

Effectiveness of support programs for Orphans in Iringa Municipal. A Stakeholder Perspective

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Abstract: *This study examined the effectiveness of orphan support programs in Iringa from stakeholder perspectives. The purpose was to assess how well existing interventions address the educational, health, and psychosocial needs of orphaned and vulnerable children. A cross-sectional research design was used, involving 86 respondents, including caregivers, orphaned children, program officers, and community leaders. Data were collected through questionnaires and interviews and analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. Findings revealed that educational and health supports were relatively adequate, while psychosocial and shelter supports were weak. Key challenges included inadequate funding, weak coordination, and limited monitoring and evaluation systems. The study was limited to Iringa Municipal and a relatively small sample size, which may restrict generalizability. Practically, the findings provide useful insights for improving service delivery, coordination, and resource allocation among stakeholders. Socially, the study highlights the need for stronger community involvement and improved psychosocial care for orphans. The study is original in its integration of multiple stakeholder perspectives in evaluating orphan support programs at the municipal level. It concludes that while existing programs contribute positively to child welfare, they remain insufficient in addressing holistic needs. The study recommends strengthening coordination, increasing funding, improving psychosocial services, and enhancing monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure more effective and sustainable support for orphaned children in Iringa Municipal and similar contexts.*

Keywords; Orphan support programs, Program effectiveness, Stakeholder perspectives, vulnerable children, Psychosocial support

1.0 Introduction

The situation of orphaned children remains one of the most pressing social and economic challenges in sub-Saharan Africa, and Tanzania is no exception. In Iringa, factors such as urban poverty, the long-term effects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and rural-to-urban migration have contributed to a growing number of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). In response, various support programs have been introduced by the government and non-governmental organizations to improve their living conditions. However, there is ongoing debate about the extent to which these interventions create meaningful and lasting change in the lives of beneficiaries. This study therefore examines the effectiveness of orphan support programs in Iringa by exploring the perspectives of key stakeholders, including program administrators, community leaders, caregivers, and the orphans themselves. It seeks to determine whether current interventions adequately address emotional, social, and long-term developmental needs or mainly provide short-term assistance without ensuring sustainable psychosocial well-being outcomes.

At the global level, orphan hood remains a significant child welfare challenge, with millions of children losing parental care due to poverty, conflict, disease, and natural disasters. International reports indicate that sub-Saharan Africa bears the heaviest burden of orphaned and vulnerable children, largely due to the long-term effects of HIV/AIDS and persistent socio-economic inequalities [1, 2]. Globally, efforts to address this issue have increasingly focused on strengthening child protection systems, community-based

care, and social safety nets, yet gaps in implementation and funding remain a major concern [3].

In many developing regions, orphan support programs are recognized as essential for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to poverty reduction, education, and child welfare [4]. However, despite international commitments, disparities in program quality and access continue to exist between high-income and low-income regions, with Africa experiencing some of the most severe service delivery challenges [1]. These global inequalities highlight the need for localized research that examines how orphan support interventions function in specific contexts such as municipalities and districts.

Across Africa, orphan hood is strongly linked to structural poverty, health crises, and weak social protection systems [5]. The HIV/AIDS epidemic significantly increased the number of orphaned children in many countries, particularly in Eastern and Southern Africa, where prevalence rates were historically high update [2]. In response, governments and development partners introduced a wide range of interventions, including cash transfer programs, foster care systems, and NGO-led child welfare initiatives [6].

Despite these efforts, many African countries continue to face challenges related to inadequate funding, limited institutional capacity, and over-reliance on donor support. Studies show that while some programs succeed in providing basic material support, they often fall short in addressing psychosocial needs and long-term child development outcomes [3, 7]. This

situation highlights a persistent gap between policy intentions and actual service delivery across the continent.

In Tanzania, orphan hood remains a critical social issue, with national estimates indicating that over 2.5 million children live without one or both parents (URT, 2021) [6]. The causes are multifaceted, including HIV/AIDS, poverty, and changing family structures influenced by rural-urban migration. The government has responded by developing child protection policies and social welfare programs aimed at improving the well-being of vulnerable children.

Key interventions include the Productive Social Safety Net (PSSN), implemented by TASAF, which provides conditional cash transfers to poor households to improve access to education and healthcare [3, 8]. In addition, NGOs and faith-based organizations complement government efforts by offering residential care, education sponsorship, and psychosocial support. However, despite these initiatives, challenges such as uneven coverage, limited monitoring, and sustainability concerns continue to affect program effectiveness [9].

In Iringa, orphanhood is influenced by both historical and current socio-economic factors. The HIV/AIDS epidemic left many children under the care of elderly guardians or in child-headed households [2], increasing reliance on external support systems. At the same time, rapid urbanization in Iringa Municipal has expanded informal settlements where many orphans live in overcrowded conditions with limited access to clean water, education, and social protection [3, 6]. Consequently, orphaned children face multiple overlapping vulnerabilities, creating a strong need for coordinated, effective, and sustainable support systems to improve their overall well-being and development outcomes.

In Tanzania, orphan support is provided through government programs, NGOs, and community-based actors. The TASAF-managed PSSN program is the main government initiative, using conditional cash transfers to reduce poverty and improve access to education and healthcare [3, 8]. In Iringa, NGOs such as the Ilula Orphan Program and local foundations provide education support, nutrition, and vocational training [1, 7]. Community-based organizations and religious groups offer emotional support, but coordination remains weak, with uneven resource distribution and limited integration among service providers, affecting overall program effectiveness and sustainability across the municipality.

Evaluating orphan support programs requires more than administrative data; it needs understanding of stakeholder experiences. Administrators often focus on outputs, caregivers on daily care, and children on emotional safety and belonging [10, 11](Patton, 2018; OECD, 2021). These differing views shape how success is defined and measured.

Despite global and national efforts, limited localized research integrates stakeholder perspectives in contexts like Iringa. Most studies generalize findings, overlooking grassroots realities of implementation. This creates a gap in understanding program coordination, psychosocial impact, and sustainability. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by examining stakeholder perspectives on orphan support programs in Iringa Municipal.

