

THE WELFARE OF ORPHANAGE CHILDREN AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

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This study examined the welfare services available to orphanage children in Edo State, and social work intervention to ameliorate their challenges. Previous research has documented the appalling conditions that orphans and other vulnerable children endure due to abuse, exploitation, violence, and neglect. The study looked at how non-governmental organizations may help the OVC, and it found that this is not only important but also a sign of a good response from society to the crisis, despite the government's inability to provide orphans with a comprehensive and practical framework that is focused on the community. Therefore, in order to improve the wellbeing of orphans, social work engagement is necessary. The study's sample size consists of one hundred orphans from five (5) different orphanage settings. The study used a survey research methodology, and the structured questionnaire served as the primary data gathering tool. A basic random sample technique was also used. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data that was gathered for the study. According to research, there are numerous environmental risks to an orphan's survival and health. The government, non-governmental organizations, and social workers were the main sources of information on orphan vulnerability in order to mobilize the public at all levels of advocacy and to provide the basic necessities. To disseminate educated messages regarding orphans, both civil and media attention are required.

Keywords: Children, orphans, orphanage, vulnerable, social work, welfare

Introduction

7.6% of children worldwide are orphans, according to reports from the United Nations Children's Fund (2013) and the joint United Nations (2005). There are around 132 million orphans across the continents of Africa, Asia, and America, according to UNICEF (2013). Of these, 13 million children are born without a mother or father. Each nation has its own definition of what constitutes an orphan, which is determined by factors such as the environment, population, and culture of that nation. The definition of orphan differs from those in many developed nations, where a child must have lost both of its parents in order to meet the criteria (UNICEF, 2013). Thus, the phrase "single orphan" refers to the death of one parent, and the phrase "double orphan"

Nigeria is home to one of the biggest orphan populations worldwide. Nigeria has the greatest number of AIDS orphans in the world as of 2011. Of the 52 million children believed to have existed in 2011, nearly 5.4 million, or 10.3% of Nigerian children, were orphans, and 995,000, or roughly 18.4%, were orphaned as a result of AIDS. The estimated 7 million Nigerian orphans were augmented by 800,000 AIDS-affected youngsters in 2013 alone (UNICEF 2013). According to projections made by the United Nations Population Fund in 2004, 8.2 million children worldwide are expected to be orphans by 2010. According to the United Nations Population Fund (2004), a variety of other factors, such as poverty, conflict, and gender inequality, put a huge number of children at risk of becoming orphans in

Nigeria. These factors also include maternal death, sectarian violence, insurgency, and ethnic conflicts.

The frequency and burden of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) vary greatly between communities and regions. Research from a number of African nations has shown that OVC are not equally dispersed throughout populations (Schutt, 2015; Omorogiuwa, 2023). Time-series household surveys in several nations have shown a trend toward a disproportionate increase in the burden of orphan dependency on working adult family members in rural areas, while being steady or reducing in urban areas. This shows that the educational, financial, and social demands are shifting from urban to rural areas, which puts children at greater risk in the latter (Egharevba et al., 2018; Tagurum et al., 2015). Jasen (2010) reported that surveys conducted in Sub-Saharan Africa also showed an increase in certain countries' non-relative child fostering, which was formerly a rare practice. Orphans are more susceptible than non-orphans, according to evidence as well. Research from recent times has shown that orphans' nutritional quality and educational outcomes are deteriorating globally. Children who are double orphans have lower school attendance rates than non-orphan children, according to UNICEF data. In Nigeria, children whose mothers were orphans and those whose parents had recently passed away postponed enrolling their children in primary school (Mishra & Simona, 2008). The study also demonstrates how the death of a breadwinner or another parent in a home environment had a detrimental impact on the development of the children.

