

# Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Primary Schools in Dodoma City, Tanzania: Challenges and Strategies Adopted in Enhancing their Academic Achievements

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**Abstract:** Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) are one of the most challenging problems in both developed and developing countries. The challenge of OVC is global and alarming, especially in access to education. This study investigated the challenges and strategies adopted by OVC in enhancing their academic achievements in primary schools in Dodoma City. A structured questionnaire, focus group discussion, in-depth interview, semi-structured interview, and documentary review were used to collect data. The study involved 55 OVCs from standard I to standard VII and 13 key informants from the office of the City Council (Head of Education Department, Head of Health and Social Welfare Department), Ward Executive Officers from four wards, Head Teachers from four primary schools, and leaders of orphanage centers. The data collected from respondents was analyzed using NVivo software. The findings revealed that OVC are constrained by various challenges which limit their efforts to enhance their academic achievements in primary schools, including lack of school supplies, lack of concentration among OVC in education, shortage of food and poverty, and inadequate discriminatory care. OVC opt for various strategies to cope with these hardships, including engagement in different economic activities, leaving school early, and seeking help from family members and relatives. The study recommends the relevant ministry (PO-RALG) to facilitate the availability of educational resources among OVC in order to assist them in realizing their educational goals. The government, in collaboration with CSOs, FBOs, and the community, should formulate programs that will conduct community awareness, psychosocial support, and most vulnerable household income-generating activities, as well as children's policy advocacy, education, health services, and food security support interventions. Furthermore, the government, through the Community Development and Social Welfare Department, should promote and protect OVC by creating an enabling environment for affected children and their families. The government should provide social support (such as food, school uniforms, scholarly materials, shelters, and health services) to OVC and subsidies to exempt OVC from costs such as health and mid-day school meal expenses.

**Keywords:** Orphans and vulnerable children; primary schools; academic achievement

## 1.0 Introduction

The world's population is dominated by children. There are about 1.6 billion children globally, with orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) anticipated to increase from 62% in 2012 to 70% by 2040 in most regions (UN, 2013). OVC is one of the challenging problems in both developed and developing countries (Williamson, 2000). It is estimated that there are 241,000,000 orphan children worldwide (Deters, 2010). Large and growing numbers of OVC are noted mainly in Asia, where the absolute number of orphans reached 89 million in 2006, and in sub-Saharan Africa, where the number reached 45.4 to 50 million. In 2005, more than 47 million children in Africa were orphaned as single orphans, either maternally or paternally, or as double orphans, with the number anticipated to quadruple by 2010. (Foster, 2002; Pence, 2008).

According to UNAIDS (2004), the globe is experiencing unprecedented upheavals caused by HIV/AIDS, civil wars, and natural disasters on various scales. As a result, a large number of people have died or been injured, leaving thousands of vulnerable dependents. Due to the loss of parents, illness in the family, displacement, and often unintentional neglect, children have been subject to social and economic challenges. There are 171 million orphans worldwide who are either paternal or maternal orphans (UNICEF, 2016). Furthermore, Childinfo (2011) reports that 17,900,000 orphans have lost both parents and are living in orphanages or streets, lacking various social services such as education and health services. As a result, they are vulnerable to diseases, malnutrition, and death.

On the other hand, education has been regarded as a fundamental human right and a catalyst for human development (Okumu, Nakajjo, and Isoke, 2012). Apart from making people become more civilized and well disciplined in society, education is responsible for an individual, society, or nation changing in terms of social revolution, economic, political, and technical (Yahya, 2012). Education shapes people's way of living and thinking about various life challenges, including disease, poverty, and hunger (Adekola, 2012). This implies that education is a very crucial aspect for all people and community development.

In Latin America, such as Brazil and Mexico, orphans are not receiving high quality education compared to other children, and those receiving education are facing many challenges that result in insufficient academic achievements (IDB, 2015; TALIS, 2013). It is estimated that one out of five orphans are out of school and employed in urban areas to either support themselves or their siblings to attend school (World Bank, 2016). They drop out of school due to poverty, lack of food and school related materials (ibid). Hence, paid labor has become one of their coping strategies to meet some of the basic and school needs.