1.1 Statement of a Problem

The growing number of orphaned and vulnerable children in Iringa continues to present serious social and developmental challenges. Over the years, different support programs have been introduced by the government, non-governmental organizations, and community-based groups to improve the well-being of these children. These programs provide services such as education support, healthcare, nutrition, and basic needs. Despite these efforts, many orphaned children still struggle to meet their daily needs and achieve stable, healthy development.

One major concern is that the effectiveness of these programs remains unclear. While reports often show that services are being delivered, there is limited understanding of whether these interventions are truly making a meaningful and lasting difference in the lives of the children. In many cases, support may be inconsistent, insufficient, or not well coordinated, leaving gaps in important areas such as psychosocial care and long-term development.

Additionally, most existing studies focus on general program outcomes and overlook the real experiences and views of stakeholders such as caregivers, program staff, and the children themselves. This creates a gap in understanding how these programs function in practice. Therefore, this study seeks to assess the effectiveness of orphan support programs in Iringa Municipal from a stakeholder perspective to better understand existing challenges and improve service delivery.

1.2 Research Objective

1.2.1 Main Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess how effective orphan support programs are in Iringa based on the views of different stakeholders.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives of the Study

- i. To examine the types of support services provided to orphans in Iringa Municipal by government, NGOs, and community-based organizations.
- ii. To assess stakeholders' perceptions on the effectiveness of orphan support programs in meeting

the social, emotional, and educational needs of orphans.

- iii. To identify the challenges affecting the implementation and sustainability of orphan support programs in Iringa Municipal.

1.3 Significant of the study

This study is significant because it provides important insights into how orphan support programs operate in Iringa and whether they effectively meet the needs of vulnerable children. It helps policymakers and local government authorities in Tanzania understand the strengths and weaknesses of existing interventions, enabling them to improve service delivery and resource allocation. The study also benefits NGOs and community-based organizations by highlighting areas that require improvement, especially in coordination and psychosocial support. For researchers, it adds valuable knowledge on stakeholder perspectives in orphan care. Additionally, it gives caregivers and community members a voice in evaluating programs, ensuring that future interventions are more responsive, sustainable, and child-centered in addressing the real challenges faced by orphans.

2.0 Related Studies

2.1 Types of Support Services Provided

The types of support services provided to orphaned and vulnerable children (OVC) vary significantly across regions, reflecting differences in economic capacity, welfare systems, and institutional development [12]. In Europe, orphan and child welfare systems are generally highly structured and state-led, with comprehensive services that integrate education, health care, psychosocial support, and foster care systems [13]. Countries such as Sweden, Germany, and the United Kingdom prioritize family-based care models over institutionalization, ensuring that children are placed in foster families with strong government oversight and financial support [14]. These systems are supported by robust social protection frameworks that guarantee universal access to healthcare, education, and child protection services, making orphanhood less associated with extreme vulnerability compared to developing regions [1].

In Asia, orphan support services vary widely due to differences in income levels and governance structures. High-income countries such as Japan and South Korea provide comprehensive child welfare systems similar to Europe, including foster care, adoption services, and psychosocial counseling [15]. However, in lower-income Asian countries such as Nepal and Cambodia, orphan care often relies heavily on non-governmental organizations and religious institutions. These services typically focus on residential care, education sponsorship, and basic health services, though they may lack long-term sustainability and professional psychosocial

support systems [6]. This disparity highlights the uneven development of child protection systems across the continent.

In Africa, orphan support services are largely shaped by economic constraints and high levels of poverty. Many countries rely on a combination of government programs, NGOs, and community-based care systems. The HIV/AIDS epidemic significantly increased the number of orphans, leading to the expansion of community-based care models rather than institutional systems [2]. Services often include school fee support, food provision, and basic healthcare, but psychosocial services remain limited due to resource shortages (World Bank, 2022). In countries like Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, NGOs play a central role in filling service gaps, though coordination between actors remains a challenge [7].

In Tanzania, orphan support services are delivered through government programs such as the Productive Social Safety Net (PSSN), alongside NGO and community-based interventions. These services mainly focus on cash transfers, education support, nutrition programs, and basic healthcare access [8]. However, psychosocial support and long-term child development services are still underdeveloped, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas like Iringa. As a result, while basic needs are partially met, comprehensive child development services remain inconsistent, creating gaps in overall service delivery [1].

2.2 Effectiveness of Support Programs

The effectiveness of orphan support programs is increasingly understood as a multidimensional concept that goes beyond the provision of services to include how beneficiaries and stakeholders perceive outcomes such as well-being, inclusion, and long-term development. In Europe, effectiveness is strongly measured through outcome-based evaluation systems that prioritize child well-being indicators such as emotional stability, educational attainment, and social integration. According to Berrick, Gilbert [16], European child welfare systems emphasize evidence-based evaluation, where success is measured through child development outcomes rather than service delivery outputs. Countries such as Finland and Sweden apply continuous monitoring frameworks that incorporate feedback from children, caregivers, and professionals to ensure accountability and quality improvement [16].

In Asia, perceptions of effectiveness vary widely depending on socio-economic development levels. In high-income countries such as Japan, effectiveness is assessed through structured child protection systems that integrate psychological well-being and educational performance indicators [17]. However, in developing Asian contexts, effectiveness is often measured more narrowly, focusing on access to basic needs such as food, shelter, and schooling.

According to Banerjee and Duflo [18], many social programs in low-income Asian settings struggle to incorporate beneficiary feedback into evaluation processes, leading to gaps between policy intentions and lived experiences. These results in programs that are perceived as partially effective but lacking in long-term developmental impact

In Africa, effectiveness of orphan support programs is often constrained by resource limitations and weak monitoring systems. Studies by Africa [19] highlight that many programs in sub-Saharan Africa emphasize output indicators such as number of children enrolled in school or receiving food aid, rather than psychosocial outcomes or long-term well-being. Stakeholders, particularly caregivers and community leaders, often report that while basic needs are met, emotional support and stability remain inadequate. In countries like Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania, effectiveness is frequently judged differently by NGOs and beneficiaries, creating a mismatch between program reporting and community perceptions [7].

In Tanzania, effectiveness is largely evaluated through national social protection programs such as the Productive Social Safety Net (PSSN). According to Evans, Hausladen [20], cash transfer programs in Tanzania have improved school attendance and household consumption, but their impact on psychosocial well-being remains limited. Stakeholders in local contexts such as Iringa often perceive programs as helpful in meeting immediate needs but insufficient in addressing emotional trauma, social integration, and long-term empowerment of orphans. Petersen, Križ [6], further notes that while Tanzania has made progress in expanding child welfare coverage, inconsistencies in implementation and limited stakeholder engagement reduce overall perceived effectiveness. This highlights a gap between policy success indicators and community-level experiences.