A combination of national and focused actions was necessary to address orphanhood and the issues it presents for nations and communities. Governments have strengthened social protection systems for orphans, but public responses to the orphan crisis have been extremely delayed in many of these nations. The government, UNICEF, Save the Children, and other organizations have a history of working in Nigeria to meet the needs of children, especially those who require special protection because they live in vulnerable circumstances (UNICEF, 2013). Unfortunately, a large number of children still lack access to or enjoyment of their basic rights and necessities. Even though significant efforts have been made to ensure that children's rights are upheld, many contemporary Nigerian factors, including inadequate public social services, a high rate of poverty among the populace, instances of harmful traditional practices (Omorogiuwa, 2017), gender inequality, and inadequate policies (though these are currently being developed), have left many children vulnerable to denial and abuse of their rights (UNICEF, 2013).

A child under the age of eighteen who has lost one or both parents, regardless of the cause of death, is considered an orphan, according to Nigeria's National Plan of Action on Orphans and Vulnerable Children. People who are considered "double orphans" are those who have lost both of their parents. It is more challenging to classify youngsters who are vulnerable. Vulnerability is defined differently in each culture and across societies. Generally speaking, it refers to youngsters who are less likely than their classmates to lead normal lives (Omorogiuwa, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

Being an orphan can be very confusing, especially when your urgent needs aren't addressed the way you anticipate them to be (Skinner, 2014). According to Tagurum et al. (2015), earlier research has shown that the idea that orphans live comfortably is a myth, possibly because they deal with issues like subpar housing, overcrowding, subpar food and irregular feeding practices, an unbalanced staff-to-child ratio, staff members' lack of knowledge and skills, and subpar health services. Only 30% of an orphanage's funding in Nigeria truly goes into childcare, according to Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN, 2010). It was also reported that there are no fixed standards for staff

members, not even in Nigerian orphanages (Nte&Igbani, 2010), as well as expressing the stigma associated with OVC receiving institutional care. In Egharevba et al. (2018) view, empirical research is necessary to further investigate and develop techniques that can be used to solve the aforementioned concerns with the welfare of OVC. Very few empirical researches on OVC welfare in Nigeria have been conducted. Thus, the purpose of this study is to look into the welfare of the orphanage in the Ikpoba-okha orphanage.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine welfare of orphanage children in Ikpoba-okha Local Government Area, Edo State. The specific objectives are:

5. To explore the immediate social and psychological needs of the children in orphanage homes in Ikpoba-okha Local Government Area, Edo State.
6. To determine the conditions and challenges facing orphans in orphanage homes in Ikpoba-okha Local Government Area, Edo State.
7. To examine the available social interventions support for orphans to actualize their personal development in Ikpoba-okha Local Government Area, Edo State.

Review of Literature

The Concept of Orphan in Nigeria

An orphan is defined as a child under the age of eighteen whose parents have died, either as a maternal or paternal orphan, or as both (a double orphan), as stated in the (Nigeria Country Report, 2016). Vulnerability occurs when a youngster is more likely than the average child in the society to have more bad outcomes. Malnutrition, increased risk of abuse, greater rates of morbidity and death, poor rates of school attendance and completion, and psychosocial repercussions analysis are examples of negative outcomes (Omorogiuwa & Yuka, 2022). However, the Federal Ministry of Social Development (2017) offers some crucial indicators that pinpoint children's vulnerability, such as those who come from low-income families; have insufficient access to healthcare, education, and other social services. In addition is those that reside in a home where a parent or caregiver has terminal illness; living in an institution, on the streets, with extended relatives, or away from family care; (Egharevba et al., 2018), and HIV-positive. It is sufficient to say that Omorogiuwa (2023) lists the children who are specifically thought to be the most vulnerable in their communities. Thus, Omorogiuwa, further points that these children include: children with material and physical disabilities; neglected children; beggars; destitute children and scavengers; children from broken homes; internally displaced children; school dropouts; and abandoned children.