Mathias (2013) argued that most orphans in South Africa face educational challenges like poverty, limited access to educational services, dropping out, poor performance, sexual and emotional abuse, violence and substance abuse within communities. Likewise, in Namibia, orphans were estimated to be 180,000 by 2010 (Namibia Education Policy for OVC, 2012) and are still threatened by poverty, extended family and insufficient mechanisms to ensure quality education (Mbumba, 2013). Despite all these challenges, Fleming (2015) reports that some of the orphans attending school do respond to the situation through selling labor and selling family properties. Some of the orphans adopt herding livestock, cheap labor, and spend time producing food for their families. Thus, vulnerable orphans become at risk of getting a quality education and failure to achieve their academic plans.

In Uganda, OVC, particularly vulnerable orphans, have been found not to perform well in primary schools due to stress, hunger, conflicts, social inequalities, stigmatization, and anxiety (Simona, 2013). Some of the vulnerable orphans have generally adjusted to the situation through dropping out of school, selling vegetables and wild fruits to relieve stress, and herding livestock so as to raise family income (Bryant, 2012). Likewise, vulnerable orphans in Kenya face discrimination, lack of guidance, uniforms, and general stationery, all of which affect their academic achievements (Kimanga, 2014). Because of this situation, Pillay (2016) reported that some orphans have opted to sell vegetables and eggs in the streets and different social gatherings such as bus stations, provision of agricultural labor and use of spiritual approach in order to earn their academic needs. This situation suggests that orphans in Africa are not adequately catered for by government programs to enable them to attain sufficient and quality education compared to non-orphans.

In the case of Tanzania, the government review estimated the number of OVC to be over one million in 2010/2013 (Charwe et al, 2014). The situation of OVCs, particularly orphans, is highly pronounced in Tanzania. The district analysis shows that districts where more than 10 percent of children are orphans and vulnerable include Dodoma rural (13.3%), Singida rural (10.8%) and Manyoni (10.1%). Other districts with a high number of OVC are Iramba (9.7%), Bukoba rural (9.2%), and Kondoa (8.1%) (URT, 2007). 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. Orphans include all children under the age of eighteen who are maternal, paternal or double orphans. In particular, UNICEF states that the vast majority of children are single orphans, maternal or paternal (2008).

In urban areas in Tanzania, 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 (Terway et al (2015). 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.

Despite the fact that, Tanzania has been working with international agencies and NGOs to eliminate illiteracy and improve livelihoods for all Tanzanians, a noticeable impact on both the quality and quantity of education for children from poor families has not been evaluated (Koda, 2015). Some children have been confirmed to be marginalized from education through economic hardship, social exclusion, and psychological inferiority. These hardships together raise questions as to how the vulnerable orphans in Tanzania cope and adjust themselves well to their academic achievements. Hence, the need to investigate the challenges and coping strategies adopted by OVC in school life in the study area was deemed necessary. Therefore, this study aimed to identify the challenges and strategies adopted by OVC to enhance their academic achievements in primary schools in the study area.

## **2.0 Empirical Literature Review**

### **2.1 Orphan**

An orphan is defined by the United Nations as a child who has lost one or both parents. Worldwide, it is estimated that 17.8 million children under 18 have been orphaned by AIDS and that still this is expected to rise to 30 million by 2020 (AIDS orphan, 2017). In some countries larger populations of orphans have lost their parents because of HIV/AIDS more than any other cause of death. This means that if it was not HIV/AIDS these children would not have been orphaned (UNICEF 2016).

The report by UNICEF (2016) reveals that in Tanzania children who have lost one or two parents due to HIV/AIDS is estimated to 1,200,000. The number of children orphaned due to HIV/AIDS as well as other causes is relatively higher to an approximation of 2,600,000 children (UNICEF 2013). About 18% of all children are considered vulnerable as identified by the National Coasted Plan of Action for most Vulnerable Children (Tanzania HIV/AIDS and Malaria Indicator Survey 2007-2008). It was further revealed that such children are suffering from lacking social services and therefore need quick measures to rescue the situation.

