

## Support Mechanisms for Orphans' Academic Achievement in Tanzania



Josephine Ackim

The Local Government Training Institute, P.O. BOX 1125, Dodoma, Tanzania

**ABSTRACT:** Orphans access to education is still critical for most of developing countries and Tanzania specifically. There have been government efforts such as policy and programs development and implementation to ensure orphans access to education, but the situation is still alarming. Literature in Tanzania have not explored fully the support mechanisms for orphans to capitalize their access to education. This study contribute to the literature by focusing on this case. The study was conducted in Tanzania and specifically Dodoma district. Four primary schools were involved in the study. Mixed methods approach was applied in this study covering a sample of 133 respondents. Data were analysed using the thematic and descriptive approaches. The study found that support mechanisms for orphans include government mechanisms, civil society organizations (CSOs) mechanisms and community mechanisms. Although these categories have shown efforts towards improving the situation, more efforts are required to solve the problem. The study suggests that, for government, it should continue building schools, hostels and counseling sessions at schools. Again, CSOs should continue raising awareness to community members, providing necessary financial support and help to orphans so that they can be able to attend schools. Moreover, community support such as taking care of orphans and encouraging them is highly recommended. These will make mechanisms applied to help orphans meaningful and contribute towards attaining quality education for all goal of sustainable development goals.

**KEYWORDS:** Academic achievement, Orphans, Tanzania

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Education has been regarded as a fundamental human right and catalyst for human development (Okumu et al., 2012). Education is responsible for an individual, society or nation changes in terms of social revolution, economic, political and technical (Yahya, 2012). It shapes peoples way of living and thinking on the various life challenges include disease, poverty and hunger (Adekola, 2012). Ever since the United Nations Declaration of Universal Human Rights in 1948, there have been innumerable policy statements aiming to substantially improve basic education system for all children in the world (Young, 2016). The concept of education for all can be understood as the capacity within a network of primary schools to enroll all school-age children for a stipulated period of time without any barriers like family economic or social status (Pillay, 2014).

Similarly, in order to make sure that the child right to education is achieved, other conventions such as the Convention on Rights of the Children (2000) and African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) were introduced (Fleming, 2015). For example, article 28 of the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child, states that, all state parties shall recognize the right of the child to education (UNESCO, 1989). This means that every child should have access to education regardless his/her ethnicity, disability or economic status. Equally, Article 11 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, also states that every child has the right to education.

Furthermore, Education for All (EFA) was introduced in 1990 by the international conference held in Jomtie-Thailand and later revised in 2000 in Dakar Senegal. According to Miles and Singal (2010), the EFA targets were on improving childhood care education, enrollment to basic education and retention, ensuring that by 2015 all children have access to and complete free and compulsory education, provision of quality basic education and eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education. EFA as a means towards inclusive and equitable society needs to take into account of diversity of learners such as orphans living in vulnerable situations.

Despite all the conventions, declarations and education being rights to all children, globally, not all have access or brief to education. UNESCO (2010) points out that among many groups being marginalized from education access orphans face a big

## Support Mechanisms for Orphans' Academic Achievement in Tanzania

challenge. Some children have become vulnerable either because of the loss of parents, thereby living without adequate support or live outside of the family care all of which make them marginalized, stigmatized, socially and educationally discriminated (USAID, 2009). Thus, orphans present a social segment that if not well given an attention, their current and future life in the society becomes uncertain. In this study, orphan includes all children under the age of eighteen who are maternal, paternal or double orphans. In Tanzania an orphan is similarly defined under the two variables of age and parental loss; a child under the age of eighteen with at least one deceased parent is considered an orphan. Vulnerable children are those who belong to high-risk groups who lack access to basic social amenities or facilities (UNICEF 2002).

UNICEF reports that the main sources of vulnerability include HIV/AIDS and civil conflicts. With this contention it is better to note that not all orphan children are vulnerable. Some of the children may be orphans but not vulnerable and therefore vulnerable orphans are all children under the age of eighteen who are maternal, paternal or double orphans who are abused, neglected or at risk of neglect, hunger or homeless (MOHSS and UNICEF 1999). Because of vulnerability most of vulnerable orphans are taken care by foster parents who may be single parent left, grandfather/mother and other siblings or volunteering individuals who most have them face difficulties in sustaining their social and academic needs (Ladan, 2006).

As a result many people have lost their lives, being wounded and therefore leaving thousands of helpless dependents. Specifically, children have become vulnerable to social and economic hardships due to loss of parents, illness in the home, displacement and often involuntary neglect. UNICEF (2016), reveals that worldwide there is 171 million orphans who are either paternal or maternal orphan. Furthermore, UNICEF (2011) reports that 17,900,000 orphans have lost both parents and they are living in orphanages or streets and lack different social services such as education and health services. Therefore, they are at risk from diseases, malnutrition, and death.

The challenge of vulnerable orphans is globally alarming especially in the access to education and their academic achievements have also been threatened by the increasing poverty, over stretched extended families and insufficient mechanisms to provide quality education for all (UNICEF, 2013). This implies that, if this group is not proactively supported may lead to an escalated poverty, social unrest and related challenges.

