

Community Mobilization Towards Addressing Orphans and Vulnerable Children Phenomenon in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined community mobilization towards addressing orphans and vulnerable children phenomenon in Nigeria. Three research questions were raised and one null hypothesis was tested to guide the study. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. 6,774,331 was considered as the target populations. A sample size of 480 respondents selected was across the six geo-political zone of Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling procedure consisting of stratified sampling, simple random sampling and purposive sampling technique was used. A self-developed questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were used for data collection. The reliability test of the instruments was done using test retest technique and a co-efficient 0.87 was obtained. The administration of the instrument was done by the researchers and five field research assistants. The data collected were analyzed using frequency count, percentages, mean and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Hypothesis formulated was tested at 0.05 level of significance. One of the findings revealed that the needs of OVC have not been adequately met. It was therefore, recommended that community members should pool their resources and ideas to cater for them especially in providing access to health, education and welfare services. In addition, global partnership among stakeholders particularly the civil societies should be sought and pursued.

Keywords: Community mobilization, orphans and vulnerable children, Nigeria

Introduction

The number of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) is increasing daily and its calls greater attention of governments at all levels, international organization, philanthropist, faith based organizations, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, social workers among others. More emphatically, government alone at whatever level cannot adequately satisfy all the needs of orphans and vulnerable children especially in the areas of health, education and welfare services. This is due to the lack of baseline data on the level of vulnerability which is amorphous. The National Plan of Action on Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Nigeria (2007) noted that children who could be vulnerable might not be exhaustive, for working purposes, a child is defined as a boy or girl below 18 years of age while an orphan on the other hand is a child (below the age of 18) who has lost one or both parents, irrespective of the cause of death. Those who have lost both parents are commonly referred to as “double orphaned”. However, definition of vulnerability varies from society to society; therefore definitions are community specific. The Federal Ministry of Social Development (2007) provides some key indicators determining children’s vulnerability including children that are:

- i. Children with physical and material disabilities
- ii. Neglected children
- iii. Child beggars, destitute children and scavengers
- iv. Children from broken homes

- v. Internally displaced children
- vi. Children who have dropped out of school
- vii. Abandoned children.

UNICEF (2002) in Olagbuji and Okojie (2015) reported that evidence has shown that OVC in Nigeria live in deplorable conditions and are exposed to neglect, exploitation, and abuse and deprived of basic human rights and needs. The burden of poverty makes families and communities unable to cope with the increased number of orphans (McKenna, 2010). Over the years, many numerous factors have contributed to OVC phenomenon ranging from death, communal conflicts, war, political crises and natural disasters. Many children in Nigeria are mostly affected by all these aforementioned crises and have increasingly contributed to the large population of influx of under age children in the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). One of the major teething challenges in contemporary times is the rapid growth in the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in north-eastern part of Nigeria. Individuals are displaced when they are forced to move from their locality or environment. In view of this, it has been established through research that women and children are particularly vulnerable to violence and abuse of all kinds (Dada, 2007).

In Nigeria context Almajiris' were also classified as OVC. Most of these children were living far away from both their parents and guardians. They are mostly found in northern Nigeria. The Almajirai constitute the largest group of out-of-school children in Nigeria. Numbering about 10 million, this segment of the Nigerian population poses tremendous challenges to attaining Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as other notable international conventions and protocols. To neglect this group does not only deny them their fundamental rights but also jeopardizes the country's pursuit of her home-grown technological development and economic transformation (UBE, 2010).

On the issue of orphans, it is certain that parental death can affect various aspects of a growing child's development. The effect of parental death on education is likely to vary as previous studies have shown (Andrews, Skinner, Zuma, 2006). The loss of a father or mother can result in loss of shelter, school drop-out or non-enrolment in school, poor health outcomes, malnutrition, abuse and stigmatization. Therefore, it is imperative that mobilization of all and sundry may bring the lasting solution to any problems within the community. Akanji and Olawuni (2011) observed that through mobilization community people would be more aware of their right and of their responsibilities. Also, this could make people aware of the problems of their society and think of what they are as individuals and as groups could do towards addressing the problems.