Generally, across Europe, Asia, Africa, and Tanzania, effectiveness is increasingly recognized as dependent on stakeholder perspectives, yet developing regions still struggle to fully integrate these perspectives into program evaluation systems, leading to gaps in understanding real program impact.

2.3 Challenges in Program Implementation

The implementation of orphan support programs faces persistent challenges across different global regions, affecting their sustainability and overall impact. In Europe, although child welfare systems are well-developed, challenges still arise in ensuring equity, integration of migrant or refugee children, and long-term foster care stability [16]. Recent studies highlight that even in high-income countries, child protection systems face increasing pressure due to migration flows and social inequality, which strain service delivery and foster care placement systems [14]. Additionally,

administrative complexity and rising costs of child welfare services continue to challenge efficiency despite strong institutional frameworks.

In Asia, implementation challenges vary significantly between developed and developing countries. In countries such as Japan and South Korea, the main challenges relate to aging populations and increasing demand for specialized child welfare services [17]. However, in lower-income Asian countries, orphan support programs often struggle with inadequate funding, weak institutional capacity, and overdependence on NGOs and international donors. According to Banerjee and Duflo [18] many social protection programs in developing contexts face implementation gaps due to weak governance systems and lack of reliable monitoring structures. This results in inconsistent service delivery and limited long-term impact on vulnerable children.

In Africa, implementation challenges are more pronounced due to structural and economic constraints. Studies show that many orphan support programs face chronic underfunding, weak coordination, and limited technical capacity for monitoring and evaluation [3, 6]. The HIV/AIDS epidemic further increased demand for services, overwhelming existing systems and leading to heavy reliance on NGOs and community-based organizations [2]. Research by [19] also highlights that many programs in sub-Saharan Africa focus on short-term material support rather than sustainable psychosocial and developmental interventions. This limits long-term effectiveness and creates dependency on external funding sources.

In Tanzania, implementation challenges are closely linked to financial constraints, institutional capacity, and coordination gaps among stakeholders. The Productive Social Safety Net (PSSN) program has improved coverage of vulnerable households, but studies indicate challenges in targeting accuracy, monitoring systems, and sustainability [3, 8]. In Iringa, orphan support programs face additional challenges such as fragmented service delivery among NGOs, community-based organizations, and government agencies. Research shows that limited coordination leads to duplication of services in some areas while leaving other needs unmet, particularly psychosocial and emotional support [1, 7]. Furthermore, shortages of trained social workers and weak data systems hinder effective tracking of child outcomes.

Therefore, implementation challenges consistently revolve around issues of funding, governance, coordination, and monitoring. However, these challenges are more severe in low-income contexts where institutional capacity is limited and dependency on external support is high. This highlights the need for stronger integrated systems and improved stakeholder coordination to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of orphan support programs.

3.0 Methodology of the Study

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a cross-sectional research design. This design was chosen because it allowed data to be collected at a single point in time from different categories of respondents, providing a snapshot of the effectiveness of orphan support programs in Iringa. The design was appropriate for comparing perceptions among stakeholders such as caregivers, program administrators, community leaders, and orphans.

3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Iringa. The area was selected because it has a noticeable population of orphaned and vulnerable children supported by various government, NGO, and community-based programs. It also provided a suitable environment for examining multiple stakeholder perspectives on service delivery.

3.3 Target Population

The target population included orphaned children, caregivers, program officers from NGOs, community leaders, and local government officials involved in child welfare services. These groups were considered key stakeholders in the implementation and evaluation of orphan support programs.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The study involved a sample size of **86 respondents**. This sample size was considered adequate to provide reliable information from different stakeholder groups. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants such as program officers and local leaders, while simple random sampling was used to select caregivers and orphaned children to ensure fairness and reduce bias.

3.5 Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using questionnaires and interviews. Questionnaires were administered to caregivers and orphans to gather quantitative data on service access and satisfaction levels. In-depth interviews were conducted with program administrators and community leaders to obtain detailed qualitative information on program implementation and challenges.

3.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected from questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically by identifying common patterns and themes related to the effectiveness of orphan support programs.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was observed throughout the study. Permission was obtained from relevant authorities in Iringa. Informed consent was sought from all participants, and confidentiality was strictly maintained. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured that their responses would be used for academic purposes only.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion of findings on the effectiveness of orphan support programs in Iringa. The study involved 86 respondents, including caregivers, orphaned children, program officers, and community leaders. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, while qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically to capture participants' experiences and views. Findings are presented according to three objectives: types of support services, program effectiveness, and implementation challenges, providing a comprehensive understanding of both statistical trends and lived stakeholder experiences.

4.2 Types of Support Services Provided to Orphans

This section presents findings on the first indicator, which examines the types of support services provided to orphaned and vulnerable children in Iringa. It focuses on education, health and nutrition, and psychosocial and shelter support. The analysis uses both quantitative data from questionnaires and qualitative data from interviews to understand the availability and adequacy of these services. The aim is to identify strengths and gaps in service delivery and how well these programs address the basic and broader needs of orphans in the study area.

4.2.1 Educational support

The findings showed that educational support was the most common type of assistance provided to orphaned and vulnerable children in Iringa, with 55.8% of respondents saying it was adequate, 29.1% describing it as moderate, and 15.1% considering it inadequate. This suggested that many children were able to access basic educational needs such as school fees, uniforms, and learning materials, showing a strong effort by government programs and non-governmental organizations to promote education among orphans.