This is also a concern in Africa (Pillay, 2014). Experiences show that traditionally vulnerable children particularly orphan have been cared by the aged grandparents, their brothers and sisters whom sometimes are also children and the extended family (Baxen, 2014). However, the elderly people fail to meet adequately the educational and personal needs of the orphans leading to low academic achievements of orphans. Despite of many children being enrolled in schools following the abolition of school fees in primary schools in most Sub Saharan Africa countries, still the children from poor family and orphans fail to adjust to education due to failure to meet educational needs such as uniform, exercise books, adequate and quality food and shelter (Williamson & Witzel, 2016). Even some of those who attending school have to undergo different coping mechanisms, such as attending to daily pay labor and begging to subsidize the educational material needed.

The situation in Tanzania is comparable to other parts of the world. According to the Tanzania's National Strategy on Inclusive Education (2018-2022) the schools must become more responsible to the needs of learners and teachers so as to enable all vulnerable learners to develop access to quality education. Despite the emphases on inclusive education in Tanzania, there are many children from poor family in primary schools who fail to meet the various costs of their education. UNICEF (2016) pointed out that, the major reasons for persistence of the problem of children from poor family is the lack of access to schooling, even when school fees are abolished, money must still be found to pay for things like uniforms and books. This lead to some children to either fail to attend to school or drop from school before completing standard seven as compulsory basic education.

The study by Mahanza et al. (2022) reveals that Tanzania is experiencing a big number of out of school orphans in rural and urban areas. Furthermore, it reported that orphans in the primary school age group (7-14 years), more single and double orphans are out of school than non-orphans, though the difference is not statistically significant compared to secondary school age (14-18) orphans. For instance, in (2014) the out-of-school rate was high for secondary school age children in general, in which 55 percent of single orphans were out of school compared with a significantly lower percentage of non-orphans (45 percent) in rural areas. In urban areas, within the secondary school age population, single orphans were approximately one and half times more likely to be out of school than non-orphans, and double orphans were almost twice as likely to be out of school as non-orphans. Thus, orphan hood appears to be a determinant of lower school attendance for older children, though not for younger children. Due to the abolition of school fees at the primary level, it may be that all primary-aged children gain access to schooling, while older orphans have a more difficult time than non-orphans in paying fees for secondary school or have other opportunity costs like earning a living.

Additionally, despite the fact that Tanzania has been working with International agencies and NGOs to eliminate illiteracy and improve livelihoods for all Tanzanians (Koda, 2015), a noticeable impact on both the quality and quantity of education for children from poor family has not been evaluated. Similarly, support mechanism adopted in Tanzania to support orphans and vulnerable

## Support Mechanisms for Orphans' Academic Achievement in Tanzania

children to access education has not been fully explored in Tanzania specifically in primary education. Hence, the main question for this study is, what sufficient support mechanisms that can help orphans in enhancing their academic achievements in primary schools in Tanzania? This study aimed to contribute to the debate of access to education for all in Tanzania by exploring mechanisms that can be used to help orphans to access education. Also, it contributes to sustainable development goal four which focuses on realizing quality education for all groups of the society.

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies suggest different mechanisms in different parts of the world to support orphans access education. According to Reupert et al. (2013), stakeholders have significant role to play in the academic development of all pupils. Different nations have adopted several support mechanism to help orphans access and adjust to primary education well for their academic achievement as follows. Among the support mechanism adopted by many countries in Africa include abolition of school fees for compulsory education (Pillay, 2016). Further, Pillar (2016) argues that for many countries attainment of Education for all goals decided to adopt abolition of school fees as a general intervention for all children including orphan. Supporting this idea Oleke (2007), in Nigeria investigated on the initiatives done by the government in supporting the education of vulnerable children. In this study the findings revealed that abolition of school fees in primary education was a great initiative adopted by Nigerian government to serve children from poor families accessing education. The study further revealed that abolish of school fees help to increase enrolments in school especially to children that would face difficult in accessing primary education.

Different countries such as Uganda adopted Universal Primary Education (UPE) policy abolishing the payment of fees for the first four children in a family which increased enrolments of children from poor family and orphans within a year as compared to children from middle and high income (Tumushabe et al. 1999). Likewise, Malawi also abolished fees as a means of improving academic achievement of all pupils and experienced a rise in enrolment specifically children from poor family and orphans (Kadzamira et al., 1999). Supporting the idea the study by (Pillay 2014) on the effects of abolition of school fees in Indonesia, and Kenya revealed that, enrolment increased for about 40% substantially following abolition of primary school fees for all children of which most of the enrolled pupils included children from vulnerable conditions (Pillay, 2014). Therefore, abolition of tuition fees stands as a super support mechanism which helps most of children from poor family and orphans in access and adjustment to primary education in various countries and therefore reaching their academic plans.

Adato, Coady, and Ruel, (2000) argue that one of the most common supportive mechanisms used by government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to overcome or reduce challenges facing orphanage children from poor family in accessing primary education is to reduce or eliminate some of school costs. The reduction interventions help orphanage children from poor family to cover the costs of books, stationery, and school clothing (uniform and shoes). They further argued that the best means is to send directly the needed materials to orphans and children from poor family, or to send direct to school. The materials to be sent include textbooks, uniforms, pens and other related materials. Apart from providing free materials to orphans, Adato, Coady, and Ruel, (2000) suggested that materials should also be made available through textbook rentals, or sold at subsidized rates

Globally there various countries which have been subsidizing school related costs in order to help orphanage children from poor family to access or adjust to primary education. For instance in Brazil, it was observed that school attendance of children from poor family increased when the *BolsaEscola* program was introduced. The program aimed at providing cash grants to poor families with children aged 7 to 14 who access primary school (Guilherme, et al., 2000). In Latin American countries, some local authorities provide school subsidies and fund for the education of children from poor family and orphans (Subbarao et al., 2001).