Statement of the Problem

The outrageous number of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in Nigeria is worrisome. These sub-groups are facing numerous problems in many settings in Nigeria ranging from malnutrition, hawking, poor education, poor shelter, poor health care, sexual harassment and rape among others. These concerns emerged from many studies concerning OVC's. Chirdanet al (2015) conducted a study on situational analysis of orphans and vulnerable Children in urban and rural communities of Plateau State. Similarly, Ibeh (2011) worked on services available for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Enugu State. In the same vein, Olagbuji and Okojie (2015) researched on the assessment of the implementation of the national policy on orphans and vulnerable children in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. However, studies have not focused on community mobilization towards addressing orphans and vulnerable children phenomenon in Nigeria especially where gaps exist, as well as explore ways to fill these gaps.

Objectives of the study

The objectives that guided the study were to:

- i. explore the attitudes of Nigerians towards caring for orphans and vulnerable children;
 - ii. analyse the views of orphans and vulnerable children about Nigerians in meeting their daily needs;
- and

- iii. examine the strategies for community mobilization towards addressing orphans and vulnerable children phenomenon in Nigeria.

Research questions

The following research questions were raised by the researchers:

- i. What are the attitudes of Nigerians towards caring for orphans and vulnerable children?
- ii. What are the views of orphans and vulnerable children about Nigerians in meeting their needs?
- iii. What are the strategies for community mobilization towards addressing orphans and vulnerable children phenomenon in Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between the attitudes of Nigerians and views of orphans and vulnerable children towards meeting their daily needs.

Methodology

Research Design

The descriptive survey was employed for the study. The design considered relevant because it sought to obtain the views and opinions of the respondents (general public) in mobilization towards addressing orphans and vulnerable children phenomenon in Nigeria. Check and Schutt (2010) reported that, survey research design is an efficient method for systematically collecting data from a broad spectrum of individuals and educational setting.

Population, Sample and Sampling techniques

A total of 6,774,331 populations was obtained from the 2006 population census and considered as the target population for study. The sample size was by using Raosoft online sample calculator (2017). A minimum sample size of 377 respondents was recommended for a population of that magnitude. However, the minimum recommended sample size was increased to 480 as the sample for the study by the researchers in order to have a fair representation of the target population.

Multi-stage sampling procedure was adopted. At the first stage, stratified random sampling technique was used to select two (2) states from each of the six geo-political zone of Nigeria: North-West, North-East, North-Central, South-West, South-East and South-South. That is, 12 states were selected across the country (See Appendix I). Also, at the second stage, simple random sampling technique was used to draw two (2) Local Government Areas in each of the state capitals, which makes 24 local government areas. At the final stage, purposive sampling was adopted to sample 20 respondents (10 members of the general public and 10 orphans and vulnerable children) willing to participate in the study in each of the local government areas sampled making a total of four hundred and eighty (480) respondents.

Instruments

Two major research instruments were used for data collection for the study. These include: Interview and a self-developed questionnaire tagged "Community Mobilization Addressing Orphans and Vulnerable Children Phenomenon in Nigerian Questionnaire" (CMAOVCPNQ). It consisted of three (3) sections: Section A contained demographic information of the respondents', that is, gender, age and geographical local. Section B contained 10 items on the attitudes of Nigerians towards caring for orphans and vulnerable children. Section C focused on the strategies for community mobilization towards addressing orphans and vulnerable children phenomenon in Nigeria. Two formats of appropriate options were provided from which respondents were to choose. The options to these items were taken on four (4) point Likert scale type rating Always (AL), Often (OF), Occasionally (OC) and Never (NV). And also: Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Disagree (D); and Strongly Disagree (SD)

In the same vein, In-depth interviews (IDIs) in a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) manner were also used to obtain information from respondents (OVC). The selection was based on contact with OVC around the street in

the major cities sampled for the study without any bias for gender, age or educational status. The responses were recorded verbatim and transcribed where necessary for better understanding. The interviews were structured and sought the views of OVC about Nigerians in meeting their needs. The items in the instruments were validated by experts in the fields of adult education, test and measurement through a cross-examination by peer review in relation to the research questions raised for the study. The reliability co-efficient of the instrument was carried out using test re-test technique and 0.87 was obtained which revealed that the instrument was reliable for the study.