On the other hand, most of the children orphaned by AIDS who live outside Africa live in Asia where the total number of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS exceeds 1.1 million (UNICEF, 2013). However, there is insufficient information available to provide figures for the number orphaned by AIDS in Asian countries (Jo. Stein, 2003). Nagasha et al (2012) did a study on the burden of orphans and vulnerable children due to HIV/AIDS in Cameroon. In their study they revealed that in Cameroon out of 1,200,000 orphans and vulnerable children in 2010, 300,000 (25%) were AIDS orphans. They further, showed that orphans and the number of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS are increasing annually from 13,000 in 1995 to 304,000 in 2010 and estimated to rise to 350,000 by 2020. They also found that there is an estimation of 141 new infections per day. The study also revealed that most of them (62%) were facing social challenges particularly health and education services.

## 2.2 Vulnerability and Vulnerable Children

Vulnerability has been defined as experiencing or being at risk of poverty and social exclusion. As a result, vulnerability can be basically described as the capacity to be wounded (Palterson, 2013). Vulnerability includes violence, discrimination, poverty and social exclusion of children (Roelenet *al.*, 2012). According to the existing literature, vulnerability is a complex phenomenon that refers to the following dimensions: (i) Economic difficulties/lack of financial resources, poverty, low living standard, housing problems, (ii) Social exclusion, limited access to facilities such as shops, schools, libraries or medical services, (iii) Lack of social support from social networks; lack of assistance from family members, friends, neighbors or colleagues referring to practical help as well as emotional support, (iv) Stigmatization, being a victim of stereotypes, being devaluated, and confronted with disgraceful behavior because of belonging to a particular social or ethnic groups, (v) Health difficulties: disadvantages resulting from poor mental, health, physical health or disabilities, and (vi) Being a victim of crime, in family context especially of violence.

Vulnerable children refers to a child under the age of 18 whose life is in jeopardy due to conditions such as abject poverty, orphanhood, child abuse, child labor, hostile family conditions, and child abandonment, among others (Evans 2002, Whitehouse, 2002). However, it should be known that vulnerability does not only include such concrete indicators as age and parental loss. Instead, "vulnerable children are those who belong to high-risk groups who lack access to basic social amenities or facilities (UNICEF 2002). Further, 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. 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 homelessness (MOHSS and UNICEF 1998). Because of vulnerability, most vulnerable orphans are taken care of by foster parents who may be single parents, grandfather/mother and other siblings, or volunteering individuals who most often face difficulties in sustaining their social and academic needs (Alpha 2014).

## 3.0 Theoretical Framework

The research is guided by Urie Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory, which he developed and promoted. Child development, according to Bronfenbrenner, arises from an individual's interaction with their environment and relationships with others at various system levels. As a result, the environment's interconnected layers have an impact on child development (Bronfenbrenner, 2001). Orphans, as individuals, are a part of the various systems that make up society. Examples of these systems include the family, school, and community. Social, economic, educational, legal, and political systems are also included. For example, within the microsystem, the family can have a direct influence on a child's socialization. Similarly, school and peers represent the mesosystem in which the interactions of the child and the interrelationship between school and home influence child development. Furthermore, interactions between teachers and caregivers, as well as children's education and behavior, can have an impact on their cognitive and emotional development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

In this study, Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory was used to assess the strategies used and the support available for orphans and vulnerable children in systems such as families, orphanage centers, primary schools, and the community. The research also looked into socioeconomic and psychological factors that hampered orphans and vulnerable children from achieving their educational goals.

## 4.0 Study Location and Methodology.

The study was carried out in Dodoma City which is the national capital of the United Republic of Tanzania and the capital of the Dodoma Region. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2012), the 2012 census estimated that, Dodoma had a population of 410,956. The city is located at 6.17 latitudes and 35.74 longitudes and it is situated at an elevation of 1,125 metres above sea level. The city lies in the central part of the country, 450 km west of Dar es Salaam. The selection of Dodoma City as a study area is based on the fact that it has a high number of OVC (MOEVT 2011, World Bank Report, 2003), therefore, living in poor economic status and a large number of dependent families. Also, the study area is vested with a larger number of baggers who work with children during begging, which helped us to come up with a clear picture of how orphans cope with different challenges in adjusting maximally to primary education.