Another supportive mechanism that has been used to improve access and adjustment of orphan to primary education is to increase coverage so that schools are available to children living in areas outside the covered by the formal education system (Sumra, and Rajani, 2006). Community schools are established by local community members and sometimes supported by NGOs and churches. These schools do not charge fees, nor do they require children to wear uniforms, sometimes adjust their timetable to local needs and use volunteer teachers (Ntozi, Ahimbisibwe, Odwe, 1999). Community schools implement the same curriculum used in the public primary schools, though modified. This support is implemented in order to help orphans to access and adjust to primary education in easiest way. The report by World Bank, (2002) revealed that in Zambia, more than 200 community schools have been opened in faraway remote areas where there are no government schools and covered most of orphans. With this reason most of orphans have access to education in Zambia. Despite that this strategy served orphans attending school and adjusting to primary education needs well it was better to study and see whether the programme can serve the same purpose in Tanzania.

Palmer and Maramba, (2011) conducted a study in America investigating the situation of the schools admitting orphans to the highest level. In their study they revealed that, admitting orphans who are unable to accommodate school costs is always very difficult and very cost full to a school. Due to this reason they reported that schools fail to admit orphans and giving them some

## Support Mechanisms for Orphans' Academic Achievement in Tanzania

required educational needs and therefore they face difficult in access to primary education as compared to nonorphans. In order to overcome the situation the study by Hepburn, (2001) in Zimbabwe reported that in an effort to improve accessibility and adjustment of primary education to orphans government and NGOs need to induce some projects which will attempt to overcome the challenge by donating materials needed by a school on condition that the school admits a certain number of orphans. In his study he revealed the supportive mechanisms adopted by Zimbabwe where by some school are guided to admit 20% of orphans and it is supported by the government and other NGOs in providing school materials to the admitted orphans such as school uniforms, exercise books, shoes and food. Further, the school receives fund which support in accommodating the needs of orphans when they are at school.

Tanzania is among the developing countries vested with higher number of orphan"s due to poverty in families and higher death rate of parents contributed to diseases such as HIV/AIDS and Malaria. Other factors that are noted as leading to vulnerability included break up of families, presence of obesity, and loss of skills (Ainsworth, Beegle, and Koda, 2002) consider orphans as biological orphans with an increase in the spread of HIV /AIDS, the number of orphans and other helpless children has also had been increasing drastically. In Tanzania, the Ministry of Education and Training policy 2014 as revised in 2023 and National Strategy on Inclusive Education 2009 – 2017 identified two goals which based on most vulnerable children, these goals are: Expanding and Improving Comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Education, especially for the Most Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Children. Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality in order to meet the goals the government have taken several intervention and support as discussed below;

As observed from foreign counties Tanzania also has eliminated school fees in order to increase attendance of children attending primary education. But the extra costs of uniforms, supplies and special assessments still be substantial (Human Rights Watch, 2004). Some questions to ask orphan do without uniforms to ease up the stress of meeting school requirement? Are such uniforms a necessity or should government subsidize schools to make it easier for more orphan to attend school? What alternatives should exist to make it easier for orphan dropping out from schools to overcome the barrier?

According to Boyle (2002) the cost of education, both monetary and nonmonetary, continues to be a burden on households and a barrier to education. They argue that the barriers of uniforms as well as indirect costs in accessing education makes households opt not to send their children to school; as a result orphans are the most unlikely to be schooled. Further, it has been that orphaned children find it hard to attend school due to the extra costs of school uniforms, books and stationery, and because they are often left responsible for earning money or caring for younger siblings in some instances.

As observed from foreign reviews that school feeding program is among of support mechanism which exemplified from various countries, the government of Tanzania has also continued to expand the School Feeding Programme in order to promote attendance and retention of pupils in schools particularly vulnerable children. The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP) expanded the School Feeding Project from 13 Councils of Bahi, Longido, Iramba, Manyoni, Kondoa, Chamwino, Karatu, Simanjiro, Kiteto, Ngorongoro, Mpwapwa, Singida (R) and Monduli (2000) to 16 Councils in 2011/12 to include Kishapu, Shinyanga and Meatu in the list. The feeding programme has so far reached 600,000 pupils in 1,000 schools in 16 drought-prone and pastoralist Councils located in 5 regions namely Singida, Dodoma, Manyara, and Arusha (Tanzania Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2013).

Addition to that, the Tanzania government's plan is to ensure that, school meals are provided to all schools throughout the school calendar. In that regard, the government has continued to sensitize parents and other stakeholders to contribute resources including grain to ensure sustainable provision of meals to children at school to promote attendance and retention. Nationally, until August 2010, out of a total of 16,331 schools, 5, 424 (34.2%) were providing school meals. Out of these 1,167 were supported by WFP (BEST, 2012).

Despite various efforts made by government in order to make easy access to primary education, orphan often face different challenges as the result lead to adoption of some strategies in access to primary education. This makes support mechanisms to be adopted by to help orphans to achieve their academic endeavors not to have been explored enough in Tanzania, a thing that this study contributes.

### 3. STUDY METHODOLOGY

#### Study Approach

This study employed a mixed research approach. On qualitative side of the study, a case study design was applied. Creswell (2009) informs that case study allows the enquirer to generate knowledge basing primarily on multiple meanings of individuals' experiences, which are socially and historically constructed for developing a theory or pattern. On the side of quantitative side of the study, a descriptive survey design was applied. Davies, (2007) states that, descriptive survey involves a small inclusive and

## Support Mechanisms for Orphans' Academic Achievement in Tanzania

intensive study of individuals whereby an investigator employs his/her skills and methods so as to allow systematic gathering of enough information about a phenomenon to permit one's understanding on how it functions as a unit of society.