Children with the aforementioned traits are viewed as fragile by society. More specifically, a research of the communities where the children reside and the necessity of providing for and supporting them was employed by government agencies as a model intervention in understanding orphanhood and child vulnerability (Omorogiuwa & Yuka, 2022; Omorogiuwa, 2023). In order to meet the basic physical, cognitive, and psychological needs of OVC, their caregivers, and communities in a long-term and sustainable manner, the government also provides non-material and material support. Some of the basic needs of OVC are clothing, shelter, emotional support, a clean environment, recreation, and life-building skills (FMSDWA, 2007).

Numerous social, economic, and political elements are thought to be in charge of the children's vulnerability and orphan status. According to Garba (2017), colonialism is to blame for the

breakdown of the extensive, long-standing social welfare programs for needy people, the elderly, children, the underprivileged, and the sick. According to him, colonization severely disrupted the family unit and significantly changed the social, economic, political, and educational systems, making life extremely difficult (Garba, 2017). Money-economy and excessive individualism have supplanted the concepts of social living, the spirit of brotherhood, and traditional values that have been disrupted. According to Mcphail (2018), family members in Nigeria are becoming more individualistic in all phases of life. In support of this argument, Birmingham (2015) lists a number of unfavorable outcomes of colonization, such as starvation, arbitrary government, foreign exploitation, disregard for indigenous cultural heritage, urban-bids introduction of foreign alien values that run counter to the rich traditional ones, ecological neglect, and many more, all of which have resulted in an alien inadequate formal social welfare policy.

Urbanization-related child vulnerability is also a result of the high divorce rate, which increases the likelihood of single motherhood, particularly in homes led by women. In patriarchal society, the culture of female-headed homes is seen as foreign, which leads to more issues such urban bias and worsening situations for children (Omorogiuwa, 2023; Egharevba et al., 2018). Coles (2016) found a few elements that put maternal resources' attempts to meet the demands of the younger ones' socialization and subsistence at risk. Kin dispersal, ecological stresses, environmental stress, economic calamities, mounting labor-intensive work responsibilities, and the rising proportion of women who rely on their offspring for both present-day survival and future security are a few of these (Deretaka, 2014).

According to Badamasiu (2014), children's development program cannot be successful unless it acknowledges and addresses the crucial role that poverty plays in the underdevelopment of children starting at the local level. In a similar vein, Oguonu (2015) believes that poverty in Nigeria is a significant obstacle to sustainable development. According to him, the number of orphans and vulnerable children in Nigeria has increased, and their living circumstances are getting worse as a result of the country's rising poverty rate. According to Lanchman et al. (2012), there are numerous obstacles to attaining the aim of universal child safety that children in the 21st century must overcome. He continued by outlining three distinct barriers to child safety in Nigeria: war, HIV/AIDS infection, and poverty. He highlighted the detrimental impacts of poverty, which can be both material and psychological. Poverty makes many children on the continent orphans, making them susceptible.

Every youngster is entitled to protection. According to Evans and Murray (2008), Article 19 of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) mandates that vulnerable children must be treated with respect and dignity. "All peoples (including OVC) shall be equal; they shall enjoy the same respect and shall have the same rights," the article states. The aforementioned is protected by the Nigerian constitution, but regrettably, a large number of these children live in filthy environments and are neglected (Nasaba, 2014). Exposing them to a variety of issues pertaining to their health, education, moral development, and other areas that can have a negative impact on both the children and the entire community (Omorogiuwa, 2023). In addition, they deal with social issues like stigma, various dangers in their immediate surroundings, and a lack of positive role models and peer groups (Skinner, 2006). A child's growth greatly depends on the many difficulties faced by orphans, including unfulfilled psychosocial support needs (Giese, 2009).

