

STAKEHOLDERS' INVOLVEMENT AND ORPHANS' COMFORTABILITY WITH RESIDENTIAL PLACEMENT OPTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Nigerian orphans face a range of challenges, including finding a suitable place to live, having to choose who to live with and this choice is influenced by various factors. This study determined the proportion of orphans' resident in orphanages and family settings in selected states in Nigeria. It also assessed stakeholder's input into placement option decision for orphans. The study examined orphans' comfortability with residential placement and living with caregivers. The issues related to non-comfortability of orphans with residential placement were also investigated. The study employed the descriptive survey research design. The population for the study comprised all orphans in formal care (orphanages) and informal care (family settings) in Nigeria. A multistage sample procedure was employed. Five states were selected purposively in Nigeria. Indices such as poverty, high rates of insurgencies and HIV/AIDs were used in states' selection. A sample of 1,475 in orphanages and 2,418 in family settings were selected for the study making a total of 3,893 orphans. Data was from a larger study on Needs and Vulnerability of Orphans in Orphanages and family settings in Nigeria. Questionnaire for Needs and Vulnerability of Orphans in Orphanages and Family settings in Nigeria was used to elicit information from the respondents. Data collected were analyzed using frequency distribution and percentages. The results showed that more orphans live in family settings (2,418) and orphans residing in both orphanages (30.5%) and family settings (44.2%) are staying there based on the decisions of relatives. As perceived by the orphans, (88.5%) in orphanages and (71.1%) in family settings are comfortable where they are living and (77.6%) in orphanages and (72.3%) in the family settings perceived that they are comfortable living with their caregivers. Finally, it was found out that most prominent of the issues related to the residential placement of orphans in the family settings were poor living conditions (49.7%) and access to resources (48.2%), while orphans in orphanages felt challenged with strict caregivers (46.2%) and lack of access to recreational facilities (16.2%). Based on the findings, it was suggested that families within the communities and stakeholders should support family members who are saddled with the responsibility of caring for orphans. It was also recommended that staffing patterns in orphanages should be restructured to enhance caregivers' capacity to provide children with stable, warm, and consistent relationships.

Keywords

Orphans, orphanages, family settings, stakeholders, residential placements

Introduction

Orphans face enormous challenges and are considered vulnerable as a result of absence of parental care and protection. Finding a suitable and befitting place to live and whom to live with is a major challenge for some orphans. As at 2015, there was an estimate of 140 million orphans globally and it is expected that the figure would have increased. According to Bonwit (2019), 61 million orphans lived in Asia, 52 million in Africa, 7.3 million in Eastern Europe and Central Asia and 10 million in Latin America as at 2015. This attest to the fact that Asia and Africa hold the world's largest population of orphaned children and the majority of these orphans live in developing countries of which Nigeria is one.

Orphans are facing challenges of whom to stay with and most importantly where to live. The loss of either of the parents or both is grievous for orphans when it comes to shelter, health outcomes, nutrition, abuse, stigmatization, school enrollment, attendance and likely drop out from school (Tagurum et al., 2015). Having a shelter or housing is an important protection against threatening elements like violence, abuse, disturbances, and noise. In the event of the death of a father or mother or both parents, a major decision to be taken is where the child will live or whom the child will live with. The traditional African system allows the family members to take up the care of such orphans. In situations where parents do not maintain contact with their relatives, the children after the death of their parents may end up living in orphanages or on the street. Irrespective of where a child lives, every child requires basic needs to develop and grow into a healthy and responsible adult (UNICEF, 2016).