### Location of the study and Sample Selection

This study was conducted in Tanzania mainland and specifically in Dodoma district. According to the Ministry of Education and Vocation Training (2011), Dodoma is the district with the highest number of orphan pupils in Tanzania, and most of these children are used by elders for begging and carrying people's luggage at the market places. Therefore, selection of Dodoma as a study area was based on the fact that it has a high number of orphans (MOEVT, 2011) Therefore, living on poor economic status and lager number of dependent in family. But also the study area is vested with lager number of baggers who work with children during begging which helped to come up with clear picture on how orphans cope with different challenges in adjusting maximally to primary education. The study involved four primary schools in Dodoma district which are Nzuguni Primary School, Mpunguzi Primary School, Mkonze Primary School, and Chamwino Primary School. In primary schools, the study selected head teachers, teachers and pupils. It also involved the collection of data from the city council of Dodoma department of education where the education officer was involved. The distribution of the sample is as indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1: Sample Size and Respondents Categories**

<b>Educational Institution</b>	<b>Head Teachers</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Orphan pupils</b>	<b>Education Officer</b>	<b>Total</b>
Department of Education Dodoma City Council				01	1
Nzuguni Primary School	01	8	24		33
Mpunguzi Primary School	01	8	24		33
Mkonze Primary School	01	8	24		33
Chamwino Primary School	01	8	24		33
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>04</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>133</b>

**Source:** Author (2024)

As presented in Table 1 the sample size used in this study was 133 respondents in order to obtain information where by 96 orphans were pupils from 4 schools, because they were the primary source of information regarding the coping strategies. Further, 1 education officer from Dodoma Municipal Council, 32 teachers from 4 schools (2 urban, 2 rural) and 4 head teachers from respective primary schools were involved for objectivity of the study results. Orphan pupils were involved in the study because they were the main informants of the study. They are the ones living the situation and therefore were in the best position to explain their lived experiences. A total number of 96 orphanage pupils from different classes from Nzuguni, Mpunguzi, Mkonze and Chamwino primary schools participated in the study respecting gender sensitivity in selecting the category of respondents for the purpose of collecting adequate information. The selected orphanage pupils were expected to give information about the educational coping strategies adopted by them in enhancing their academic achievements.

Teachers were involved because of their roles within the schools. Apart from conducting the session, they also guide the pupils and entitled as academic advisors within the school. A total number of 32 teachers with different educational levels and experiences working with pupils in schools were involved. Head teachers were also selected to be among the key informants because of their position and responsibilities within the schools. The total number of 4 head teachers participated because they

## Support Mechanisms for Orphans' Academic Achievement in Tanzania

had fundamental responsibilities for ensuring pupils wellbeing. Therefore, according to their roles and position they were expected to provide good information regarding educational coping strategies adopted by orphan pupils. Further, the District Education Officer (DEO) was also selected to participate in this study because of their position and responsibilities of supervising and guiding the schools and providing well-being of pupils in schools hence they have statistics regarding orphans pupils and support offered by the government. So in this case they were in the position to provide required information on the educational coping strategies adopted by orphan's pupils. The selected respondents in this category were expected to share their experience on the education coping strategies adopted by orphans in enhancing their academic achievements.

### Data collection and Analysis

Data were collected through survey questionnaires from pupils and teachers category. Again, interviews was used to collect data from head teachers and city education officer. Moreover, documentary review was used to collect data from secondary materials. The thematic approach and descriptive approach was used in analyzing qualitative and quantitative data respectively. The thematic approach involved the data transcription, data cleaning, and developing codes, developing themes and sub-themes and writing up a report. Codes developed include "orphans" "mechanism" "academic" and "achievement" The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive approach. Frequencies and percentage were calculated through Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS) software (version 20). Frequency distribution tables were used to describe and present the findings of the data collected.

## 4. RESULTS

Analysis of collected data through interviews, questionnaire and documentary review revealed that there is a need of collaborative efforts between the government, NGOs and the community in order to help orphans access their education needs. This could be evidenced through the teachers and pupil's assertion on the role of government, NGOs as well as the community as presented in Table 2 and Table 3.

### Results from Pupils

The interview with pupils revealed several support mechanism that they thought if done could help orphans enhance their academic achievements very well. Pupil's suggestions were categorized into three main groups; support from the government support from NGOs and support from the community as presented in table 2.

**Table 2: Interview on Support Mechanism with Pupils**

Major Category	Sub-category	Freq	%
Government Support	Buying school materials	62	64.5
	Provision of food at school	51	53.1
NGOs	Provision of school materials	43	44.7
	Provision of home needs	59	61.4
Community Support	Taking care of young orphans	38	39.5
	Counseling	38	39.5
	Helping with home needs	43	44.7

Source: Field work

### Government Support

Most of the interviewed orphans, (64.5%) were of the view that the government should take responsibility of helping them in accessing different school materials such as exercise books, school uniforms, pens and other materials such as school bag and shoes. Not only that but also pupils revealed that provision of food at school would help them focus on studies at school rather than focusing on many things at once. Orphans were of the view that if the government will reduce the burden they have on school materials and provision of food it will be easy for them to achieve their academic goals because lack of school related materials was the challenge rated highly by them.