Vulnerable Children

Children "whose safety, well-being, and development are, for various reasons, threatened" are considered vulnerable (Subbarao, 2015). Some of the most significant things that highlight children's vulnerability include inadequate care and affection, proper housing, food, education, and psychological support as they exposed to a variety of vulnerabilities that are extremely contextual and change depending on the environment (Omorogiuwa, 2020). For Omorogiuwa (2023), vulnerable children are those who, for whatever reason, are unable or unwilling to live with their parents or other family members. They have essentially "lost" their primary caregivers, much like orphans. These children are frequently abused, neglected, or abandoned, or their parents might not have the means to provide for them. According to UNICEF (2011), children who have lost their primary caregivers are more susceptible to health hazards, violence, exploitation, and prejudice. In this study, vulnerable children and orphans are referred to as a single category. Distinguishing between the youngsters who were true orphans and the rest proved to be quite challenging. The use of labels has some risk since it can influence people's behavior and can have stigmatizing and detrimental impacts (Angermeyer & Matschinger, 2013).

Psychosocial wellbeing of orphans

According to Gilborn (2006), this is a reference to a child's intrapersonal (emotional) and mental (psychological) states as well as his or her interpersonal network of social connections, human relationships, and functioning. In light of the child's social-cultural background and developmental stage, it is crucial to comprehend the boundaries of their psychological well-being and psychosocial suffering. Children who have these relationships are more equipped to handle hardships such as hunger, general discomfort, and other deprivations of poverty and loss because they feel like they belong and have hope (Omorogiuwa, 2021). These endeavors represent "important investments" in the human capital of young children who get affection, stimulation, and support since they lay a solid foundation for future growth and development, are better equipped to handle difficulties, and are more adept at overcoming setbacks. A state of good psychosocial wellbeing, according to Gilborn (2006), is characterized by a preponderance of positive, healthy, and adaptive mental, emotional, and social relationships.

According to Tagurum et al. (2015), the Nigeria OVC National Plan of Action provided a thorough overview of the circumstances and psychosocial requirements of OVC in the nation; this is discussed below. According to FMWASD (2007) and Omorogiuwa (2023), psychosocial support is the continuous process of addressing the emotional, social, mental, and spiritual needs of children who are at risk. These requirements are regarded as crucial components of meaningful and constructive human development. It emphasizes children's psychological and emotional requirements as well as their need for social relationships, going beyond just providing for their bodily needs. The goal of psychosocial support is to assist children and teenagers in managing the stress and emotional anguish brought on by losing one or both of their parents or other significant adults. Among the many psychosocial requirements that orphans and vulnerable children have are those for life skills training, supervision, and counseling (Omorogiuwa, 2020). Sustaining material and educational support requires psychosocial well-being, as unhappy children might not be able to take care of themselves or participate in school activities. Programs that prioritize meeting physical requirements above psychosocial ones are probably not going to have much of an impact. For children's development to be holistic, these needs must be met (Tagurum et al., 2015).

OVC need psychosocial support because HIV/AIDS has varying effects on their lives. This support is crucial. When a family member becomes ill, both the child and the caregiver have serious difficulties

in the areas of physical, social, cognitive, emotional, and moral development (Omorogiuwa, 2020). After this, the children frequently experience acute stress, grief, and a lack of access to basic necessities, which puts them in critical need of psychosocial help. When family resources are shifted to taking care of the sick member, children in the households lose out on targeted support (Omorogiuwa & Yuka, 2022). Safety assurance systems that assist children in need degrade and becoming overburdened at the community level. Government agencies and departments dealing with health, education, food supply, law enforcement, and food security systems at the federal level (UNICEF, 2013).

Challenges of Orphans and vulnerable children in Nigeria

A youngster under the age of eighteen who has a seriously ill parent or who lives in a home where an adult adult passed away during the last three to twelve months is considered a vulnerable orphan." Vulnerable children are categorized by the Nigeria Research Situation Analysis (2009), which evaluated the level of OVC in 2008 across all 36 states, including Abuja. Additional vulnerable children's groups include those living on the streets, in households, in institutions, and as homeless OVCs. Children in need of help and protection include trafficked children, orphaned, mistreated, abandoned, and neglected children; children in legal trouble; child sex workers; children with disabilities; and children living in poverty. Because their parents or other caregivers are unable to provide their basic requirements and they are emotionally challenged, OVCs typically fail to develop a strong sense of identity and self-worth (Subbarao, 2015).