Shelter is an integral element of sustainable development goals (SDGs). The specific goals affected by it include Goal 1(no poverty), Goal 3 (good health and well-being), Goal 5 (gender equality), Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation), Goal 11 (sustainable cities and communities), and Goal 13 (climate) (Habitat, 2021). It is common knowledge that children, especially orphans, may not have a say in the choice of where to live and whom to live with. Akram et al. (2015) reported that if orphans do not have relatives for support, then orphanages will be the best place to provide protection, healthcare, food, education, and accommodation. Nnama-Okechuwku & Okoye (2019) noted that raising orphans in family settings might be better for a child's overall development, as orphanages being institutional care, have their negative effect. To them, children are better raised in the family household with relatives than in orphanages. Meanwhile, Kurfi (2010) believes that children who live in households might be staying with ill parents, ill caregivers, or the elderly who may not be of good health to take appropriate care. Most orphans in family settings may not have basic needs of food and clothing, especially if they are living with poor relatives. Some relatives might also discriminate between the orphans and their children when providing care. Most times orphans do not have a choice on where to live. Based on the above submission, there is the need to empirically establish the dynamics of residential placements of orphans in Nigeria. The immediate and long-term damage caused by loss of parents, family separation, and unsuitable alternative care, particularly in orphanages and family settings are very important to orphans' wellbeing hence this study.

The following objectives were raised to address the concerns of the study:

1. To determine the proportion of orphans resident in orphanages and family settings in the selected states;
2. To find out stakeholders' input into placement option decision of orphans,
3. To determine orphans' comfortability with residential placement and living with caregiver;
4. To identify challenges and issues of comfortability raised by orphans on residential placements.

Research questions

1. What are the proportions of orphans resident in orphanages and family settings in selected states in Nigeria?
2. What are the stakeholders' input into the placement option decision of orphans?
3. How comfortable are orphans living in orphanages and family settings in selected states in Nigeria?
4. How comfortable are orphans living with their caregivers?
5. What are the challenges faced by orphans, based on residential placements?

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. The population for the study comprised all orphans in formal (orphanages) and informal care (family settings) in Nigeria. A multistage sampling procedure was employed for sample selection. At the first stage, five states were selected purposively using national metrics such as poverty rates, HIV/AIDs prevalence, and insurgencies. The states include Lagos, Osun, Akwa Ibom, Gombe, and Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Secondly, the Local Government Areas (LGA) that have orphanages were purposively chosen. Orphans between the ages of 10-17 years and who agreed to participate in the study were involved. The target sample size of 1,475 in orphanages and 2,418 in family settings who met the criteria for inclusion participated in the study. The instruments used for the study are 'Questionnaire for Needs and Vulnerability of Orphans in Orphanages in Nigeria' and 'Questionnaire for Needs and Vulnerability of Orphans in Family settings in Nigeria'. The validity of the instruments was determined using expert judgment from psychology and test and measurement. The instruments were pilot tested in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, which was not part of the selected states for the study. After the validation of instruments, some of the items were restructured and modified. Ethical approval was sought to observe the protocol required for a national survey from the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the Institute of Public Health (IPH), Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. For data collection, research assistants were trained and commissioned. During the fieldwork, the list of orphanages in each state was collected from the Ministry of Women Affairs. The instruments for the study were administered to the orphans in orphanages and family settings in Lagos, Osun, Akwa Ibom, Gombe, and Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The respondents were informed and assured of the confidentiality of the information that would be given in the questionnaire. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages.

Results

The socio-demographic characteristics

Research question one: What proportion of orphans are resident in orphanages and family settings in selected states in Nigeria? To answer this question, items were subjected to descriptive analysis using frequency count and percentages. The result is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Proportion of Orphans resident in orphanages and family settings

S/N	State	Orphanages	Proportion	Family settings	Proportion	Total
1	Abuja	393	393/755=0.52	362	362/755=0.48	755
2	Lagos	326	326/704=0.46	378	378/704=0.54	704
3	Osun	149	149/731=0.20	582	582/731=0.80	731
4	Akwa-Ibom	471	471/985=0.48	514	514/985=0.52	985

5	Gombe	136	136/718=0.19	582	582/718=0.81	718
	Total	1475	1475/3893=0.38	2418	2418/3893=0.62	3893

From the above table, the proportion of orphans' resident in orphanages and family settings are 38% and 62% respectively. Specifically, in Abuja (FCT), the proportion of orphans resident in orphanages and family settings are 52% and 48% respectively, while in Lagos, the proportion of orphans resident in orphanages and family settings are 46% and 54% respectively. Furthermore, the proportion of orphans resident in orphanages and family settings in Osun state are 20% and 80% respectively, while the proportion of orphans resident in orphanages and family settings in Akwa-Ibom state are 48% and 52% respectively. Finally, in Gombe state, the proportion of orphans resident in orphanages and family settings are 19% and 81% respectively.