The study applied a qualitative approach because it sought to collect the views on challenges and strategies adopted by OVC to enhance their academic achievement. Therefore, using a qualitative approach in this study helped the researchers to collect, describe,

and analyze non-numerical data for a better understanding of the research problem. Both primary and secondary data sources were employed. Secondary data sources used include various published research papers and reports, population data collected from the National Bureau of Statistics, internet search and other relevant sources. Primary data sources include questionnaires, focus group discussion, interviews with key informants, which involved the Head of the Education Department, the Head of the Health and Social Welfare Department, Ward Executive Officers, Head Teachers, and Leaders of the Orphanage Centers.

The study utilized both open-ended questions and closed-ended questions to collect information from OVC. Closed-ended questions were developed by the researcher and distributed to the respondents to provide answers straight forward for easy coding. Also, they were used to gather data from the OVC regarding the challenges they face and educational strategies adopted. The intention of using both closed and open-ended questions was to provide a wide range of variety of possible answers from the teachers. Moreover, a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted to seek opinions and views on the strategies adapted by OVC to enhance their academic achievement in primary schools. Therefore, four separate FGDs were reached in the study areas. Each group consisted of six members, the FGDs includes OVCs and Teachers separately. The discussions were conducted in a convenient place and time and consent was considered during the discussion. Throughout the discussion, the researcher took notes of all the important information.

**Table 1: Summary of Data Collection Methods and Target Groups**

Objective	Method	Target Group
To identify challenges faced by OVCs in Primary Schools.	Structured Questionnaire, Semi-structured Interview.	OVCs (students), Head Teachers.
To identify the strategies adopted by orphans in enhancing their academic achievements in primary schools.	Structured Questionnaire, FGDs, In-depth Interview, Semi-structured Interview, Documentary Review.	OVCs (students), Teachers, Leaders of Orphanage Centres, Head of Education Department.

Furthermore, a semi-structured one-to-one interview was deployed. The choice was rooted in the fact that semi-structured interviews are helpful to the researcher (s) in collecting rich qualitative data based on the informants' experiences and the meaning they make of those experiences due to their flexibility, being focused and time-effective. Moreover, confidential information that the individual may be reluctant to put in writing may be obtained. Documentary review was also employed to obtain data from documented sources. Reviewed documents involved class attendance registers, exercise books, teaching and learning resources, and research documents on orphans and education. The study used documentary review due to the fact that, documents prove valuable not only because of what can be learnt directly from them but also as stimulus for paths of inquiry that can be pursued only through direct observation and interviewing (Patton, 2002 cited in Mpate, 2012).

Simple random and purposive sampling techniques were adopted to select study participants. The respondents were randomly selected in order to get a representative sample from four primary schools (Mpunguzi, Chamwino, Nzuguni, and Mkonze) in the study area. A purposive sampling technique used to select key informants within the study area. These are participants who were knowledgeable about the subject matter, and they were capable of providing the required information. The population of OVC from each primary school was 64 from Mpunguzi, 52 from Chamwino, 61 from Nzuguni, and 92 from Mkonze, whereby the total population was 269. Statistically, the sample size was calculated using the following formulae by Nassiuma (2002).

Therefore, the sample size for the study was 55 students and 13 key informants who were purposely selected for the study, as presented in Table 1. The key informants were from the office of the City Council (Head of Education Department, Head of Health and Social Welfare Department), Ward Executive Officers from four wards (Mpunguzi, Chamwino, Nzuguni, and Mkonze), Head Teachers from four primary schools (Mpunguzi, Chamwino, Nzuguni, and Mkonze), and Leaders of Ophanage Centers (Village of Hope, St Gemma, and Mother Theresa).