These results were in line with earlier studies, which found that education is often given priority in orphan support programs because it is seen as a key path toward a better

future [1, 3]. However, the fact that some respondents rated the support as moderate or inadequate showed that not all

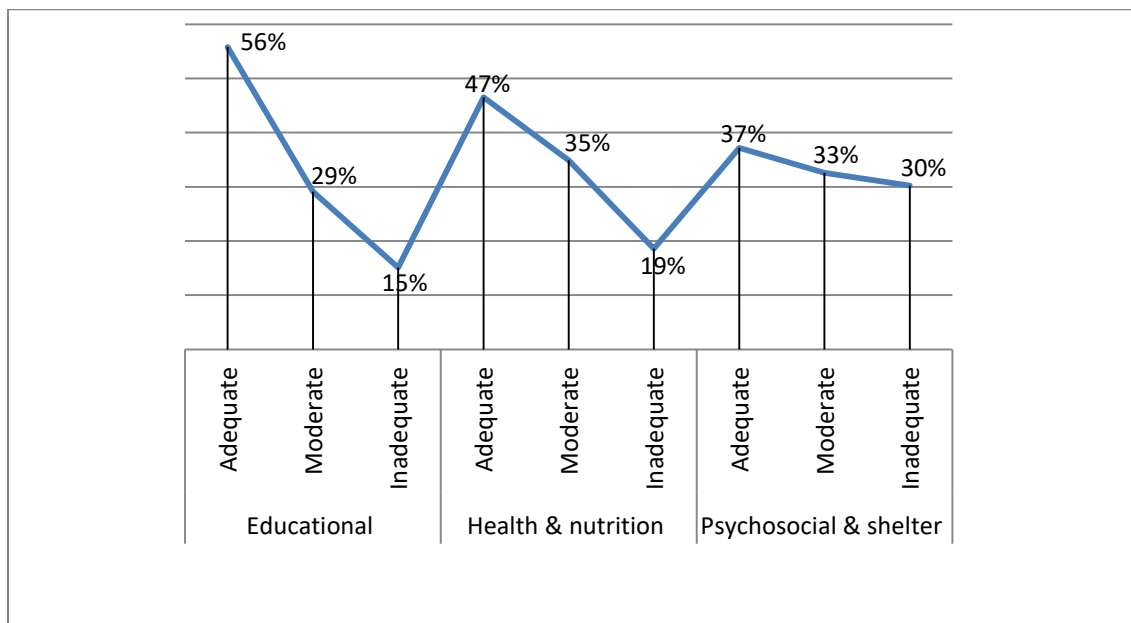


Figure 1; Results on Types of Support Services Provided to Orphans

children benefited equally.

The qualitative findings added more depth by showing differences in real-life experiences. During interviews, one caregiver shared,

“Sometimes the program pays school fees, but we still struggle to buy uniforms and exercise books, so the support is helpful but not complete.” In a focus group discussion (FGD), another participant said, *“Children are able to go to school, but they lack other materials, and this affects their performance.”*

These views showed that while educational support existed, it was often incomplete and did not fully meet all school-related needs. This supports findings by Nakijoba [7], which noted that many programs focus more on getting children into school rather than ensuring they have everything needed to succeed.

Respondents who described the support as inadequate pointed to issues such as delays in funding, limited resources, and unequal distribution of support. One program officer explained,

“We try to support as many children as possible, but funds are not enough, so some are left out or receive partial assistance.”

This highlighted the challenges programs face in reaching every child in need. Similar observations were made by Killian, Walwa [8], which reported that although access to

education has improved, there are still gaps in consistent service delivery. Thus, while educational support was relatively strong compared to other services, the findings showed the need for more complete and reliable support so that all orphaned children can fully benefit from education

4.2.2 Health & nutrition support

The findings indicated that health and nutrition support for orphaned and vulnerable children in Iringa was moderately provided, with 46.5% of respondents rating it as adequate, 34.9% as moderate, and 18.6% as inadequate. This suggested that although a considerable number of children benefited from services such as medical care, food provision, and nutritional support, a significant proportion still experienced gaps in accessing consistent and sufficient assistance. The results implied that while health and nutrition interventions were present within orphan support programs, their coverage and effectiveness were uneven.

These findings were consistent with earlier studies which showed that in many developing contexts, health and nutrition services for vulnerable children are often available but not always reliable or comprehensive [3, 6].

Qualitative data further illustrated these mixed experiences among beneficiaries. During interviews, one caregiver explained,

“We sometimes receive food support, but it is not regular, and when it delays, children suffer.” Similarly, a participant in a focus group discussion (FGD) noted, *“When a child gets sick, getting help*

depends on whether the program has funds at that time.”

These responses highlighted the irregular nature of support and the uncertainty faced by caregivers and children. Although programs attempted to meet basic health and nutritional needs, inconsistency in delivery reduced their overall effectiveness. This observation aligned with findings by Save the Nakijoba [7], which emphasized that irregular supply of food and medical assistance weakens the impact of child support programs in low-income settings.

Moreover, respondents who rated the support as moderate pointed to partial coverage of needs, where some services were provided but not to a satisfactory level. For instance, one caregiver stated,

“The program helps with clinic visits, but we still struggle to buy enough nutritious food at home.”

This suggested that interventions were often limited to basic medical assistance without addressing broader nutritional requirements necessary for healthy child development. Literature supports this view, indicating that effective child welfare programs should integrate both healthcare and sustained nutritional support to improve overall well-being [1].

Those who perceived health and nutrition support as inadequate cited challenges such as limited funding, lack of medical supplies, and unequal distribution of resources. A program officer remarked,

“We try to respond to health needs, but resources are not enough to support all children consistently.”

This reflected systemic constraints affecting program implementation. Similar findings were reported by the Ajwad, Abels [3], which noted that financial limitations and weak health systems often hinder the delivery of adequate services to vulnerable populations. So, the findings suggested that while health and nutrition support played an important role in improving the welfare of orphans, gaps in consistency, coverage, and resource availability reduced its effectiveness, highlighting the need for more reliable and integrated support systems.

4.2.3 Psychosocial & shelter support

The findings showed that psychosocial and shelter support for orphaned and vulnerable children in Iringa was the least

developed among the services assessed, with only 37.2% of respondents rating it as adequate, 32.6% as moderate, and 30.2% as inadequate. This indicated that a large proportion of children did not receive sufficient emotional care, counseling, or stable housing support. Compared to education and health services, psychosocial and shelter support appeared more fragmented and less prioritized.

These results were consistent with existing literature, which has shown that in many developing contexts, child support programs tend to focus more on material needs while neglecting emotional well-being and safe living conditions [3, 6]. This imbalance limits the overall effectiveness of interventions aimed at improving the holistic development of orphaned children.