Research question two: What are stakeholders' input into placement options in orphanages and family settings in selected states in Nigeria?

To answer this question, items were subjected to descriptive analysis using frequency count and percentages. The result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Stakeholders' input into placement options

Stakeholders	Family Settings		Orphanages	
Self	145	6	32	2.2
Mother	679	28.1	159	10.8
Father	281	11.6	90	6.1
Relatives	1069	44.2	450	30.5
NGO	35	1.4	173	11.7
FBO	48	2	135	9.2
Neighbours	15	0.6	49	3.3
Others/Don't Know	146	6	387	26.2
Total	2418	100	1492	100

The majority of the orphans in both orphanages (30.5%) and family settings (44.2%) are living where they are due to the decisions of relatives. In the family settings, 28.1% of the orphans are placed there due to their mother's decision, and 10.8% are placed at the orphanage due to their mother's decision. 11.6 % of the orphans are placed in family settings due to their father's decision, and 6.1% are placed at the orphanage due to their father's decision. 6% of the orphans are at the family settings by themselves, and at the orphanage, 2.2% reported that it was their decision to stay at the orphanage. 1.4% are placed at the family settings due to the NGO's decision, and 11.7% are placed at the orphanage by the NGOs. It was also reported that 26.2% do not know how they were placed at the orphanage, and 6% also reported that they do not know how they were placed in family settings.

Research question three: What are the orphans' perceived comfortability of living in orphanages and living in family settings? To answer this question, items were subjected to descriptive analysis using frequency count and percentages. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Orphans' perceived comfortability of living in orphanages and living in family settings

Are you comfortable living in this home?	Family setting		Orphanage	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	1720	71.1%	1306	88.5%
No	698	28.9%	169	11.5%
Do you like where you live?				
Yes	1851	76.6%	1345	91.2%
No	567	23.4%	130	8.8%

The majority of the orphans perceived that they are comfortable living in orphanages (88.5%) and living in family settings (71.1%), while 76.6% of the orphans in the family settings indicated that they like where they live and 91.2% of the orphans in the orphanages indicated that they like where they live. At the family setting, 28.9% indicated that they are not comfortable living in the family setting, while 11.5% also indicated that they are not comfortable living in the orphanage. Also, at the family setting, 23.4% reported that they do not like where they are living, while 8.8% orphans living at the orphanage indicated that they do not like where they are living.

Research question four: What is the orphans' perceived comfortability of living with their caregivers? To answer this question, the data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. Table 4 presents the results:

Table 4: Orphans' perceived comfortability of living with their caregivers

Given the options, do you want to continue living with your caregiver?	Family setting		Orphanages	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Yes	1749	72.3%	1145	77.6%
No	669	27.7%	330	22.4%
Do you think living in with a caregiver is a good idea?				
Yes	1967	81.3%	1303	88.3%
No	451	18.7%	172	11.7%

The majority of the orphans perceived that they are comfortable living with their caregivers in the orphanages (77.6%) and the family settings (72.3%), while 81.3% of the orphans in the family settings indicated they think living in with a caregiver is a good idea and 88.3% of the orphans in the orphanages indicated that they think living in with caregiver is a good idea. At the family settings, 27.7% indicated that they do not want to continue living in family settings, while 22.4% also indicated that they do not want to continue living in the orphanages. Also, at the family settings, 18.7% reported that they do not think living with a caregiver is a good idea, while 11.7% orphans living at the orphanages indicated that they do not think living with a caregiver is also a good idea.

Research question five: What challenges are being faced by orphans based on residential placement? To answer this question, the data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. Table 5 presents the results:

Table 5: Identify challenges faced by orphans based on residential placement.