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents**

Selected Primary Schools	Sample Size	Office/Institution	Key Informants
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Mpunguzi	13	City Council	2
Chamwino	11	WEO	4
Nzuguni	12	Head Teachers	4
Mkonze	19	Orphanage Centers	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>

Source: Field Data 2021

The qualitative data were translated from Swahili to English language and analyzed using NVivo software in three stages: first, the line-by-line coding of field notes and transcripts (unpacking of text into discrete elements to expose underlying thoughts and meanings); second, the in-depth examination and interpretation of the resultant codes into descriptive themes; and third, interpretation of the descriptive themes into more abstract analytical themes. Tables and figures were used to present the findings.

## 5.0 Results and Discussion

### 5.1 Demographic Characteristics

**Table 3: Categories of Pupils (Orphans and Vulnerable Children)**

Criteria	Description	Frequency	Percent
<b>Sex of respondents</b>	Male	38	69
	Female	17	31
<b>Education level</b>	Standard I	18	33
	Standard II	12	22
	Standard III	8	15
	Standard IV	6	11
	Standard V	5	9
	Standard VI	3	5
	Standard VII	3	5

#### *Sex of Respondents*

As indicated in Table 3 there was a total of 55 respondents out of which 69% were males and 31% were females. This implies that majority of the respondents were boys compared to girls. This finding is in line with Haile and Haile (2011) using survey data from rural Ethiopia that boys are prone to attend school and combine school with family work than girls. Khanam and Russel (2015) provided evidence from Bangladesh that, OVCs are affected by child labor which impede their attendance to school, but girls are more affected than boys. Basumatary (2012) claims that, with regard to gender difference, in Nigeria girls are often forced to drop out of school and placed into early marriages, domestic, and agricultural labor, or street vending, while boys are more likely to attend to school than girls. This means the number of OVCs in primary schools who are boys is large compared to girls.

#### *Education Level*

The study revealed that, majority of respondents are from standard I (33%), standard II (22%), standard III (15%) and standard IV (11%), while few respondents are from standard V (9%), standard VI (5%) and standard VII (5%) as presented in Table 3. This implies that the number of OVCs in primary schools is decreasing from one standard to another, most of the OVCs, because of the difficulties they face, decide to drop from school and engage in different cheap labor activities in order to contribute to household income. This was evidenced by the study conducted by Osment (2010) who supported that, in Tanzania many children drop out school and contribute to household income. Similarly, most of orphans adjust to educational challenges by dropping from school, leaving school to relieve difficulties at school and their homes as well as child labor to cope with food insecurity or lack of food (UNICEF, 2013). Moreover, Shakdar *et al.*, (2013) found evidence that in Bangladesh 50% of primary school children drops out before they complete their fifth grade.

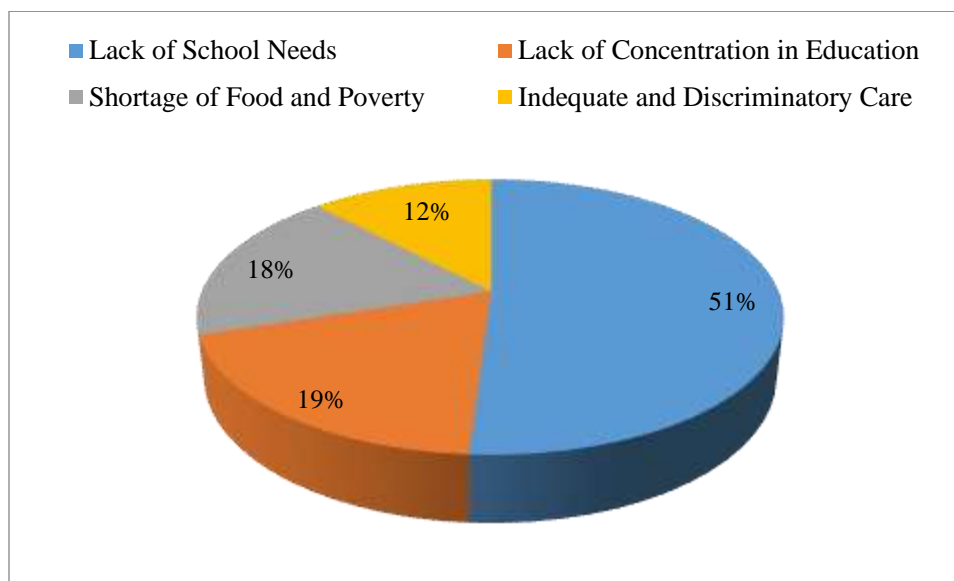
### 5.2 Challenges faced by OVCs in Primary Schools

