerged, thus lack of food and nutrition; lack of school fees and school uniforms; lack of stationery and lack of psychological support.

Lack of food and Nutrition

It emerged from the study that lack of food was one of the main challenges experienced by OVC in public primary schools. The participants highlighted that in most cases OVC attended school without any food to eat during break time and this was a sign of not having enough food at home to bring to school and as a result OVC failed to concentrate in class because of hunger. The study further established that the hunger situation was worsened by the termination of support by international non-governmental organisations, which

used to provide feeding programmes to OVC in schools. The termination of feeding support by non-governmental organisations could have been caused by political interference and it is sad because that left many OVC struggling to get food. Lack of food affected OVC's academic performance as they failed to adequately concentrate in class. Participants further revealed that lack of food affects children's thinking skills, behavior and health. All these factors may impact negatively on the academic performance of OVC in schools as hunger may cause problems with memory and concentration in class. The school heads and teachers further highlighted that there is one of the local organisations working in partnership with Mary's Meals International is providing children in schools with nutritional support and the feeding programme is motivational as OVC learners attend school daily leading to improved academic performance. This is supported by the following statements:

"Our major challenge is hunger and our parents struggle to get us food. Lack of food makes us sick and sometimes we find it difficult to concentrate and actively participate in class."

"I acknowledge that some of the learners come to school hungry, hence as the school we always try to feed them during break time whenever we have the food. As a school we are receiving food donations from one of the local organisations which is in partnership with Mary's Meal International is providing our children in schools with nutritional support and the feeding programme is motivational as OVC learners now attend school daily leading to good academic performance."

Lack of School Fees and School Uniforms

The study established that OVC in public primary schools encountered a number of challenges including lack of school fees and uniforms. The findings highlighted that school fees for some of the vulnerable children were being paid by the government through the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) programme. Non-governmental organisations and faith-based organisations working in local communities also assist with fees for other OVC who are not on BEAM. Participants revealed that this provision of school fees by the government and non-governmental organisations enabled a number of OVC to acquire quality education regardless of their status. The study further revealed that the BEAM programme had faced challenges especially with the selection committees particularly when selecting BEAM beneficiaries. The findings of the current study revealed that BEAM school selection committees were not doing a fair job as some children from well-to-do families were recommended and benefiting from the programme and disadvantaged the well-deserved OVC and this left a huge number of deserving OVC out of the programme. The study furthermore established that public primary schools were

receiving BEAM funds late, in most cases towards the end of school term or even at the beginning of another new term. The late disbursement of BEAM funds to primary schools affected the quality of education received by OVC in public primary schools. The study revealed that OVC sometimes were asked to go back home and look for fees. The study also established that the Government had trimmed down the number of BEAM beneficiaries, meaning many OVC were being left out of school fees assistance. Furthermore, findings established that not all legitimate beneficiaries were benefiting from the BEAM programme as some OVC were being left out of the programme thereby violating these OVC's educational rights as enshrined in the legal frameworks mentioned above. The present study further revealed that to come up with the eligible beneficiaries to some extent there was a need to come up with a junior BEAM school selection committee that would work hand in hand with the main BEAM school selection committees. This is supported by the following statement:

"School fees are a challenge that impact negatively on our education as sometimes we are asked to go back home for non-payment of fees. BEAM, NGOs and FBOs sometimes pay fees for other OVC. However, BEAM sometimes pays our fees very late and that affects our education."

The study further established that procurement of school uniforms was not easy for many OVC in public primary schools. The study noted that school uniforms were part of major requirements for all learners. School heads revealed that there was a policy, which encouraged all learners to be in uniforms; however this policy was difficult to implement since most of the schoolchildren come from very poor families. The findings also established that OVC were allowed to be in classes without complete uniforms. School heads and teachers highlighted that OVC without school uniforms may be psychologically, emotionally and academically affected as they are likely to lack self-esteem. The findings further highlighted that lack of uniforms put OVC at risk of stigma and discrimination, which in most cases affected their self-esteem and academic performance. On the other hand, the study found out that there are non-governmental organisations and faith-based organisations (churches) and individuals helping few OVC with uniforms, though the help is not consistent. This was evident from the following comment:

"Procurement of school uniforms is one of the greatest challenges for OVC in primary schools. Most OVC do not have proper or complete school uniforms or have old and tattered uniforms. As a teacher sometimes, I become affected by the way some of the OVC might be dressed, wearing torn school uniforms or worn out shoes. OVC are stigmatised and discriminated against by their peers because of not having school uniforms."