One of the interviewed orphans had this to say:

## Support Mechanisms for Orphans' Academic Achievement in Tanzania

*The government should buy school uniforms and exercise books for us so that we may be like our fellow students. We feel inferior because we find ourselves different from our fellows (Interview with a female pupil from school D)*

The expression by the pupil reveals that orphans are of the views that if the government will help them with school materials are likely to learn like their fellow pupils. This means that they will be able to do the exercise given by teachers, submit the work done and receive feedback from teachers and therefore, there won't be any difference among them.

### Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) Support

The interview with pupils revealed that, NGOs intervention is important for assisting orphan pupils access their education needs. Pupils argued that as advocates, NGOs should act as intermediaries between children and other social systems with a view to protecting the rights of the children. Pupils further argued that the support orphans receive from their neighbours does not sustain them for a long time therefore they live without help from neighbors and relatives most of the time. This is where NGOs are needed to bridge the gap by providing the support related to school materials as well as home requirements. Furthermore, pupils reported that NGOs should support them by staying with them, involving them in income-generating projects; involving them in a peer education support group; offering psychosocial support services; and material support, to mention but a few. For example, one orphan pupil from school

C stated that:

*"NGOs should continue visiting and helping my grandmother with different needs such as food in order that we may be able to go to school because sometimes we don't go to school in order that we may find food for our own as well as our grandmother" (Interview with a female Orphan Pupils from school C).*

The excerpts indicate that these children, although they are heading the households on their own and taking care of their grandparents, still they needed outside support especially from NGOs.

### Community Support

Most of the pupils (56%) perceived that people in their communities (especially neighbours and friends) had sympathy for the orphaned children. Pupils reported that they have often been supported with food and other educational material such as exercise books by neighbours and friends. This indicates that the community's response to the needs of orphaned children is not only promising but also reflects a level of acceptance of the children after the death of their parents. However, pupils reported that not all community members are ready to support them and therefore argued that it is important the society be educated on the importance of helping orphans in whatever way they can afford in order to help them reach their educational destination. The following excerpts by pupils indicate the desire to have support in the form of community or family intervention:

*"I want one of my relatives to come stay with us especially when grandmother is too weak or sick so that we go on with studies because we can't go to school while our grandmother is sick at home. (Interview with female Orphan Pupils from school B).*

The above quotation indicates that orphan children wish to have support from their extended families. Some also wish that their family members would come to their aid in cases when the grandmother is terminally ill. This will help them get an opportunity to finish their studies otherwise they will become a dream which will never be fulfilled.

Furthermore, orphan pupils reported to have a good relationship with their neighbours. Some reported that they did not go to neighbours for material support while others reported to depend on their neighbours when they need help. The findings revealed that some neighbours are of assistance to orphan children as they are helping them with material and emotional support and play the role of the extended families that are unavailable while others not. The following interview lines with pupils indicate different forms of children's relationship with their neighbours:

*It is good. Neighbours also help me with food  
It is good because they are the ones who always assist us  
My relationship with our neighbors is good even though they are busy with their lives (Interview with a male Orphan Pupil from school C).*

Another orphan pupil revealed that:

*We don't go to them asking for food or anything because they will gossip us around. We just keep our problems to ourselves despite that we suffer a lot and we feel talking to them (Interview with female Orphan Pupil from school D).*

## Support Mechanisms for Orphans' Academic Achievement in Tanzania

From the pupils' expressions it can be noted that, although the relationships between orphans and neighbours are good, some orphan pupils indicated that they do not go to their neighbours and ask for help for fear of being gossiped about or for reasons of pride. Some of the children indicated that their neighbours assist them with food, although not on a daily basis. The neighbours can be viewed as a support mechanism to the children since their extended families are not available to play this role. Therefore, neighbours should be advocated on the importance of helping the orphans around them. Additionally, the findings revealed through interview from pupils revealed that counseling is very necessary for helping orphan children cope with their daily life.

This was evidenced by the orphan pupils who partook in this study, they were not happy with the situation they find themselves in and the researcher saw a need to offer them counseling, particularly to those who were very emotional during the research interviews. Some of the research questions opened up old wounds and the participants became emotional. Through counselling, orphans can be given an opportunity to explore and discover ways of living more fully, despite their challenges, as counselling assists them with addressing and solving these challenges and making an informed decision. Below extracts indicated the need for counseling for these orphans:

*"Sometimes our neighbour only provides us with food and encourages us not to feel bad. He tells us that if we study hard we will live good life. We are happy today you are also encouraging us to study hard".  
(Interview with male orphan Pupil from school C).*

Another orphan pupil said that:

*There are times I feel so down and I don't see my future. I ask myself why my parents died. This happens very much especially when I don't have food to eat home, lacking school materials or the time when I feel segregated by people around me. But I thank my church pastor provides me with advice at church and at home at times" (Interview with female Orphan Pupils from school D).*

From the contentions by pupils, it can be argued that, counseling as a coping tool can help orphans to manage their unresolved emotional problems more effectively and they may develop unused or underused opportunities to cope more effectively with psychological challenges that may affect their academic achievement. This is because it seems that some of the orphans need to be instilled hope on the way to handle their circumstances.