S/N	Do you face any challenge?	Family settings		Orphanages	
1	Yes	825 (34.1%)		197 (13.4%)	
2	No	1593 (65.9%)		1278 (86.6%)	
S/N	Challenges faced by orphans	Family settings		Orphanages	
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)
1	Caregiver too strict	285 (34.5%)	540 (65.5%)	91 (46.2%)	106(53.8%)
2	Not caring	143 (17.3%)	682 (82.7%)	27 (13.7%)	170 (86.3%)
3	Too suspicious	90 (10.9%)	735 (89.1%)	29 (14.7%)	168 (85.3%)
4	Unconcerned	100 (12.1%)	725 (87.9%)	19 (9.6%)	178 (90.4%)
5	Poor resources	393 (48.2%)	427 (51.8%)	23 (11.7%)	174 (88.3%)
6	Poor living conditions	410 (49.7%)	415 (50.3%)	22 (11.2%)	175 (88.8%)
7	Lack of access to recreational facilities	245 (29.7%)	580 (70.3%)	32 (16.2%)	165 (83.8%)

From the above table, 34.1% in family settings and 13.4% in orphanages indicated that they are facing challenges, while 65.9% in family settings and 86.6% in orphanages indicated that they are not facing any challenge. Furthermore, on the specific challenges faced by orphans, 65.5% orphans in family settings and 53.8% indicated that their caregiver is not too strict, while 34.5% in family settings and 46.2% in orphanages reported that their caregiver is too strict. 17.3% orphans in family settings and 13.7% in orphanages indicated that their caregiver is not caring, while 82.7% in family settings and 86.3% in orphanages reported they are caring.

Poor resources were identified at the family settings (48.2%) and orphanages (11.7%) as the challenge being faced by orphans, while 51.8% orphans in family settings and 88.3% in orphanages reported they are not facing such problems. Orphans (49.7%) in family settings and 11.2% in orphanages indicated that poor living condition is one of the challenges they face, while 50.3% in family settings and 88.8% in orphanages indicated that they do not face such problems. Also, 29.7% in family settings and 16.2% in orphanages indicated that lack of access to recreational facilities was the challenge they faced, while 70.3% in family settings and 83.8% in orphanages indicated that they do not face such challenge.

Discussion

Based on the findings, the study revealed that a larger percentage of the orphans live in family settings. Many reasons may account for this, culturally, Nigerians might not buy the idea of putting children of dead relatives in orphanages. This might be due to stigmatization and superstitious belief that the dead is able to see from the spirit world how their children are being taken care of. It is also possible that the orphanages visited do not accept more children than what they can cater for. Some orphanages might have specific number of orphans that they want to admit into their homes. Some orphanages may decide not to accept children who have relatives that can cater for them. It is also possible for relatives to believe that orphanages lack emotional care, and would not want to send children there. In such cases, family members may take up the responsibilities of such orphans. The finding that larger percentage of orphans live in family settings is consistent with Ahern (2013) assertion that orphanages are not the best place for children because of cruelty like babies being tied to their crib and children with disabilities who are denied medical care and are left to die.

However the finding run contrary to the assertion of Mahyuddin et al., (1993), where they posited that orphanages are put in place to give orphans a sense of belonging in the society and make them feel the presence of a family in their lives. They noted further that orphanages are not like family settings where orphans may be exposed to hardships which the hosting family faces if they are not wealthy enough to cater for them effectively. To them orphanages have constant funding from well-wishers, NGOs, and governments and are thus able to provide protection, care, and educational services. Akram et al. (2015) buttressed the point of Mahyuddin et al. (1993), on this assertion by noting that orphans who do not have relatives to support their lives are better placed in an orphanage where they would be provided with protection, healthcare, food, education, and accommodation.

After analysing the stakeholders' input, it was discovered that orphans' placements, either into orphanages or family settings, is majorly the decisions of relatives, that is their uncles, aunties or even step parents. This is consistent with the findings of Maundeni & Malinga-Musamba (2012), who explored the roles of family members and other siblings in placement of the orphaned child. They believed that family members and other siblings play vital roles in the placement of orphans. Furthermore, it was also found out that some of the children do not know the reason for their placement into orphanage or the reason for living with the family they are living with. This may be because some of their caregivers decided not to tell the children, in order not to trigger the children's emotion negatively as this could affect their psychological wellbeing. In addition some orphans indicated that it was their mother's or father's decision to be in the family settings or orphanage homes. This indicates that if the mother is dead, the father will be the one to decide where the child will live and if it is the father that died, the mother will decide where the child will live, especially if the person that is alive could not cater for the welfare of the child. Bilson and Cox (2007) study aligns with the findings of this study. They noticed that poverty and not lack of caregivers, is often cited as the reason for placing children in orphanages. Parents and other caregivers struggling to provide for their children may feel compelled to use orphanages to address an immediate problem. They use orphanages to meet basic needs such as food, access to education, and other services for their children.