Lack of Stationery

It emerged from the study that OVC did not have enough stationery and that made them more vulnerable to stigma and discrimination which affected their self-esteem and academic performance. The study established that due to financial constraints schools were unable to provide stationery to the learners in need and lack of stationery contributed to high rates of absenteeism. The study further revealed that lack of stationery contributed to bad behaviour and affected OVC's academic performance as they were unable to write daily class exercises. The study also revealed that OVC were sometimes asked to go back home and look for stationery and that was compromising academic performance of OVC. Participants highlighted that only a few OVC were being helped by non-governmental organisations, faith-based organisations and members of the communities with educational material. The study highlighted that lack of educational material compromised education standards and education quality and support services to OVC in public primary schools. This was clarified by the participants who revealed that:

“Most of OVC in schools do not have enough stationery including exercise books, pens and other school requirements which contribute to poor academic performance. BEAM pays school fees for OVC...BEAM should also provide these children with stationery and uniforms.”

One of the OVC also revealed that:

“We do not have adequate stationery, which contributes to our poor academic performance...because of lack of stationery we are unable to write our daily class exercises, and sometimes we are asked to go back home and look for stationery.”

Lack of Psychological Support

The current study revealed that most OVC encountered psychological challenges that affected their academic performance and social life in general. These psychological problems induced stress, depression, lack of love, discrimination and stigma, lack of concentration in class, loneliness, isolation and rejection. The study further revealed that teachers were not having enough time to effectively assist or attend to each and every OVC who needed help in the form of counselling. The study established that teachers did not have enough time because of too much work to be covered as they were also full-time class teachers. One of the school heads revealed that some of the teachers had a negative attitude towards school counseling as it consumes much of their time. Hence, teachers' negative attitude towards OVC counselling compromised quality counselling services these children deserve to receive. The present study furthermore revealed that OVC in public primary schools were being labeled and called derogatory names such as *vana vema-donor*, *vana veMashamwari*, *vana vBEAM* and many other names. All these names psychologically

and academically affect OVC in schools. Negative labelling affects the way children see themselves and that has a lasting impact on how OVC think of themselves in schools.

DISCUSSION

Evidence from the findings has shown that OVC encounter various experience and challenges both at home and at school. Several challenges were mentioned which include lack of food and nutrition, stationery, school fees and uniforms and psychological needs. The findings of the current study concur with Dekeza (2018) who revealed that OVC encounter challenges such as access to food. Similarly, Masuka *et al.* (2012) established that OVC in schools were more disadvantaged than non-OVC in health and nutritional status. Lack of food affects children's thinking skills, behavior and health. All these factors may impact negatively on the academic performance of OVC in schools as hunger may cause problems with memory and concentration in class. Walthouse (2014) argues that hunger can also cause behavioral problems in a class setting. A single child's behavior may affect the rest of the learners, teacher's attention and overall learning atmosphere. In this regard lack of food not only disturbs the affected child's learning, but the learning of other learners as well. The findings of this current study are in tandem with Ngwerume (2016) who postulates that lack of adequate and appropriate food, especially for children has long term consequences on their physical and mental growth. Similarly, Makore & Rukuni (2016) argue that malnourished children score poorly in tests of cognitive function and have poor psychomotor development. Lack of adequate food may also make OVC more vulnerable to malnutrition. Hence, adequate nutrition is universally recognized as the foundation for proper physical and mental development of children (Ngwerume, 2010). The current study further revealed that one of the local organisations working in partnership with Mary's Meals International is providing children in schools with nutritional support and the feeding programme is motivational as OVC learners attend school daily leading to improved academic performance. Mwamwenda (2004) highlights that the provision of school feeding programmes is critical as they improve concentration and participation of learners during lessons and even after school, hence learners may be provided with adequate nutrition both home and school. Similarly, Stebbin (1919) observes that children, especially the young ones, need to be well fed for them to have quality learning characteristics such as high concentration and participation levels in class activities. Hence, healthy children have more chances of optimising on learning opportunities that arise during the teaching and learning process.

The study has also established the provision of school fees by the government and non-governmental organisations that enabled a number of OVC to acquire quality education regardless of their status. The findings

concur with a South African study by Mwoma (2016) who established that the schools and other stakeholders have done their best to ensure that OVC in public primary schools are supported to acquire their basic education. Similarly, Ncube (2016) observes that non-governmental organisations always try to improve access to education and wrap around services for OVC by strengthening the systems that support these children especially those already in schools. The late disbursement of BEAM funds to primary schools affected the quality of education received by OVC in public primary schools. The study revealed that OVC sometimes were asked to go back home and look for fees. The findings of the present study concur with Ncube (2018) who revealed that late disbursement at times forced School Development Committees (SDCs) to send back home BEAM beneficiaries for non-payment of fees. Similarly, Manyanye (2012) highlights that although the Education Act (1987; 1996) clearly stipulates that no child shall be sent home over non-payment of levies and tuition fees, school authorities (SDCs and Heads), still disregard the law by sending the vulnerable children home for the same reason. The sending of OVC back home is actually against government policy, the policy says no child should be refused entry into school because of non-payment of school fees. In addition, Article (28) of the UNCRC encourages member states to make primary education compulsory and available to all children regardless of their status.