During interviews, one caregiver explained,

“Children have gone through a lot, but there is no one to talk to them regularly about their feelings.” Similarly, in a focus group discussion (FGD), a participant shared, *“Some children stay in difficult home environments, and there is little follow-up to check their well-being.”*

These responses highlighted the absence of structured psychosocial support systems and consistent monitoring of children’s living conditions. Although some programs attempted to provide counseling or shelter assistance, such services were often irregular and limited in scope. This observation aligned with findings by Betancourt, Meyers-Ohki [21], who emphasized that lack of sustained psychosocial care negatively affects children’s emotional stability and long-term resilience.

Respondents who rated the support as moderate pointed to situations where limited assistance was available but not sufficient to meet growing needs. For instance, one caregiver stated,

“Sometimes social workers visit, but not often enough to really help the child cope.”

This suggested that while some level of psychosocial engagement existed, it lacked consistency and depth. Research supports this view, noting that effective psychosocial support requires continuous interaction, trained personnel, and structured programs to address trauma and social stigma among orphans [6, 7]. Without these elements, support remains superficial and less impactful.

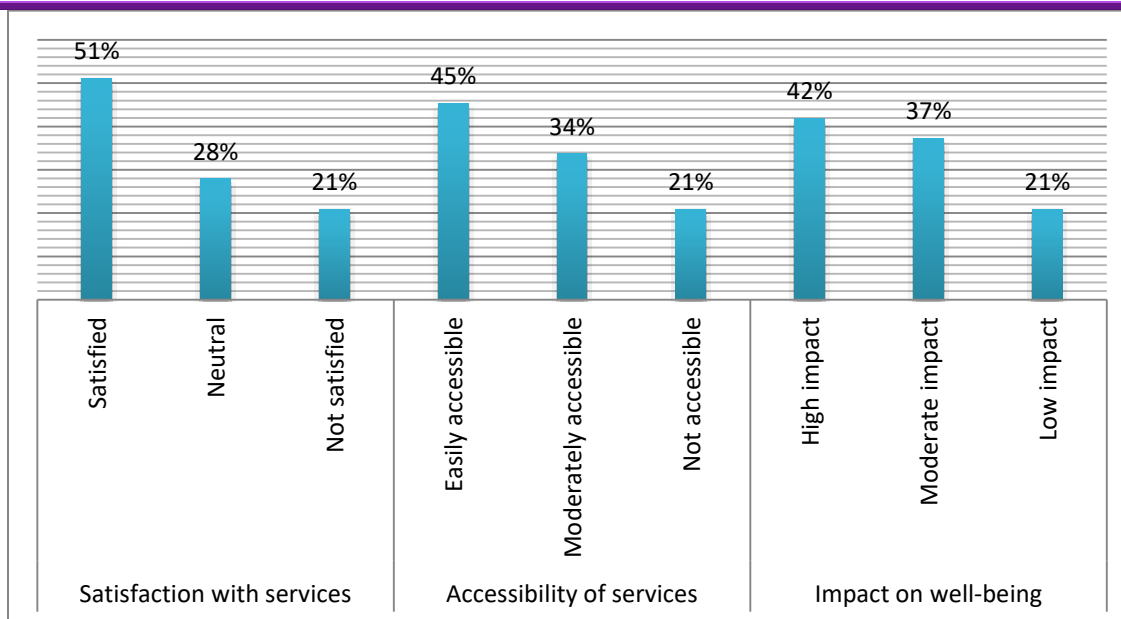


Figure 2; Results on Effectiveness of Support Programs

Those who perceived psychosocial and shelter support as inadequate emphasized challenges such as shortage of trained counselors, limited housing support, and weak follow-up mechanisms. A program officer noted,

“We focus more on food and education because resources are limited, so psychosocial services are not fully developed.”

This reflected a broader resource allocation issue where emotional and social needs are often deprioritized. Similar findings were reported by the World Bank (2022), which highlighted that psychosocial services in many low-income settings remain underfunded and poorly integrated into child welfare systems. Therefore, the findings suggested that significant gaps existed in addressing the emotional and living conditions of orphaned children, showing the need for more comprehensive and sustained psychosocial and shelter interventions.

4.3 Effectiveness of Support Programs

This section presents findings on the second key indicator, which examines the effectiveness of orphan support programs in Iringa based on stakeholder perceptions. The analysis focuses on three sub-indicators: satisfaction with services, accessibility of support, and the overall impact of programs on the well-being of orphaned and vulnerable children. The aim is to assess how well existing interventions meet the needs of beneficiaries beyond mere service provision.

4.3.1 Satisfaction with services

The findings showed that just over half of respondents (51.2%) were satisfied with orphan support services in Iringa, while 27.9% were neutral and 20.9% were not satisfied. This suggested generally positive perceptions, but with notable reservations among a substantial minority. Satisfaction appeared to be linked to the reliability and scope of assistance, especially where education and basic needs were consistently supported.

These results aligned with literature indicating that stakeholder satisfaction in social programs often reflects immediate benefits rather than long-term outcomes [10, 11]. However, the proportion expressing neutrality and dissatisfaction pointed to gaps in service consistency and coverage, echoing studies that found mixed satisfaction levels in child welfare programs in low-resource settings [6].

During interviews, one caregiver stated,

“We appreciate the help because children are going to school, but sometimes the support is not enough for all their needs.”

In a focus group discussion (FGD), another participant noted,

“The program is good, but it does not reach every child equally, and some are left struggling.”

These views indicated that satisfaction was often conditional, depending on whether services were sufficient and fairly distributed. Such findings were consistent with [7], which

observed that perceived fairness and adequacy strongly influence beneficiary satisfaction.

Respondents who expressed neutral views often described partial or inconsistent experiences. One caregiver explained,

“Sometimes we receive support, other times nothing comes, so it is hard to say if it is good or bad.”

This reflected uncertainty and variability in service delivery, which reduced confidence in program effectiveness. Literature supports this, noting that inconsistency in program implementation can lead to ambivalent perceptions among beneficiaries [3].

Those who were not satisfied pointed to unmet needs and systemic challenges. A program officer remarked,

“We try to meet expectations, but limited resources mean we cannot fully satisfy all beneficiaries.”

This highlighted structural constraints affecting service quality. Generally, while many respondents appreciated the support received, the findings suggested that improving consistency, coverage, and responsiveness would be essential for enhancing overall satisfaction with orphan support programs.