The responses regarding various challenges were recorded and analyzed during the field study. The respondents were asked to identify, choose, and prioritize the various categories of challenges they had been facing. The majority of respondents indicated lack



of school needs (51%), lack of concentration among OVCs in education (19%), shortage of food and poverty (18%), as well as inadequate and discriminatory care for OVCs (12%) as major challenges, as shown in figure 2.

**Figure 2: Challenges faced by OVCs in Primary Schools**



**Source:** Field Data, 2021

#### *Lack of School Needs*

The findings revealed that OVCs face a variety of challenges in primary schools, with a lack of school supplies being the most significant impediment to orphans and vulnerable children achieving their educational goals. This was followed by a lack of concentration in school, a lack of food and poverty, as well as inadequate and discriminatory health care. This finding is consistent with Lindsjö (2018), who asserted that school-aged OVC in Makete District lack school supplies as well as other necessities such as food, learning materials, and school uniforms. According to Mahenge (2013), there are thousands of school-age children in Tanzania who are not enrolled. The majority of them are orphans as a result of the numerous challenges they face, including social, economic, and educational challenges. Human Rights Watch report in Kenya (2014), concluded that orphans face difficulties in affording various needs such as uniforms, stationary, and other related materials, which causes many orphans to drop out of school in comparison to the number of non-orphans in school, hampered their academic achievement. Respondents in focus groups acknowledged this challenge as well. For example, one of the 13-year-old respondents said:

*"The biggest challenge we normally face in school is a lack of school needs such as textbooks, pens, school uniforms, and other necessary needs. It happens when our orphanage home faces financial constraints and, hence, we fail to meet school requirements on time. This normally discourages some of us and we decide to drop out of school. Fortunately, the government introduced free primary education, but still other needs are required "(August, 2021).*

This implies that many OVCs may fail to access their education because of lacking necessary educational needs, and therefore raised a need to see the mechanism adopted by those attending school for better improvement.

#### *Lack of Concentration among OVCs in Education*

The study also identified that a lack of concentration among orphans in access to primary education is another challenge that has a negative impact on OVCs education. Due to the loss of parents, most orphans lack concentration, which results from low care from guardians as compared to children who are under parental care. This encourages them to engage in income-generating activities in order to support their family needs. For this reason, orphans spend much time on other issues apart from school, and their concentration in school becomes minimal. This finding is supported by Mwona and Pillay (2015), who asserted that orphans are engulfed with sadness, depression, and anger, which impairs their concentration in studies and results in poor academic performance. Moreover, lack of concentration among OVCs affected their school attendance compared to non-orphaned children (Olanrewaju et al., 2015). A male Head Teacher aged 43 years at Nzuguni Primary School had this to say:

*"The school attendance of orphaned children is very poor compared to non-orphaned children. This is caused by the low concentration of orphans due to their engagement in income-generating activities in order to get their necessary needs..." (August, 2021).*

In this regard, OVCs' lack of concentration in education is caused by their participation in income-generating activities to meet their needs. This has an impact on their school attendance, which leads to poor performance and school dropouts. The findings are consistent with the findings of a study conducted in Zimbabwe by Oyedele, Chikwature, and Manyange (2016), who concluded that orphans' academic performance is poor due to the challenges they face in their lives.