The findings further highlighted that lack of uniforms put OVC at risk of stigma and discrimination, which in most cases affected their self-esteem and academic performance. In this vein, it could be an opportune time for public primary schools to look for external support helps to respond to the needs of OVC meaningfully. Muchenje (2018) established that OVC in public primary schools were being discriminated against by their peers due to lack of complete school uniforms. Similarly, Maushe (2014) established that OVC face challenges in obtaining school uniforms. The current study noted that OVC strongly wish to be in complete uniforms as their peers.

The problem of stationery also came up as a challenge faced by OVC in public primary schools. The study revealed that most OVC were coming to school without adequate stationery and that was a stumbling block for OVC's academic performance. Due to lack of stationery children were sometimes asked to go back home and get all the required stationery. This act of chasing OVC out of classrooms due to lack of stationery is the act of depriving children their right to education and that has a negative impact on their educational opportunities. Lack of stationery was revealed as the cause of poor academic performance, absenteeism and bad behavior for learners in public primary schools. Lack of stationery compromised quality of education received by OVC in public primary schools as they sometimes failed to write daily work because they did not have

exercise books. It further emerged from this study that stationery in education plays a very critical role. This concurs with Zalm (2017) who revealed that learners with adequate learning materials including exercise books and pens in most cases produce better academic results than those without enough materials. Similarly, Dekeza's (2018) articulates that OVC in public primary schools gain much from the teaching-learning process when they were able to participate and write daily work. The current study findings further established that some of the OVC were provided stationery by non-governmental organisations and faith-based organisations. These findings were in accordance with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, which states that families and other community care systems are very critical for child development as well as cognitive development.

The current study revealed that most OVC encountered psychological challenges that affected their academic performance and social life in general. These psychological problems induced stress, depression, and lack of love, discrimination and stigma, lack of concentration in class, loneliness, isolation and rejection. Children need care and love from adults; they need good shelter, clothing and all forms of social support. Such psychological issues, if not properly attended to, may seriously affect the entire life of OVC in public primary schools. The demonstration of love towards OVC in schools may be seen as critical because love impacts on children's future lives especially with regards to relationships with other people in the community and in society as a whole (Barr *et al.*, 2008). Similarly, Berk (2004) revealed that showing children love is critical in child development as it influences the psychological functioning and development of children. Against this backdrop, it is necessary for schools to have professional school counselors who are able to adequately assist learners, particularly OVC who need psychological help. The present study further revealed loneliness, stigma and discrimination, lack of concentration in classes and low self-efficacy also as the most psychological challenges faced by OVC in schools. The current study also revealed that teachers were not having enough time to effectively assist or attend to each and every OVC who needed help in the form of counselling. Failure to effectively provide OVC with counseling could have been violating one of their rights as schools are supposed to provide basic counselling to learners. The findings concur with Mbetha (2015) who established that OVC in public primary schools face serious psychological and emotional challenges because there are no proper and clear support systems both at home and at schools, and OVC problems are not well attended. The present study furthermore revealed that OVC in public primary schools were being labeled and called derogatory names such as *vana vema-donor*, *vana veMashamwari*, *vana vBEAM* and many other names. All these names psychologically and academically affect OVC in schools. Negative labelling affects the way children see themselves and that has a

lasting impact on how OVC think of themselves in schools. This concurs with Ringson (2014) who revealed that name calling and labelling are the most damaging forms of bullying as they have lasting forms of mental exploitation to a child's confidence, personality and mental wellbeing. Negative labels directed at OVC erode their self-esteem at an early age (Ringson, 2014). Similarly, insults could have a very serious impact on children's psychological state as they internalise what they would have been called, which leads to deeper and long-lasting mental health issues (Giddens, 2013).

CONCLUSIONS

The study further concluded that OVC in schools were not adequately receiving standard quality education and support services in schools because of serious inadequate financial, material and human resources in schools. For example, lack of specialist school counsellors compromised the quality of education and counselling services needed by OVC in schools. The study concluded that unavailability of stationery, lack of nutritional food at home and poor access to health facilities and poor clothing compromised quality education and support services for OVC in public primary schools.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the study recommends that:

- The government ought to enhance the school-feeding programme by means of bringing in adequate funds into the school feeding programme.
- It is further recommended that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should revive the School Psychological Services Department by making sure that it is well-stuffed and adequately funded to effectively carry out its responsibilities of assisting orphan and vulnerable children who face psychological problems.
- The study recommends that the government should intensify financial resources allocated for orphans and vulnerable children programmes for competency in conclusivity.

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