Procedure for Data Collection

The administration of the instruments was done by the researchers and five field research assistants who live in the states sampled for the study. The researchers made sure that the selected assistants were familiar with the interpretation of the content of the instruments in the language of the immediate environment of the respondents. This was necessary in case if respondent did not understand English. All the questionnaires were successfully filled and returned.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Hypothesis formulated was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

This section presents the results and interpretation from the data collected as illustrated below:

Research Question 1: *What are the attitudes of Nigerians towards caring for orphans and vulnerable children?*

Table 1: Analysis of the attitudes of Nigerians towards caring for orphans and vulnerable children

S/N	Nigerians attitudes	Frequency, Percentage (%) & Mean				Mean
		AL	OF	OC	NV	
1.	I provide three meals per day for orphans and vulnerable children living within my area.	84 (35%)	77 (32.1%)	60 (25%)	19 (7.9%)	2.94
2.	My religious beliefs encouraged care for orphans and vulnerable children.	128 (53.3%)	112 (46.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3.53
3.	I offered donations for less privileged children.	109 (45.4%)	84 (35%)	28 (11.7%)	19 (7.9%)	3.18
4.	I visited orphanage home on regular basis.	15 (6.25%)	52 (21.7%)	60 (25%)	113 (47.1%)	1.87
5.	I sponsor orphans and vulnerable children in schools.	15 (6.25%)	52 (21.7%)	32 (13.33%)	141 (58.75%)	1.75
6.	I give out any unused materials to less privileged children in schools.	144 (60%)	96 (40%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3.60
7.	I felt for parents whose wards and lads are roaming around the street for survival.	47 (19.6%)	168 (70%)	25 (10.4%)	0 (0%)	3.09
8.	Orphans and vulnerable children are notorious in my area.	88 (36.7%)	112 (46.7%)	25 (10.4%)	15 (6.2%)	1.86
9.	I have no difficulties in living with orphans and vulnerable children around me.	69 (28.75%)	171 (71.25%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3.28
10.	Orphans and vulnerable children are very helpful to me.	84 (35%)	131 (54.6%)	25 (10.4%)	0 (0%)	3.14

Table 1 above presents the result of the respondents on caring for OVC, using frequency counts, percentages and mean as derived from the data collected. Out of ten (10) items that tested the attitudes of Nigerians towards

caring for orphans and vulnerable children, the result indicated that items 1,2,3,6, 7, 9 and 10 were above average mean or mid-point of 2.5. On the other hand, items 4, 5 and 8 were below average mean or mid-point of 2.5.

Research Question 2: *What are the views of orphans and vulnerable children about Nigerians in meeting their needs?*

Table 2: Analysis of the views of orphans and vulnerable children about Nigerians in meeting their needs

S/N	views of orphans and vulnerable children	Frequency, Percentage (%) & Mean				
		SA	A	D	SD	Mean
1.	I have before my guardian give me food.	24 (10%)	46 (19.2%)	91 (37.9%)	79 (32.9%)	2.43
2.	People around my neighbourhood had shown a kind gesture to me.	144 (60%)	96 (40%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3.60
3.	I have been severally harassed and sexually abuse.	99 (41.3%)	123 (51.3%)	14 (5.83%)	4 (1.67%)	1.62
4.	My guardian used me as a slave.	47 (19.6%)	168 (70%)	25 (10.4%)	0 (0%)	1.59
5.	I usually receive beaten by my guardian to wake me up.	83 (34.6%)	126 (52.5%)	18 (7.5%)	13 (5.42%)	3.01
6.	The room am living is conducive and hygienic enough	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	128 (53.3%)	112 (46.7%)	1.53
7.	I am given required treatment whenever am ill by people around me.	120 (50%)	84 (35%)	28 (11.7%)	8 (3.3%)	3.28

Table 2 shows the result of the respondents (OVC) about Nigerians in meeting their needs, using frequency counts, percentages and mean as derived from the data collected. Out of seven (7) items that tested the views of OVC about Nigerians in meeting their needs, the result indicated that items 2, 5, and 7 were above average mean or mid-point of 2.5. On the other hand, items 1, 3, 4 and 6 were below average mean or mid-point of 2.5.