#### *Shortage of Food and Poverty*

It was further revealed that a shortage of food and poverty are other challenges facing OVC in primary schools. During FDGs, the majority of respondents mentioned that OVC are unable to get three meals per day, which leads them to pay low attention to studies due to hunger. This is also reported by UNICEF (2011) that many orphans are affected by poverty reflected by the families in which they are living. For this reason, they find it difficult to access food because they lack the money to buy it. Therefore, they spend much time searching for money to buy food, which adversely affects their attendance at school as well as their academic performance. Likewise, Human Rights Watch's (2014) report to developing countries shows that around 171 million children, particularly orphans, are stunted by shortages of food, which affects their access to primary education. In addition, the World Fund's (2016) report on Latin America observed a difference in dropout rate between orphans and non-orphans, which revealed that orphans' dropout rate from school is very high due to a lack of food and poverty, as opposed to non-orphan pupils who receive food and other needs from their parents.

The findings imply that a shortage of adequate nutritional food leads to malnutrition, which impedes proper mental and physical development. Most vulnerable children often come to school without having eaten any breakfast before leaving home in the morning. Thus, they find it difficult to concentrate on schoolwork during the day and, normally, the majority of them think about how they can get food in the evening after departing from school to their homes, so they miss concentration, which affects their daily performance.

#### *Inadequate and Discriminatory Care*

Due to the loss of parents, with either a single parent or both, it was noted that orphans face inadequate and sometimes discriminatory care. During the interview, the Ward Executive Officer from Mpunguzi Ward, aged 34, had this to say:

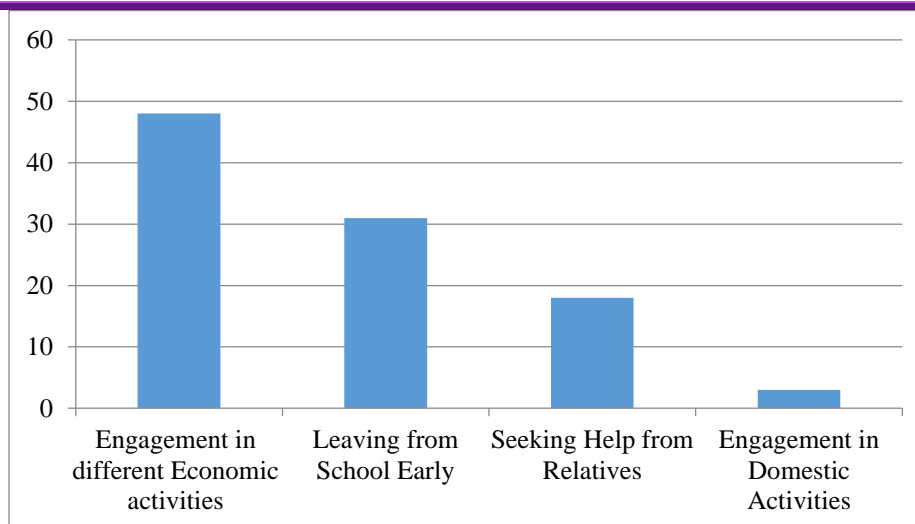
*"The existence of the extended family system has negative impacts, especially for orphans living within. Orphans are normally discriminated against in care through workloads, inadequate feeding, clothing, and sometimes shelter; hence, orphans experience difficulty in accessing primary education." (August, 2021).*

These findings are in line with the Report from the Global Partnership for Education (2016), which reveals that in the world, 93 million orphans face inadequate and sometimes discriminatory care. The findings mean a large percent of OVC are mostly manifested through relative workloads, inadequate feeding, clothing, shelter, and limited joy compared to non-orphaned children, which affected their school attendance. This is also supported by Olanrewaju et al., (2015) and Pillay (2018), who concluded that orphan children had poor school attendance rates compared to non-orphaned children.

### **5.3 Strategies adopted by orphans to enhance their academic achievements in primary schools**

This part presents and discusses the strategies adopted by orphans to enhance their academic achievement in primary schools. Data presented in Figure 3 indicated that 48% of respondents mentioned engagement in different economic activities as the main strategy employed by OVCs to enhance their academic achievement, followed by leaving school early (31%), seeking help from relatives (18%), and engagement in domestic activities (3%).