4.3.2 Accessibility of services

The findings indicated that accessibility of orphan support services in Iringa was moderate, with 45.3% of respondents reporting that services were easily accessible, 33.7% indicating moderate accessibility, and 20.9% stating that services were not accessible. This suggested that while a considerable proportion of beneficiaries could reach and utilize available services, a significant number still faced barriers that limited their access. Accessibility appeared to vary depending on factors such as location, awareness of available programs, and the consistency of service delivery.

These results were similar with existing literature, which has shown that in many developing contexts, the presence of social services does not necessarily guarantee equal access for all intended beneficiaries [1, 3].

Qualitative findings provided deeper insights into how accessibility was experienced in practice. During interviews, one caregiver explained,

“The services are there, but sometimes we have to travel far or wait for information before we can benefit.”

Similarly, a participant in a focus group discussion (FGD) noted,

“Some families get support quickly, while others do not even know where to go for help.”

These responses highlighted disparities in information flow and geographical reach, suggesting that awareness and proximity played a major role in determining access. Such findings aligned with studies by Nakijoba [7], which emphasized that lack of clear communication and outreach mechanisms often prevents vulnerable populations from fully utilizing available services.

Respondents who rated accessibility as moderate pointed to irregular service delivery and administrative barriers. For instance, one caregiver stated,

“Sometimes the support comes, but it takes a long time, and the process is not always clear.”

This indicated that bureaucratic procedures and delays reduced the ease of accessing services. Literature supports this observation, noting that complex procedures and inconsistent implementation can discourage beneficiaries and reduce program effectiveness [11]. In this case, accessibility was not only about physical presence of services but also about how smoothly beneficiaries could engage with them.

Those who perceived services as not accessible emphasized more significant challenges such as exclusion, limited coverage, and resource constraints. One program officer remarked,

“We do not have enough resources to reach all areas, so some children are left out completely.”

This reflected structural limitations affecting service distribution. Similarly, an FGD participant added,

“There are children who qualify but never receive support because the program cannot cover everyone.”

These findings were consistent with Ajwad, Abels [3], which highlighted that limited funding and weak infrastructure often restrict the reach of social protection programs in low-income settings.

Therefore, the findings suggested that while orphan support services existed and were accessible to many beneficiaries, significant inequalities remained in terms of reach, awareness, and consistency. Accessibility was influenced not only by availability but also by communication, distance, and administrative processes. This implied that improving outreach strategies, simplifying procedures, and expanding coverage would be essential for ensuring that all orphaned and vulnerable children could benefit equally from support programs.

4.3.3 Accessibility of services

The findings indicated that the perceived impact of orphan support programs on well-being in Iringa was moderate overall, with 41.9% of respondents reporting a high impact, 37.2% indicating a moderate impact, and 20.9% perceiving a low impact. This suggested that while a notable proportion of beneficiaries experienced meaningful improvements in areas such as schooling, health access, and basic living conditions, a significant number felt that the changes were limited or inconsistent.

The results implied that programs were effective in addressing immediate needs but less successful in producing sustained improvements in emotional stability and long-term development. These findings were consistent with existing literature, which has shown that social protection programs in developing contexts often achieve short-term gains while struggling to deliver deeper, lasting well-being outcomes [3, 6].

Qualitative findings provided further insight into how beneficiaries experienced these impacts. During interviews, one caregiver explained,

“The support has helped children stay in school and eat better, so their lives have improved compared to before.” Similarly, a participant in a focus group discussion (FGD) stated, *“There is a big difference now because children are not suffering as much as they used to.”*

These responses reflected positive changes attributed to the programs, particularly in meeting basic needs and improving day-to-day living conditions. Such findings aligned with studies by Evans, Hausladen [20], which reported that cash transfer and support programs in Tanzania contributed to improved school attendance and household welfare among vulnerable groups.

However, respondents who rated the impact as moderate emphasized those improvements were partial and sometimes temporary. One caregiver noted,

“Life is better, but the support is not enough to change everything, especially for the future of the child.”

This suggested that while programs alleviated immediate hardships, they did not fully address broader developmental needs such as emotional resilience, skills development, and long-term security. Literature supports this observation, indicating that programs focusing primarily on material assistance often fail to produce comprehensive well-being outcomes unless complemented by psychosocial and empowerment interventions [6, 11].

Those who perceived a low impact highlighted persistent challenges despite receiving support. A program officer explained,

“Some children still struggle because the support is limited and cannot cover all their needs.” Additionally, an FGD participant remarked, *“Even with help, some children still feel isolated and lack emotional support.”*

These responses pointed to gaps in addressing psychosocial well-being and social inclusion. Similar concerns were raised by Nakijoba [7], which noted that neglect of emotional and social needs reduces the overall effectiveness of child welfare programs.

So, the findings suggested that orphan support programs had a positive but uneven impact on well-being. While many children experienced improvements in basic living conditions, gaps remained in achieving holistic and sustainable development. This showed the need for more integrated approaches that combine material support with psychosocial care and long-term empowerment strategies.

4.4 Challenges in Program Implementation

This section presents findings on the third key indicator, which focuses on the challenges affecting the implementation of orphan support programs in Iringa. The analysis is based on three sub-indicators: inadequate funding, weak coordination among stakeholders, and limited monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems. The aim is to identify the key barriers that hinder effective service delivery and sustainability of these programs.

4.4.1 Inadequate Funding

The findings indicated that inadequate funding was the most significant challenge affecting orphan support programs in Iringa, with 58.1% of respondents rating it as a high challenge, 27.9% as moderate, and only 14.0% as low. This suggested that financial constraints were a major barrier limiting the effectiveness, consistency, and reach of support services provided to orphaned and vulnerable children.

The results implied that although programs existed, their ability to operate effectively was heavily dependent on the availability of financial resources, which were often unstable and insufficient. These findings were consistent with existing literature, which has shown that funding limitations are a persistent challenge in social protection and child welfare programs in many developing countries, where heavy reliance on donor support undermines sustainability [1, 3].