According to Mishra and Simona (2008) and UNICEF (2003), when children witness the loss of one or both of their parents, their circumstances become traumatic and they face several challenges. Moreover, that they are more likely to be exposed to child labor, have less access to education, and sustain harm to their cognitive and emotional development. According to (Ayele, 2014), children's vulnerabilities arise from the fact that, even when their parents are still living, these youngsters have little or no access to the needs of life because of poverty or a single or a combination of ailments. These could also include the recent Boko Haram uprising, which resulted in the displacement of children from war, conflicts between farmers and herders, and flooding that claimed the lives of numerous adults and children. Other problems include assault and kidnapping, in addition to other harmful situations outside the child's control. In order to provide safety and rehabilitation, hundreds of displaced children impacted by the Boko Haram insurgency were recently transported from the northern region of Nigeria to Edo State. Adopting legislation like the youngsters's Protection and Adoption Act and orphan care policies would help to ensure that these youngsters receive the proper care and protection.

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Problem Behavior Orphans and vulnerable children are related to issue behavior theory; Ngale (2009) characterized the behavior problem that emerged in adolescence. claiming that teens are especially susceptible to risky behavior and the influence of important people in their lives during this crucial time. Lack of a parental figure may exacerbate these risky behaviors, with detrimental effects on society. To develop into a healthy, responsible adult, every child needs the necessities of life. Early in life, a child needs the love, attention, and protection of their parents. The child's immediate family and surroundings play a crucial role in shaping their development because it is in these settings that they are nourished and learn to experience love and acceptance, a sense of belonging, safety, and security, as well as to trust, respect, and confidence. According to personality researcher Erick Erickson, social interaction is the primary factor influencing human behavior and personality development. He makes the point that every person has a unique set of crises that need to be

overcome due to a combination of biological maturation and the social environment. There are eight psychosocial phases in Erick Erickson's theory of human development, and the fourth stage is more pertinent to our investigation. This fourth stage spans a time frame of roughly six to twelve years. It is anticipated that the child will acquire basic abilities through formal education at this point (Baron et al., 2009).

The attachment theory, which was established by (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991), is another hypothesis that can help explain the difficulties faced by orphans and children. The dynamics of long-term interpersonal relationships are explained by the attachment theory, which describes how people react in relationships when they are harmed, cut off from loved ones, or perceive a threat (Waters et al., 2005). When a baby or child is afraid, attachment serves as a behavioral and motivational mechanism that prompts them to approach a known caregiver in the hopes of receiving emotional support and safety. The fundamental idea of attachment theory is that parents have the ability to give their children security and protection. Thus, for a child's social and emotional development to be successful—and especially for them to learn how to properly regulate their feelings—they must form a relationship with at least one major caregiver. If they are the primary caregivers and engage in the majority of the associated social interaction, fathers, mothers, or any other individual is as likely to develop into principal attachment figures. According to this theory, a child's sense of security is based on how secure they feel about their attachment to their early caregiver(s), and the strength of these relationships acts as a model for how to interact with others and obtain what you need in life.

Methods

The research design adopted in this study is the survey research design. This design allows the study of a problem by collecting and analyzing data from only respondents considered representative to the entire group. A population is the entire set of relevant units of analysis in which we are interested for the purpose of the study. The study involved all orphans in Ikpoba-okha LGA, Edo State. The sample size of the study comprises of 100 orphans drawn from five (5) orphanage homes. This study adopted the survey research design and the simple random sampling technique was employed using the structured questionnaire as the main instrument of data collection. Data collected for the study was analyzed using descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation.