Findings for objective three showed that 1,720 of orphans in orphanages and 1,145 in family settings perceived that they are comfortable where they are living. One thousand, eight hundred and fifty-one (1,851) orphans in family settings and one thousand, three hundred and forty-five (1,345) in orphanage perceived that they like where they live. Despite the fact that these orphans are comfortable and like where they live, it was however noted that one third of the population in family settings, that is, 698 are not comfortable and do not like where they are living, and it is an issue of concern that cannot be overlooked. Six hundred and ninety-eight orphans in family settings and one hundred and sixty-nine orphans in orphanage perceived that they are not comfortable where they are living. This is an indication that orphans in orphanages are more comfortable where they are living, more than those in family settings. Family settings might not adequately cater for the needs of orphans in terms of their financial status and resources, unlike orphanage homes which are well equipped with good facilities and have resources from government, philanthropists, donors and NGOs. The finding corroborate the study of Mutiso and Mutie (2018), who found out that orphans living with family members, caregivers and guardians in the community are faced with numerous discomfort and challenges which affects their comfortability negatively. They noted that orphans are faced with poor educational opportunities, health and hygiene challenges, and poor access to quality health services, inadequate housing and poor living conditions due to the poverty level of the family members. Interventions that are aimed at preventing and reducing orphans' vulnerability will

have to reduce household poverty and increase household investments. This will go a long way in reducing the challenges faced by orphans in family settings.

Findings from objective four on the comfortability of orphans living with their caregivers, whether in family settings or orphanages, showed that 1,749 orphans in orphanages and 1,306 orphans in family settings perceived that they are comfortable living with their caregivers. Despite the fact that these orphans are comfortable living with their caregivers, it was however noted that one third of the population in family settings, that is, 451 were not comfortable living with their caregivers and it is an issue of concern that cannot be overlooked. The study further revealed the challenges faced by orphans in their residential placement. The study discovered that the major challenge reported in family settings were poor resources, poor living conditions, caregiver being too strict and lack of access to recreational facilities while the major challenges reported by orphans at the orphanages were caregivers being too strict and lack of access to recreational activities. This result could be that the family settings visited might not have enough resources and can have prejudices towards the orphans' recreation. The findings of this study are similar with the research of Zych (2006), where he noted that unprofessional attitude of the caregivers or lack of proper training could also be one of the reasons why they are strict. Christopher & Mosha (2021) also found out that orphans were faced with stigma, discrimination, bullying, physical punishment, anxiety, poor attachment, and isolation.

Conclusions and recommendations

In conclusion, the study presented evidence to demonstrate that most orphans are placed in family settings after the demise of their parents. The study also showed that relatives are instrumental in the placement of orphans either into the family settings or orphanages. This finding by implication mean that in the demise of both parents of orphans, the family members/relatives decides where the orphans will live. Furthermore, the study showed that orphanages and family settings are comfortable place of abode for majority of the orphans who participated in the study. This is an evidence that the orphans are well taken care of and are given a sense of belonging and reasons to live in homes instead of staying in the streets. The study concluded that the challenges experienced by orphans from caregivers could be as a result of lack of experience and in-adequate training of the caregivers or poverty within the family settings. .

It is therefore recommended that families caring for orphans within the communities should be strengthened financially to support orphan(s). In addition, caregivers should be provided with practical information about child care education, good nutrition, basic hygiene, immunization, and early treatment of illness so as to enhance their skills. It is also suggested that staffing patterns in orphanages should be restructured in a way that will enhance caregivers' capacity to provide children with stable, warm, and consistent relationships. Additionally, institutions should employ caregivers who are trained in psychology and have passion for children so that they can be attentive to orphans' issues. Moreover, there should be an improvement on recreational services for children, including sports and social activities, which mostly put orphans together rather than letting them be isolated. This will improve the emotional support of orphans, strengthen them and develop their social network within the community.

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