Research Question 3: *What are the strategies for community mobilization towards addressing orphans and vulnerable children phenomenon in Nigeria?*

Table 3: Analysis of the strategies for community mobilization towards addressing orphans and vulnerable children in Nigeria

S/N	views of orphans and vulnerable children	Frequency, Percentage (%) & Mean				
		SA	A	D	SD	Mean
1.	Through global partnership orphans and vulnerable children phenomenon can be addressed.	118 (49.2%)	122 (50.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3.49
2.	Good advocacy can bring awareness to the general public	122 (50.8%)	118 (49.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3.51
3.	Religions institution has a major role to play in solving OVC problems.	122 (50.8%)	118 (49.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3.51
4.	The establishment of social security scheme has immensely contribution for addressing OVC phenomenon.	44 (18.3%)	196 (81.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3.18
5.	The establishment of special educational institution can help to re-integrate street children.	118 (49.2%)	122 (50.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3.49
6.	Enactment of laws by the government can help to reduce violence against OVC	48 (20%)	192 (80%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3.20
7.	Involvement offamily-relative support, philanthropist and community based organizations can help to cater for the OVC needs.	165 (68.8%)	75 (31.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3.69

Table 3 present the result of the respondents on the strategies for community mobilization towards addressing orphans and vulnerable children phenomenon in Nigeria(Orphans and Vulnerable Children) about Nigeriansin meeting their needs,using frequency counts, percentages and mean as derived from the data collected.Out of seven (7) items that tested thestrategies for community mobilizationtowards addressing OVC, the result indicated that all items were above average mean or mid-point of 2.5.

Hypothesis testing

HO₁: *There is no significant relationship between the attitudes of Nigerians and views of orphans and vulnerable children towards meeting their daily needs.*

Hypothesis postulated was tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, at the 0.05 level of significance. The results are shown in tables 4.

Table 4: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient showing relationship between the attitudes of Nigerians and views of orphans and vulnerable children towards meeting their daily needs

Variables	No	df	r-value	Sig.	Decision
Nigerians	240	478	.065	0.01	Rejected
OVC	240				

P < 0.05

Table 4 indicates that the r-value .065 is obtained with a p-value 0.001 computed at 0.05 alpha level. Since the p-value 0.01 is less than the 0.05 alpha level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is

a significant positive relationship between the attitudes of Nigerians and views of orphans and vulnerable children towards meeting their daily needs [$r(478) = 0.65, p < 0.05$].

Summary of Findings

From the preceding data analysis, the following findings were deduced:

- i. Nigerians offered donations for less privileged children;
- ii. People had shown a kind gesture to OVC;
- iii. Through global partnership, involvement of family-relative support, philanthropist and community based organizations and establishment of social security scheme has greater contribution towards addressing OVC phenomenon and;
- iv. There is significant relationship between the attitudes of Nigerians and views of orphans and vulnerable children towards meeting their daily needs.

Discussion of Results

The results from the analysis in Table 1 item 3 revealed that “I offered donations for less privileged children” 109 (45.4%) respondents strongly agreed, 84 (35%) agreed, 28 (11.7%) disagreed and 19 (7.9%) strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.18 was obtained from table 1 item 3. This finding is agreed with the work of Fajonyomi (2016) that Nigerians have positive attitudes to voluntary giving and they could as well be disposed to giving for the cause of adult education. The findings of the study also revealed that “respondents religious beliefs encouraged care for orphans and vulnerable children” This finding is in line with the verse of the Holy Qur’an (Q 93, V5-10) which says:

Verily your Lord will give you all good so that you shall be well-pleased. Did he not find you (Muhammed SAW) an orphan and gave you a refuge. And he found unaware and guided you. He found you poor and made you rich. Therefore, treat not the orphan with oppression and repulse not the beggar.

The above verses affirmed that the doctrine of Islamic religion is conforming for the encouragement of care for orphans and vulnerable children. In addition, the results from the analysis shows the view of orphan that “the room am living is conducive and hygienic enough” 128 (53.3%) respondents disagreed, 112 (46.7%) were strongly disagreed while none of the respondents strongly agreed. The mean score of 1.53 was obtained from table 2 items 6 which indicated that orphan and vulnerable children were not living in a hygienic environment. This finding is contrary with the report of Nigerian Tribune newspaper (2017, p15) that a child that is well-fed will not be prone to kwashiorkor and other childhood diseases. Provision of medical care for children should be paramount to the government. It is the responsibility of parents to provide within their financial capability adequate clothing for their children.

Furthermore, the results from the analysis on the strategies for community mobilization towards addressing orphans and vulnerable children phenomenon in Nigeria are as follows “through global partnership orphans and vulnerable children phenomenon can be addressed” 118 (49.2%) respondents strongly agreed, 122 (50.8%) were agreed while none of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.49 was obtained from table 3 item 1. This is also in accordance with the assertion by Godfrey, Ebunlomo, Jonathon, Jill, Jen and Bram (2009) who reported that addressing the needs of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) and mitigating negative outcomes of the growing OVC population worldwide should be a high priority for national governments and international stakeholders across the globe with emphasis on issues related to social, economic, and human rights dimensions. The global partnership need to be formed among the international communities as a synergy for eliminating orphans and vulnerable children’s problems. International organizations who offered humanitarian services across the globe such as UNESCO, UNICEF, UNDP, WHO, USAID, UNHCR, ECOWAS should double or quadruple their efforts and collaborate.