Table 1: Characteristics of Orphanage home

S/N	Name of Orphanage	Type	Male	Age	Female	Age	Total
1	Oronsaye Orphanage home	Mixed	9		11		20
2	Uyiosa Orphanage Home	Mixed	10		10		20
3	Corner-Stone of Hope Orphanage Home	Mixed	9		11		20
4	Princess Kate Orphanage Home	Mixed	11		9		20
5	Sir Idehen Orphanage Home	Mixed	10		10		20

Source: Fieldwork, 2023

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Demographic Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
GENDER	Male	29	29
	Female	71	71
	Total	100	100
EDUCATION OF RESPONDENTS	Primary School	26	26
	Secondary School	24	24
	Vocational	30	30
	Tertiary	20	20
	Total	100	100
RELIGION	Islam	16	16
	Christianity	79	79
	ATR	5	5
	Total	100	100
AGE	Below 10 years	13	13
	10-14 years	68	68
	14-18 years	19	19
	Total	100	100
MARITAL STATUS OF PARENTS	Single	39	12
	Married	31	1
	Widowed	11	81
	Divorced	6	6
	Separated	3	
	Total	100	100

Source: *fieldwork (2023)*

From the table above, the result shows the sex of the respondents. The result therefore revealed that there were more male than female, as female accounted for 29% of the population while male accounted for 71% of the population. In regards to Education of the respondents, the result shows that primary school amounted to 26% of the population, Secondary School amounted to 24% of the population, Vocational Education amounted to 30 while tertiary institution amounted to 20% of the population. In regards to Religion, The result therefore revealed more Christians were accounted for at 79%, Muslim 16% while ATR accounted for are 5% of the population. In regards to Age, the result shows that respondents who were below 10 years were 13% of the population, respondents who were 10-14 years accounted for are 68%, and the respondents who were 14-18 years are 19% of the population. This shows that the respondents who were between 10-14 years are the highest in the population. In regards to Marital Status, the result shows respondents who were single amounted to 39%, married amounted to 31%, widowed are 11%, divorced amounted to 6% and separated were 3%.

What are the immediate social and psychological needs of the children in orphanage homes

S/N	ITEM	NUMBER	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	DECISION
1	Are you cared for when lonely	100	2.84	0.92	Accepted
2	Do you make friends easily at school	100	2.54	0.81	Accepted
3	Do you receive all my needs as I request from your care givers	100	2.91	1.24	Accepted

4	Are you supported when notare unhappy and emotionally down	100	2.70	0.91	Accepted
	Grand mean	100	2.76	0.97	Accepted

N=100 Criterion mean=2.5

The Table shows a grand means of 2.76 was obtained for the four items and standard deviation of 0.97, with criterion value of 2.5 from this analysis, the grand mean value is greater than the criterion value which agrees that there are immediate social and psychological needs of the vulnerable children in the orphanage homes.

What are the conditions and challenges facing orphans in orphanage

S/N	ITEM	NUMBER	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	DECISION
1	My parents/guardian do not provide most of my needs/school materials because they do not have enough money	100	3.29	1.06	Accepted
2	I have to sell things before or after school.	100	2.54	0.85	Accepted
3	My parents/guardian gets angry easily when I ask for money	100	2.81	0.91	Accepted
4	My parents are jobless and as a result they don't have money to give to me	100	2.77	0.74	Accepted
	Grand mean	100	2.92	0.89	Accepted

N=100 Criterion mean=2.5

This Table shows a grand mean of 2.92 was obtained for the four items and a standard deviation of 0.89, with a criterion value of 2.5. From this analysis, the grand mean value is greater than the criterion value which agrees that Orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) face challenges.

What are the available social work interventions that can be used to support orphans to actualize their personal dream

S/N	ITEM	NUMBER	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	DECISION
1	Do you face any challenges because you are a male or female	100	2.82	1.01	Accepted
2	Does the Care giver give you some preferences because you are a male or female?	100	2.52	0.79	Accepted
3	Does anyone care to help you when you have a problem	100	2.56	0.95	Accepted
4	Do caregivers give you audience and attempt to solve your problem	100	2.89	1.06	Accepted
	Grand mean	100	2.69	0.95	Accepted

N=100 Criterion mean=2.5

This table illustrates a grand mean of 2.69 was obtained for the four items and a standard deviation of 0.95, with a criterion value of 2.5. From this analysis, the grand mean value is greater than the criterion value which agrees that available interventions that can be used to support orphans to realize their personal dreams.