### Results from Head teachers and DEO

Likewise the data collected through interview from head teachers as well as DEO showed the necessity of the Government, NGOs as well as the community to take part collaboratively in enhancing their academic achievement. All head teachers 4 (100%) reported that there is the need for the government to allocate more fund to orphans different from the fund allocated to no-orphans at school. They argued that if the government will allocate more budgets for orphans all schools can be ordered to provide school materials per term to each registered orphan at school. Among the mentioned materials that heads of schools mentioned involved exercise books and school uniforms to be provided per each term. Further head teachers said that this could reduce the risk of orphans' engagement in petty businesses which make them not attending school effectively. One of the head teachers reported that:

*The capitation grant offered to a school is not enough to cater the needs of schools and orphans at the same time. This is because all of them receive the same share; therefore, it becomes difficult to get extra money to buy different materials to support them unless you use your own money (Interview with a female head teacher from school C)*

With this contention it can be argued that all teachers and pupils see the necessity of the government to provide support to orphan pupils. While pupils see that the government should buy for them directly, heads of schools view that each school should register the number of orphans present at school and the government should allocate budgets to school living with those orphans in order to buy school learning materials according to their needs.

On the other hand, the DEO also was of the view that different NGOs can help in supporting the needs by orphans in order that they may achieve their primary education. The DEO argued that the support to be provided may be in form of material support, such as buying school uniforms and stationery, providing food parcels and they can also advocate for exemption of school fees and being declared indigent by the municipality. He also argued that some organizations are running aftercare centres for orphans and vulnerable children, where these children are provided with meals, psychosocial support services and school work assistance while their elder siblings concentrate on their own school work. Therefore, if NGOs can be strengthened it is possible to help minimize the burden of orphans' access to school needs.

Furthermore, the findings revealed through interview from head teachers also revealed that counseling is very necessary for helping orphan children cope with their daily life. Head teachers argued that orphans at school are facing the challenges of



## Support Mechanisms for Orphans' Academic Achievement in Tanzania

stigmatization, loneliness and inferiority. Further they are psychologically affected by the difficult situation they are living in. Therefore, they require counseling in order to help them develop self-knowledge, emotional acceptance, emotional growth and personal resources. Furthermore, the interview with head teachers revealed that a family is the first point of provision for socialization which is very important for growing children. Therefore, those remaining with orphans in families should make sure that they help them to develop good socialization and engage in socially acceptable behaviors and activities that may not result them to a worse situation.

The study findings from questionnaire to teachers also revealed similar findings as those from the interview from pupils and head teachers through pointing out that different groups including the government, school and the community should provide different support to help orphans in achieving their academic needs as presented in Table 3

**Table 3: Suggested Support mechanism by Teachers**

Main Category	Sub Category	Freq	%
Government	Buying school materials	29	90.6
	Educating the society	24	75
	Protection against segregation	13	40.6
	Building hostel	24	75
School	Provision of food	26	81.2
	Provision of school materials	28	87.5
	Showing respect	20	62.5
	Provision of counseling	22	68.8
Community	Taking care of orphans	26	81.2
	Being positive to orphans	12	37.5

**Source:** Field work

Presented in Table 3, the study findings revealed that provision of school materials (90.6%) and (87.5%) respectively whether at school or by the government was considered a major support mechanism by teachers for helping orphans access their education needs. Not only that but also the provision of food at school received a great attention (81.2%) compared to others. On the other hand being positive to orphans was the least support mechanism that was identified by teachers in helping orphans access their primary education. This implies that if the government plays a key role in providing the school learning materials as well as feeding programme to school there is a high possibility that orphans challenges in enhancing their academic achievements may be sustained.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The current study findings revealed several support mechanism that can be sufficient in helping orphans access their primary education very well as the government playing the central role of making sure that orphan children access their necessary school needs. Social work intervention, counseling, family and community support, provision of food at school and good relationship with neighbours were also reported as efficient support mechanisms that can be adopted in order to help orphan pupils have their school needs as required.

The joint efforts by the government, school and the community in general is essential in making sure that orphan pupils undertake their primary education efficiently. The findings suggest that without joint effort among different stakeholders it will be difficult for only one institution (government) to accommodate the needs of the orphans. Therefore, foster parents must play their parts, as well the school but on top the government. The findings revealed that the government should provide a separate budget for orphans to schools in order that they may buy necessary requirements for them. Furthermore, community members should provide assistance positively to orphans rather than negatively.

Adato, Coady, and Ruel, (2000) supports the findings by arguing that one of the most common supportive mechanisms used by government to overcome or reduce challenges facing orphanage children from poor family in accessing primary education is to

## **Support Mechanisms for Orphans' Academic Achievement in Tanzania**

reduce or eliminate some of school costs. The reduction interventions help orphanage children from poor family to cover the costs of books, stationery, and school clothing (uniform and shoes).

As revealed in the current study Adato, Coady, and Ruel, (2000) further argued that the best means is to send directly the needed materials or requesting the schools to buy materials for orphans and children from poor family, or to send direct to school. Likewise, Subbarao, Mattimore, and Plangemann, (2001) research findings are in same line with the current study findings revealing that In Latin American countries, some local authorities provide school subsidies and fund for the education of children from poor family and orphans.

School feeding program is another supportive mechanism which was revealed by the current study findings as the mechanism that can help orphans in accessing their studies very well. When pupils are given food home they study well without thinking of lack of food at home which affect their attention in class and therefore, affecting their learning. Mwoma and Pillay, (2015) supports the study findings arguing that In situations where children have food scarcity and walk for long distances to school and food is not provided, the effect on cognition, short-term memory, verbal fluency, and ability to concentrate is negative. Therefore, the provision of food is an efficient mechanism. Furthermore, Janke, (2001) was of the view that the provision of food at school serves the purpose of reducing the dropout rates among orphans, but also as means to increase enrolment and attendance to orphans as means to access or adjust primary education.