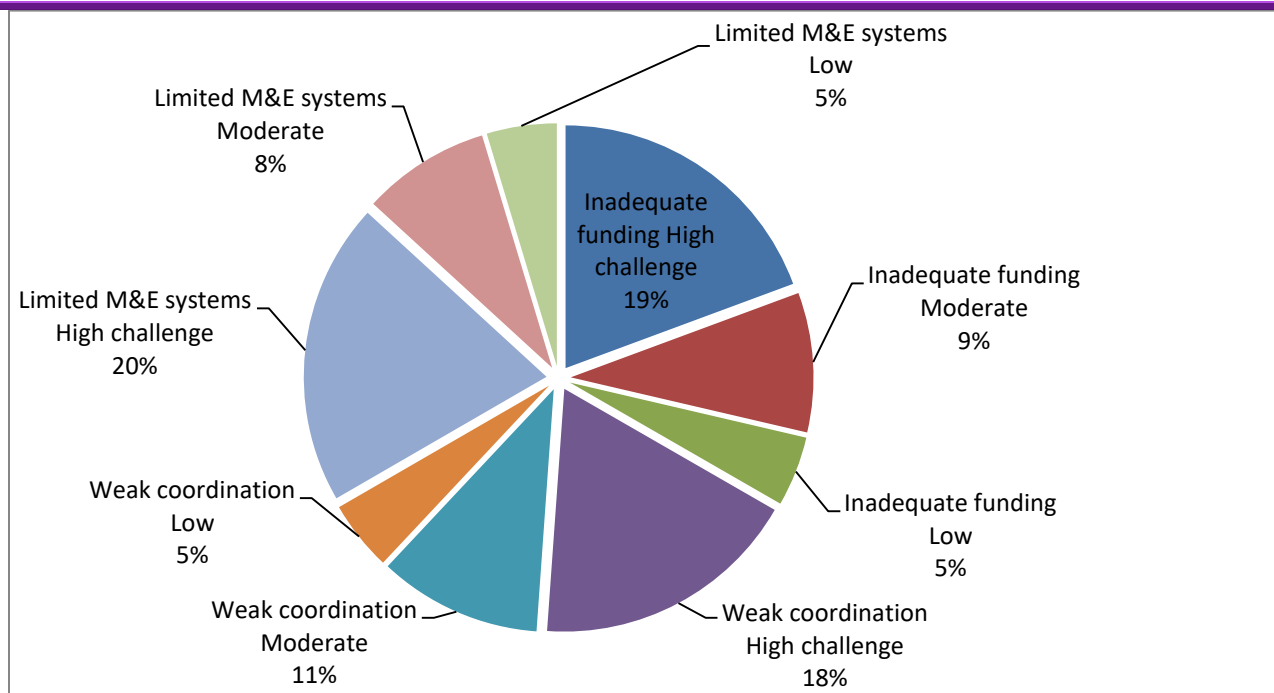


Figure 3; Results on Challenges in Program Implementation

Findings from interview further confirmed these financial constraints through the lived experiences of stakeholders. During interviews, one program officer stated,

“We have many children who need support, but the budget we receive is not enough to reach all of them.”

These responses illustrated how funding shortages directly affected service continuity and coverage. Such findings were in line with Nakijoba [7], which reported that many child welfare programs in low-income settings experience interruptions due to inconsistent financial inflows.

Respondents who rated funding as a moderate challenge highlighted partial improvements but ongoing limitations. One caregiver noted,

“The support is helpful, but it does not come regularly because funds are limited.”

This suggested that while some financial resources were available, they were not sufficient to ensure reliable and continuous service delivery. Literature supports this observation, indicating that fragmented funding structures often lead to uneven implementation of social protection programs, especially in contexts where multiple actors depend on external donors [11]. As a result, beneficiaries may receive intermittent support that does not fully address their long-term needs.

Those who perceived funding as a low challenge were mainly associated with programs that had relatively stable donor partnerships or government backing. However, even within this group, respondents acknowledged underlying financial pressures. A community leader remarked,

“Some organizations are better funded, but overall resources are still not enough for all children.”

This reflected the broader systemic issue where funding disparities exist between different implementing agencies. According to Petersen, Križ [6], such disparities often create inequalities in service delivery, where some children benefit more than others depending on program funding levels and geographical location.

Overall, the findings demonstrated that inadequate funding remained a critical constraint in orphan support programs in Iringa Municipal. It affected not only the number of children reached but also the quality and consistency of services provided. This aligns with Ajwad, Abels [3] observations that sustainable financing is essential for effective social protection systems. Without stable and sufficient funding, programs struggle to achieve long-term impact, highlighting the need for diversified funding sources and stronger financial planning mechanisms to improve sustainability and equity in service delivery.

4.4.2 Weak coordination

The findings indicated that weak coordination among stakeholders was a major challenge affecting orphan support programs in Iringa, with 53.5% of respondents rating it as a high challenge, 32.6% as moderate, and only 14.0% as low. This suggested that the implementation of orphan support services was often fragmented, with limited collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, and community-based organizations. As a result, service delivery was sometimes duplicated in some areas while other needs remained unmet.

These findings were related with existing literature, which has shown that poor coordination among actors in social protection systems often reduces efficiency and leads to gaps in service coverage, particularly in low-resource settings [1, 3].

Interviews findings further illustrated how coordination challenges affected program implementation in practice. During interviews, one program officer stated,

“We sometimes work in the same area as other organizations without knowing what they are doing, which leads to duplication of services.” Similarly, a participant in a focus group discussion (FGD) noted, *“Some children receive support from many groups, while others in nearby areas receive nothing at all.”*

These responses showed that lack of proper coordination mechanisms resulted in unequal distribution of resources and inefficiencies in service delivery. This observation aligned with Nakijoba [7], which reported that fragmented coordination among child-focused organizations often weakens the overall impact of support programs.

Respondents who rated coordination as a moderate challenge pointed to some level of cooperation, but with significant weaknesses in communication and planning. One caregiver explained,

“Sometimes organizations share information, but not regularly, so it is hard to know who is helping which child.”

This suggested that while coordination structures existed, they were not consistently applied or effective in ensuring smooth collaboration. Literature supports this view, indicating that weak inter-agency communication is a common barrier in multi-actor social protection systems, leading to inefficiencies and reduced accountability [11].

Those who perceived weak coordination as a low challenge were mainly associated with areas where local partnerships had been strengthened. However, even in these cases, respondents acknowledged that coordination was not fully effective. A community leader remarked,

“We try to work together, but sometimes meetings are irregular and plans are not fully followed.”