“The establishment of social security scheme has immense contribution to addressing OVC phenomenon”. 44 (18.3%) respondents strongly agreed, 196 (81.7%) agreed while none of the respondents disagreed or strongly

disagreed. The mean score of 3.18 was obtained. This result indicated that, as a matter of urgency at the level government, there would be need to establish social security scheme for OVC. Furthermore, “involvement offamily-relative support, philanthropist and community based organizations can help to cater for the OVC needs” 165 (68.8%) respondents strongly agreed, 75 (31.2%) were agreed while none of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.69 was obtained. This finding corroborated the view of Ambali and Fajonyomi (2015) remarked that community based associations (CBAs) should be driven by the desire to embark on two principal goals of executing self-help projects for the benefit of the community and or improvement of the living standard of their members.

“Enactment of laws by the government can help to reduce violence against orphans and vulnerable children” 48 (20%) respondents strongly agreed, 192 (80%) were agreed while none of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.20 was obtained. This finding agreed with the report of article 29 of the Child Rights Act CRA paragraph 29 (1.d) which calls for “*preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin.*”

Similarly, the National Guideline and Standard of Practice (NGSP) for OVC in Nigeria have it that provision of comprehensive, efficient and effective care, support and protection of orphans and vulnerable children in Nigeria is not negotiable (Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, 2007). However, there machineries should be put in place to implement their provision.

Based on the research hypotheses tested, it was revealed that there was significant relationship between the attitudes of Nigerians and views of orphans and vulnerable children towards meeting their daily needs. This indicated that Nigerians has been meeting the needs of the orphans and vulnerable children. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a statistically significant difference in the attitudes of Nigerians and views of orphans and vulnerable children towards meeting their daily needs [$r(478) = 0.65, p < 0.05$].

Conclusion

The paper examined the situation of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) which have become global phenomenon. The OVC problem is prevalent in Nigeria, this impediment calls for the attention of all and sundry, as the government alone cannot adequately cater for OVC needs, due to competing demand for limited government resources. The paper also highlighted strong mobilization that may bring the lasting solution. It suggest that community mobilization has the potential to improve conditions for OVC so as to complement the government efforts.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. The general public should be better enlightened on voluntary donations for less privileged children;
- ii. The use of mass media should also be explored in creating awareness among the members of public for supporting and caring for the OVC needs; and
- iii. Strong synergy should be encouraged between international donors and government as a global partnership on orphans and vulnerable children as to cater for their needs;
- iv. As a matter urgency the government at all level should make provision for adequate social security scheme in its annual budget.

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Appendix I
Sample Population Distribution

S/N	State	Capital	Goe-political Zone	LGA's	Population
1.	Kano	Kano	North-West	Gwale	357,827
				Nasarawa	596,411
2.	Sokoto	Sokoto	North-West	Sokoto sorth	197,686
				Wamakko	179,246
3.	Borno	Maiduguri	North-East	Maiduguri	540,016
				Jere	209,107
4.	Bauchi	Bauchi	North-East	Bauchi	493,730
				Ganjuwa	278,471
5.	Niger	Minna	North-Central	Bosso	148,136
				Chanchaga	202,151
6.	Kwara	Ilorin	North-Central	Ilorin east	207,462
				Ilorin west	365,221
7.	Lagos	Ikeja	South-West	Ikeja	317,614
				Agege	461,743
8.	Oyo	Ibadan	South-West	Ibadan central	331,444

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				Ibadan north	308,119
9.	Anambra	Okar	South- East	Onitsha north	125,918
				Onitsha south	137,191
10.	Imo	Owerri	South- East	Owerri north	176,334
				Owerri municipal	125,337
11.	Edo	Benin	South- South	Oredo	374,515
				Ikpoba-Okha	372,080
12.	Delta	Asaba	South- South	Oshimili north	118,540
				Oshimili south	150,032
Total population					6,774,331

Sources: Adopted from National Population Census, 2006