**Figure 3: Strategies adopted by orphans in enhancing their academic achievements in primary schools.**



**Source:** Field Data, 2021

#### *Engagement in different economic activities*

It was identified that a common strategy used by OVCs to access or adjust to primary education involves engagement in different economic activities. The study revealed that the economic activities done by OVCs in order to earn their living and meet school needs, among them include selling vegetables, selling fruits and drinks, washing or looking after cars, mounding and selling bricks, roasting and selling mice, recycling plastic bottles and other activities. The findings are supported by a phenomenological study by Mamdani, Rajani, Leach, Tumbo-Masabo, and Omondi (2019) in Sub-Saharan countries on economic activities by orphans, which revealed that orphans often mold bricks and sell them, as well as sell vegetables and fruit to get money for food or exchange them for basic needs like treatments at the local clinic if they are sick.

Likewise, Wild (2011) observed that a wide range of strategies to help secure the basic needs of orphans include working in other people's fields, herding others' cattle, washing cars, and roasting and selling mice. They further revealed that orphans are carrying out these activities in order to secure the basic minimum needs of children and their siblings, and that, in many cases, their access to primary education depends on these activities. Furthermore, a UNICEF report (2013) concluded that most orphans in Sub-Saharan countries engage in economic activities such as watering the gardens and selling different things such as sweets and groundnuts in the streets in order to access or adjust to primary education.

#### *Leaving from School Early*

Another strategy reported to be used by orphans involves leaving school earlier than the required school hours in order to access or adjust to primary education needs in different countries. The study revealed that OVCs tend to leave school earlier than the normal school hours. This leads to negative impacts on academic achievements as they are missing some of the important school activities, be they curriculum-based or extra-curriculum-based.

This is also supported by the report by UNICEF (2003) in Latin American countries, which revealed that most orphans leave school early, different from school hours, in order to look for other activities that help them get income for survival and access or adjust to primary education needs. Another study by Goba (2011) on "Care and support of orphaned and vulnerable children at school in South Africa" observed that leaving school early has increasingly been documented as a strategy adopted in order to relieve difficulties at orphans' homes.

#### *Seeking help from relatives*

The study observed that OVCs seek help from relatives in order to meet school needs like uniforms, learning equipment, and other contributions that would be needed in school. During the interview, the Head of the Health and Social Welfare Department had this to say:

*"... OVCs are doing whatever they can do to please relatives who would take care of them and help them access educational needs." (August, 2021).*

The study done by Adekola (2012) in Nigeria also revealed the same results as Mann (2002), in which he observed that orphans obtaining help from their extended family members feel significantly better off than other children with no such support in accessing primary education. Moreover, Chitiyo, Changara, and Chitiyo (2008) did a study in Zimbabwe and concluded that orphans often



visit relatives as a means of obtaining some necessary school supplies like pens, school uniforms, and other school learning equipment needs. This implies that most OVCs receive help from their family members and relatives.

## 6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study examined the challenges and coping strategies adopted by OVCs in primary schools. The study results have shown that OVC are constrained by various challenges which limit their efforts to enhance their academic achievements in primary schools, including a lack of school supplies, a lack of concentration among OVC in education, a shortage of food and poverty, and inadequate discriminatory care. The findings showed that many OVC drop out of school in comparison to the number of non-orphans and vulnerable children in schools, which hampered their academic achievement. OVC opt for various strategies to cope with these hardships, including engagement in different economic activities, leaving school early, and seeking help from family members and relatives.

The study recommends that the government should strengthen community programmes that target assisting OVC in order to enable orphanage homes and extended families to take care of OVC. In addition, the relevant ministry (PO-RALG) should facilitate the availability of educational resources among OVC in order to assist them in realizing their educational goals. The government, in collaboration with CSOs, FBOs, and the community, should formulate programs that will conduct community awareness, psychosocial support, and most vulnerable household income-generating activities as well as children's policy advocacy, education, health services, and food security support interventions. Furthermore, the government, through the Community Development and Social Welfare Department, should promote and protect OVC by creating an enabling environment for affected children and their families. The government should provide social support (such as food, school uniforms, scholarly materials, shelters, and health services) to OVC and subsidies to exempt OVC from costs such as health and mid-day school meal expenses.

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