For instance Miller, (2003) also reported that school feeding programs is notified as strategy used as support mechanism provided to orphans in several countries including Ethiopia Côte D'Ivoire and the northern regions of Ghana. It is reported that the program has a significant impact to primary education on enrolment, dropouts, and performance specifically to orphans. The programs have encouraged parents to send their children to school despite of poverty existence, and they may also result in improving health and performance at school to orphans (Mitchell, Irvine, 2008). These suggest that if this strategy is adopted in Tanzania can therefore help to serve the challenges facing orphans.

Additionally, participants who partook in this study reported that they were not happy with the situation they find themselves. They are very emotional, lonely, segregated and feeling inferior. Therefore, counseling is necessary in order to help them come into normality. Van Dyk, (2008) also revealed that through counselling, AIDS-orphans heading households are given an opportunity to explore and discover ways of living more fully, despite their challenges, as counselling assists them with addressing and solving these challenges and making an informed decision regarding their everyday encounters. Therefore, counselling as a coping tool, helped AIDSorphans to manage their unresolved emotional problems more effectively and they may develop unused or underused opportunities to cope more effectively.

Family support, community support as well as neighbours help were other support mechanisms that most of the participants agreed as the sufficient mechanisms that can help orphan pupils to enhance their academic achievements. People in communities (especially neighbours and friends) are to be sympathetic for the orphaned children. This should involve supporting them with food and other educational material such as exercise books. Such findings were also revealed by the study conducted by Woldeyohannes, (2010) who argued that the community's response to the needs of orphaned children is very important since it helps the level of acceptance of the children after the death of their parents.

Further the study findings by Schor (2003) support the family, community and neighbours as the sufficient means reporting that the family and community around are the most central and enduring influence in the lives of children. Schor (2003) emphasizes that although schools provide formal education, families teach children how to become socially acceptable adults. The family is the first unit in society to teach children the difference between right and wrong. Due to the HIV and AIDS pandemic, family unity is disrupted and consequently so is the socialization process of the child (Dalen, 2009). As a result, children may develop behavior which is unwanted or different from what is expected in a particular society. Therefore, the family and the community around should ensure that they create good conditions for orphans access to education easily. In reference to the study findings as well as the findings from different literature it can be argued that most for effective schooling of orphans different agencies must work collaboratively. These include the government, different NGOs, school and community at large. Each group should play its active role on making sure that orphans get the required school materials as well as home needs in order that they should focus only in academics.

## **6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Academic achievements for orphans is still critical in most of developing countries and Tanzania specifically. This study suggests that orphans should receive support from government, civil society organizations (CSOs) and community. Although these categories have shown efforts towards improving the situation, more efforts are required to solve the problem. This study suggests that the government should continue educating the society on significance of education to orphans, building schools, hostels and counseling sessions at schools. This will attract pupils to join schools. Again, CSOs should continue raising awareness to community

## Support Mechanisms for Orphans' Academic Achievement in Tanzania

members, providing necessary financial support and help to orphans so that they can be able to attend schools. Moreover, community support such as taking care of orphans and encouraging them is highly recommended. To realize that, the study recommend that, the government should continue setting enough budget for orphans programs and increase enrollment. Again, community at large should work together to help orphans achieve their academic needs in primary education including foster parents, neighbours and all individuals should play parenting role on helping orphans access different needs being school materials or home needs in order to help them success very well with their primary education. Moreover, CSOs have to set budget and establish programs that will help orphans have equal access to education as non-orphans children.