This reflected the broader systemic issue where coordination depends heavily on informal relationships rather than structured institutional frameworks. According to Herbst [1], sustainable child protection systems require strong coordination mechanisms that clearly define roles, responsibilities, and communication channels among stakeholders.

Therefore, the findings revealed that weak coordination significantly affected the effectiveness of orphan support programs in Iringa Municipal. It contributed to service duplication, unequal coverage, and inefficiencies in resource use. These challenges were consistent with global evidence showing that fragmented implementation structures weaken social protection outcomes. Strengthening coordination through formal collaboration frameworks, regular information sharing and integrated planning was therefore essential to improving the efficiency and impact of orphan support services.

4.4.3 Limited M&E systems

The findings revealed that limited monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems were a major challenge affecting orphan support programs in Iringa, with 60.5% of respondents rating it as a high challenge, 25.6% as moderate, and only 14.0% as low. This indicated that most programs lacked strong mechanisms for tracking performance, measuring outcomes, and assessing long-term impact on orphaned and vulnerable children.

The results suggested that while services were being implemented, there was insufficient systematic follow-up to determine whether these interventions were achieving their intended objectives. These findings were consistent with existing literature, which has shown that weak M&E systems are a common limitation in social protection programs in developing countries, where data collection, reporting, and accountability structures are often underdeveloped [6].

Further interviews highlighted how the absence of strong M&E systems affected program effectiveness. During interviews, one program officer explained,

“We provide support, but it is difficult to track each child’s progress over time because we do not have a strong monitoring system.”

Similarly, a participant in a focus group discussion (FGD) noted,

“Sometimes no one comes back to check if the child is really benefiting or if the situation has improved.”

These responses indicated that follow-up mechanisms were weak, making it difficult to assess whether interventions were producing meaningful and lasting changes in the lives of children. This aligned with Nakijoba [7], which reported that inadequate monitoring systems often reduce the ability of programs to adjust interventions based on real needs and outcomes.

Respondents who rated M&E systems as a moderate challenge pointed to some existing efforts, but with limited effectiveness. One caregiver stated,

“They sometimes visit or ask questions, but it is not regular, so we do not feel fully followed up.”

This suggested that monitoring activities existed but were inconsistent and not well structured. Literature supports this observation, noting that partial or irregular monitoring limits the ability of programs to generate reliable data for decision-making and improvement [11]. Without consistent tracking systems, programs struggle to identify gaps and respond effectively to beneficiary needs.

Those who perceived M&E systems as a low challenge were mainly involved in programs with basic reporting structures. However, even these respondents acknowledged weaknesses. A community leader remarked,

“We submit reports, but there is no strong system to evaluate long-term results for the children.”

This reflected a focus on output reporting rather than outcome-based evaluation. According to Petersen, Križ [6], effective child protection systems require robust M&E frameworks that go beyond reporting activities to assessing real changes in well-being, education, and psychosocial development.

Therefore, the findings showed that limited M&E systems significantly undermined the effectiveness of orphan support programs in Iringa Municipal. The absence of strong monitoring mechanisms reduced accountability, weakened learning processes, and limited evidence-based decision-making. This was consistent with global evidence indicating that without strong M&E systems, social protection programs risk failing to demonstrate their true impact. Strengthening monitoring frameworks was therefore essential to improving transparency, accountability, and long-term effectiveness of orphan support interventions.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, this study assessed the effectiveness of orphan support programs in Iringa from the perspectives of key stakeholders, including caregivers, program officers, community leaders, and orphaned children. The findings

revealed that while support programs provided important assistance particularly in education, health, and basic welfare, their effectiveness was generally moderate due to persistent gaps in psychosocial care, service consistency, and equitable access. Educational and health support were relatively more developed compared to psychosocial and shelter services, which remained the weakest areas. Stakeholders expressed mixed levels of satisfaction, with many acknowledging positive impacts on basic needs but also highlighting limitations in long-term well-being outcomes. Key challenges identified included inadequate funding, weak coordination among implementing actors, and limited monitoring and evaluation systems. Overall, the study concluded that although orphan support programs in Iringa Municipal contributed positively to improving children’s living conditions, their effectiveness was constrained by structural and operational challenges that limited their ability to fully address the holistic needs of orphaned and vulnerable children.

The study recommended that stakeholders involved in orphan support programs in Iringa should strengthen coordination mechanisms among government agencies, NGOs, and community-based organizations to ensure better alignment and avoid duplication of services. It also recommended that funding for orphan support programs be increased and diversified to improve sustainability and ensure consistent service delivery. Furthermore, greater emphasis should be placed on psychosocial and shelter support to address the emotional and long-term developmental needs of orphaned children, not only their basic material needs. The study also recommended the establishment of strong monitoring and evaluation systems to track program outcomes and improve accountability. In addition, capacity building for program implementers and social welfare officers was suggested to enhance efficiency and responsiveness. Finally, community participation should be strengthened to ensure that programs are more inclusive, context-specific, and responsive to the lived realities of orphaned children.

Future research should expand on this study by examining orphan support programs in other districts and regions of Tanzania to allow broader comparison of effectiveness across different socio-economic contexts. Further studies should also adopt longitudinal designs to assess long-term outcomes of support programs on the education, health, and psychosocial well-being of orphaned children over time. In addition, future work should explore the role of policy implementation at national and local levels in shaping program performance, with particular attention to coordination between stakeholders. Researchers should also consider incorporating larger sample sizes and more diverse participant groups to strengthen generalizability of findings. Moreover, there is a need for in-depth studies focusing on psychosocial interventions and how they influence resilience among orphans.

6.0 Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the management of Outreach Care International for their support, guidance, and cooperation throughout the course of this study. Their willingness to provide access to relevant information and facilitate the research process contributed greatly to the successful completion of this work. I am deeply grateful to my husband, Rev. Dr. Mpeli Mwaisumbe, for his continuous encouragement, understanding, and moral support. His patience and inspiration gave me the strength to complete this study. I also extend my heartfelt appreciation to my sons and daughters for their love, support, and understanding during the entire research period. Special thanks go to my friends for their encouragement and assistance in various ways. Finally, I would like to thank all respondents who participated in this study. Their time, openness, and valuable contributions made this research possible.

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