

Assessment of School Adjustment of Pupils Living in Orphanage Homes in Kwara State, Nigeria

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Abstract: The increasing number of orphaned children due different challenges raises concerns about their capacity to integrate successfully into formal education systems. Hence, this study assessed the school adjustment skills of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State, Nigeria. The research used descriptive survey design for the population of 835 primary school pupils living in 18 registered orphanage homes across Kwara State. The study targeted 146 primary school pupils, and census sampling was used due to the manageable population size. Data were gathered using a self-constructed instrument titled Pupils School Adjustment Rating Scale (PSARS), which was teacher-rated and comprised 15 items on a 4-point Likert scale. Face and content validity were established through expert review, while reliability was confirmed through a pilot study, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.90. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions, while ANOVA and t-tests were applied to test hypotheses at a 0.05 significance level. Results indicated a high level of school adjustment ($M = 3.35$), with no significant differences based on gender ($t = 0.269, p > 0.05$) or school location ($t = -0.191, p > 0.05$). However, a significant difference was found based on duration of stay in the orphanage ($F(2,142) = 8.307, p < 0.05$), with those staying 6–10 years showing better adjustment. The study concluded that a stable and supportive orphanage environment enhances pupils' school adjustment. It recommended strengthening caregiver orientation, promoting gender equity in school programs, and ensuring equitable teaching practices across orphanage home schools.

Keywords: School adjustment, pupils, orphanage homes

Introduction

Globally, millions of pupils face difficult circumstances such as lose of parents, abandonment, neglect, family disintegration, conflict, natural disasters, unintended pregnancies, unfit parenting, and the absence of extended family support. While every child deserves the care and stability of a nurturing family to develop strong socio-emotional skill and adapt effectively to school life, these pupils are deprived of regular parental care, making them one of the most vulnerable groups globally. This growing crisis has increased the demand for orphanage homes, which are residential institutions that provide shelter, care, and support for pupils without parental care, fostering their school adjustment and overall integration into society.

According to United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), there is an estimated number of 153 million orphaned pupils globally (UNICEF, 2024). A non-governmental organisation known as Save Our Soul (SOS) Children Village estimates that 17.5 million Orphans in Nigeria. The socio-emotional skill and competency of this group of pupils may seem different from those of pupils who receive sufficient parental care, attention, and bonding because they do not receive these forms of care and attention (Seeberg & Goździak, 2016). Socio-emotional skill involves the capacity to comprehend and regulate emotions, establish and maintain healthy relationships, and make ethical decisions (Adeyanju & Olufemi, 2021). When pupils start school, their ability to get along with others makes it easier for them to integrate and form friendships. Pupils who develop friendships tend to enjoy school more and achieve better academic outcomes (Adewale & Yusuf, 2023).

School adjustment is a critical developmental process that determines how well pupils adapt to academic, social, and emotional demands in educational settings. For pupils in orphanage homes, school adjustment is often more challenging due to the absence of parental care, emotional distress, and limited social support (Adewale & Yusuf, 2023). These pupils may struggle with forming relationships with peers and teachers, managing emotions, and coping with academic expectations, which can impact their overall well-being and educational success. In Nigeria, the increasing number of orphaned pupils due to loss of parents, conflict, and health-related crises highlights the need for a deeper understanding of how these pupils adjust to school life and the factors that support their successful integration.

Academic demands of school adjustment encompass a child's capacity to meet learning expectations, maintain engagement in classroom tasks, and cultivate a positive orientation toward schooling. Pupils who successfully adjust academically tend to demonstrate stronger motivation, better concentration, and greater resilience in overcoming educational challenges. Recent findings indicate that emotional stability, supportive teacher-student relationships, and an enriching learning environment are key contributors to academic adjustment, especially for vulnerable populations like pupils in orphanage settings (Okafor & Adeyemi, 2024).

Social demands in school adjustment involve enhancing communication, conflict resolution, and cooperative behaviours to foster a sense of belonging and emotional security. Research by Ogunleye & Ibrahim (2024) indicated that social demands ensure that pupils develop strong social adjustment skills, which are vital for promoting positive educational outcomes and long-term psychological well-being, and play a crucial role in helping pupils integrate successfully into school settings. Particularly for vulnerable pupils, such as those in orphanage homes, fostering social adjustment through supportive peer relationships and teacher guidance enhances both their academic engagement and overall school experience.

Emotional demands in school adjustment include managing stress, building relationships, coping with challenges, and developing a sense of belonging (Adewale & Yusuf, 2023). Pupils who struggle with emotional regulation often find it difficult to concentrate in class, interact positively with peers and teachers, and respond effectively to school routines. In orphanage homes, aspects such as parental absence, socio-economic status, and school climate significantly influence pupils ability to manage emotional demands in school, particularly among vulnerable groups like orphaned pupils, which may be different in boys and girls staying at the Orphanage homes.