### REFERENCES

- 1) Adato, M., D. Coady, and M. Ruel. (2000), "An Operations Evaluation of Progesa from the Perspective of Beneficiaries, *Promotoras*, School Directors, and Health Staff". Final Report, International Food Policy Research Institute. Washington D.C.: International Food Policy Research Institute, 10 August.
- 2) Adekola, E. K. (2012), Targeting orphaned and vulnerable adolescents with services: Experience with adopting a multisectoral approach in Nigeria.
- 3) Ainsworth, M., K. Beegle, and G. Koda. (2002), "The Impact of Adult Mortality on Primary School Enrolment in Northwestern Tanzania." Africa Region Human Development, Working Paper Series. Washington, D.C. World Bank. (Also available at <http://www.coregroup.org/resources/schooling.pdf>).
- 4) Baxen, J., Nsubuga, Y. & Botha, L. J. (2014), A capabilities perspective on education quality: Implications for foundation phase teacher education program design. *Perspectives in Education*, 32(4), 93-105. <http://www.perspectivesineducation.com/ViewPublication.aspx?PublicationID=26>
- 5) Boyle, J. A. (2002). Using the human genome: A case study in education. *Bio chemistry and molecular biology*, 30(20), 368-371. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bmb.2002.494030060134>
- 6) Creswell, J.W. (2009), *Research Design; Qualitative and Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. London: Sage.
- 7) Davies, M. B (2007), *Doing a Successful Research Project: Using a qualitative or quantitative method*. London: Palgrave publishers.
- 8) Fleming, K. E. (2015), *Improving access to education for orphans or vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS*. Paper commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015, Education for All 2000-2015: achievements and challenges. UNESCO [http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002324/232423\\_e.pdf](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002324/232423_e.pdf)
- 9) Hepburn, A. 2001. "Primary Education in Eastern and Southern Africa: Increasing Access for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in AIDS-Affected Areas." Durham, N.C.: Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy, Duke University, This report was prepared for a thesis project as a Master's candidate in the Terry Stanford Institute of Public Policy, Duke University. April. As of 20 June 2002, available at [http://www.usaid.gov/pop\\_health/dcofwvf/reports/hepburn.html](http://www.usaid.gov/pop_health/dcofwvf/reports/hepburn.html).
- 10) Human Rights Watch. (2004). World Report 2004. <https://www.hrw.org/legacy/wr2k4/download.htm>
- 11) Kadzamira, E.C., Chibwana, M.P., Chatsika, M., and Khozi, J.L. (1999), "*Gender and Primary Schooling in Malawi*". Report sponsored by the Forum for African Women Educationalist, Ministry of Education, Malawi, and Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Sussex, U.K.
- 12) Ladan, M. T. (2006), *Situation analysis and assessment of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC)*. Routledge, London.
- 13) Mahanza, P., Chanila, D., Minga, R., Kaijage, T. & Mashalla, Y. (2022). Exploring Challenges Faced by Orphans in Primary Schools in Ludewa District: a Case of Ludewa Ward. *Global Scientific Journals*, 10(3), 1551-1567.
- 14) Miles, S., & Singal, N. (2010). The Education for All and inclusive education debate: conflict, contradiction or opportunity? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 14(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110802265125>
- 15) Ntozi, J.P.M., F.E. Ahimbisibwe, J.O. Odwe, et al. (1999), "Orphan Care: The Role of the Extended Family in Northern Uganda." *The Continuing African HIV/AIDS Epidemic*, 225–236.
- 16) Okumu, I. M., Nakajjo, A. and Isoke, D. (2012), Socio-Economic Determinants of Primary School Dropout: The Logistic Model Analysis. [<http://mpr.ub.unimuenchen.de/7851/MPRA>] site visited on 9/1/2018
- 17) Oleke C. (2007), "When the obvious brother is not there": Political and cultural contexts of the orphan challenge in northern Uganda. *Social Science & Medicine*. 61(12):2628–2638.
- 18) Palmer, R. T., and Maramba, D. C. (2011), African American male achievement: Using a tenet of critical theory to explain the African American male achievement disparity. *Education*
- 19) Pillay, J. (2014), Advancement of children's rights in Africa: A social justice framework for school psychologists. *School Psychology International*, 35(3):225-240. doi: 10.1177/0143034313515990

## Support Mechanisms for Orphans' Academic Achievement in Tanzania

- 20) Reupert AE, J Maybery D, Kowalenko NM. (2013). Children whose parents have a mental illness: prevalence, need and treatment. *Med J Aust.* Aug 5(199) (3 Suppl):S7-9. doi: 10.5694/mja11.11200. PMID: 25369850.
- 21) Subbarao, K., Mattimore, A. & Plangemann, K. (2001). Social Protection of Africa's Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children. Africa Region Human Development Working Paper Series.
- 22) Sumra, S., and Rajani, R. (2006), *Secondary education in Tanzania: Key policy challenges* (Hakielimu working paper no. 4). Retrieved from [http://hakielimu.org/publication\\_details.php?pub=34](http://hakielimu.org/publication_details.php?pub=34)
- 23) Tumushabe, J., Barasa, C.A., Muhanguzi, C.A., and Otim-Nape, J.F..(1999), "*Gender and Primary Schooling in Uganda*". Report sponsored by the Forum for African Women Educationalist. Ministry of Education, Uganda, and Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Sussex, U.K.
- 24) UNESCO. (1989). Convention on the right of the child
- 25) UNESCO. (2010). Education for all Global Monitoring Report 2010: Educational Marginalization in Northern Kenya. Nairobi, Kenya.
- 26) UNICEF (2002). The State of the World's Children 2002 *Turning commitments into actions that improve the lives of children and families.* <https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-worlds-children-2002>
- 27) UNICEF. (1999), *Girls, HIV/AIDS and education.* Retrieved from *Urban Society*, 43(4), 431-450. doi:10.1177/0013124510380715 [www.unicef.org/publications/index\\_25047.html](http://www.unicef.org/publications/index_25047.html)
- 28) UNICEF. (2016). Annual Report. New York, United States of America.
- 29) URT (2016), "*Education*". Retrieved from <http://www.tanzania.go.tz/education.html>
- 30) USAID (United States Agency for International Development) (2009), "USAID Project Profiles: Children Affected by HIV/AIDS." Report produced by the Synergy Project. Washington, D.C.
- 31) USAID. (2009). Orphans and Vulnerable Children Comprehensive Action Research (OVC-CARE) Task Order Year 2 Annual Report. October 1st 2009 to September 30th 2010
- 32) Williamson, Alexis and Witzel, Bradley Steven (2016). Instilling Resilience in Children of Poverty. *The Winthrop McNair Research Bulletin*: 2(13). Available at: <https://digitalcommons.winthrop.edu/wmrb/vol2/iss1/13>
- 33) World Bank (2002). Annual report: Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/379051468163155729/Main-report>
- 34) Yahya, C. (2012), Challenges and complexity in human rights education, *Education Inquiry*, 4:1, 189-210, DOI: 10.3402/edui.v4i1.22068
- 35) Young, J. L. (2016). G. Stanley Hall, Child Study, and the American Public. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 177(6), 195–208. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221325.2016.1240000>



There is an Open Access article, distributed under the term of the Creative Commons Attribution – Non Commercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0) (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits remixing, adapting and building upon the work for non-commercial use, provided the original work is properly cited.