Discussion of Findings

The different conclusions gleaned from the research question are explained in depth in this section. The work of (Subbarao, 2015) assisted the children's immediate social and psychological needs in orphanage homes. Some of the most significant things that highlight children's vulnerability include inadequate care and affection, proper housing, food, education, and psychological support. In foster homes, abandoned children are burdened with a variety of environmental issues. Jasen (2010) contended that newborns and children have been significantly impacted by the worsening environmental conditions. "Every child is exposed from the prenatal phase, to a barrage of environmental threats to their health and survival," the author continues. It ends the lives of millions of children and prevents innumerable people from growing and progressing. The UNICEF (2013) statement that orphans experience emotional stress, higher levels of anxiety, depression, and anger, along with the associated inactivity caused by depression, feelings of hopelessness, and suicidal thoughts due to the hardships they face after a parent dies, supports the idea that gender plays a role in the behavioral and emotional difficulties of children in orphanage homes.

According to research, orphans have numerous psychological difficulties, such as a lack of affection, support, and acceptance in their new homes (Mishra, 2008). According to Lanchman et al. (2012), the conditions and difficulties faced by orphans in orphanage homes highlight the enormous obstacles that children in the 21st century face, which stand in the way of attaining the objective of universal child protection. They continued by identifying three distinct barriers to child safety in Nigeria: war, HIV/AIDS infection, and poverty. They highlighted the detrimental impacts of poverty, which can be both material and psychological. Poverty makes many children on the continent orphans, making them vulnerable.

The research also highlighted the social interventions that are now in place and can help orphans fulfill their own goals. Birmingham (2015) asserts that everyone has a part to play in the fight for OVC and that everyone's contributions are needed. We recognize the importance of the government, the extended family, and the local community in helping those in need, particularly the growing number of AIDS orphans and vulnerable youngsters. In order to raise awareness of OVCs and work closely with them, social workers will therefore perform their duties as educators, brokers, advocates, catalysts, activists, enablers, facilitators, conveners, planners, trainers, and outreach workers within the context of their knowledge base and experiences.

Conclusion

The conditions of vulnerable children and orphans in Edo State have been depicted in the study. The children are exposed to abuse in all its forms, including assault, exploitation, and neglect, as a result of the appalling surroundings. The primary reason of the OVC's condition is a dispute between the children's paternal and maternal relatives: either they are divorced, separated, or orphaned, or there is a breakdown in the extended family structure. This study concludes that there are a growing number of reasons contributing to the problem of OVC susceptibility, such as HIV, poverty, illiteracy, population growth, and a general collapse in family values.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

4. Through social mobilisation and advocacy, the government, NGOs, and social workers should pay attention to orphans and vulnerable children at all levels. Media coverage and civil society involvement are needed to disseminate educated messages concerning vulnerable children and orphans.

5. Government, non-profit organisations, and social workers should work together to improve families' and communities' ability to care for, assist, and shield vulnerable and orphaned children. In order for parents or other family members to provide welfare for the OVC, the government must foster a positive environment. As a result, the government, the community, and the family all have responsibilities to share.
6. Government, non-governmental organisations, and social workers to improve disadvantaged children's access to basic services (medical, shelter, food, education, and psycho-social).
7. Social workers, NGOs, and the government should work together to strengthen orphans' and vulnerable children's—especially teenagers—ability to take an active role in providing for their own needs.
8. The government should increase the ability of all parties involved to plan, organise, and mobilise resources for projects that benefit the most vulnerable children.
9. Prioritizing the alleviation of poverty by Government and NGOs with a particular emphasis on fighting poverty from children's perspective.
10. Government to ensure the involvement of trained social workers in the affairs of orphans and vulnerable children's cases in the society.

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