Studies by Adewale and Yusuf (2023) have shown that boys and girls often exhibit differences in emotional regulation, social interactions, and coping mechanisms due to biological, social, and cultural influences. In many Nigerian orphanages, girls tend to demonstrate higher levels of empathy, emotional regulation, and social competence, which may be linked to societal expectations that encourage nurturing behaviours and emotional expressiveness in females. Boys, on the other hand, are often socialised to suppress emotions and exhibit independence, which can sometimes lead to difficulties in emotional expression and relationship building (Ogunleye & Ibrahim, 2024). Additionally, gender-based differences in Socio-Emotional Skill can affect school adjustment, peer relationships, and overall psychological well-being among orphaned pupils.

The duration of stay in an orphanage significantly influences the socio-emotional development of pupils, affecting their emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, and overall psychological well-being. Longer stays in institutional care can also impact pupils ability to express emotions and develop trust, as the lack of stable caregivers and frequent changes in social environments may hinder the development of secure attachments (Eze & Nwachukwu, 2024). Conversely, some studies indicate that pupils who receive consistent emotional support within orphanages may develop resilience and adaptive Socio-Emotional Skill over time, depending on the quality of care and peer interactions. The impact of duration in care is particularly relevant in Nigeria, where orphanages often vary in terms of caregiver-child ratios, available psychosocial support, and educational resources, all of which shape pupils socio-emotional competencies and school adjustment (Okafor & Adeyemi, 2024).

Depending on whether pupils in orphanage homes have their schools inside or outside the orphanage compound, pupils living there encounter particular difficulties that impact their socio-emotional growth and school transition. Herawati et al. (2023) underscored the significance of independence and self-regulation in orphaned pupils, emphasising that fostering self-directed behaviour, confidence, and emotional control is critical to their development. However, this can be hard to develop in orphanage homes because daily routines and strict rules often limit the pupils ability to make their own decisions. When these pupils go to schools outside the orphanage, where things may be very different and more socially demanding, it can be even harder for them to adjust and feel comfortable.

The school adjustment of pupils in orphanage homes is a multidimensional process influenced by Socio-Emotional Skill such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social competence. These skills shape pupils ability to build relationships, manage emotions, and engage effectively in academic settings. Factors such as gender and the duration of stay in institutional care further impact socio-emotional development, influencing pupils school experiences and long-term psychological well-being. Given the unique challenges faced by pupils in the orphanage homes, this study assessed the socio-emotional skill and school adjustment of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

School adjustment, particularly in orphanage homes, where pupils often face unique challenges due to a lack of parental care and limited social support systems. Despite various interventions by governmental and non-governmental organisations, including the United Nations Pupils Fund (UNICEF), aimed at improving the welfare of orphaned pupils, their socio-emotional well-being and school adjustment remain a critical concern. According to UNICEF (2024), 153 million pupils have lost at least one parent without much care from anyone. In Nigeria, the increasing number of orphaned pupils due to abandonment, parental incarceration, family disintegration, parental health issues, conflict, war, natural disasters, unintended pregnancies, unfit parenting, and the absence of extended family support highlights the need for a deeper understanding of socio-emotional development and school adjustment of these pupils living in orphanage homes.

Furthermore, inferences drawn from interactions with caregivers and teachers in orphanage homes in Kwara State suggest that limited attention is given to the structured development of socio-emotional skill, which could enhance pupils school adjustment. The lack of targeted interventions and comprehensive support systems for orphaned pupils may hinder their ability to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Therefore, this study seeks to assess the socio-emotional skill and school adjustment of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of school adjustment of pupils in orphanage homes in Kwara State,

Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

H0₁: There is no significant difference in school adjustment of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara state based on gender.

H0₂: There is no significant difference in school adjustment of pupils in Kwara State based on duration of stay in the orphanage.

H0₃: there is no significant difference in school adjustment of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State based on school location.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The survey method involved the use of rating scales as data collection tools to gather information from respondents. The study sought to assess socio-emotional skill of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State, Nigeria. The population for this study consisted of all 835 primary school pupils living in 18 registered orphanage homes across Kwara State, Nigeria, based on the records from the Kwara State Ministry of Social Development (2023). A census sampling method was adopted for this study due to the relatively small and manageable population size of 146 primary school pupils residing in 18 registered orphanage homes within Kwara State.

a self-constructed rating scale titled Pupils School Adjustment Rating Scale, which was used to gather information from the respondents, and was rated by the teachers of the pupils in the schools they attend. The rating scale contains two sections; Section A consists of Demographic Data (Gender and Duration in Orphanage Home and location of the school), and Section B consists of 15 closed-ended items on pupils adjustment to school settings. The items were rated on a 4-point Likert scale (3 = Sometimes, 2 = Rarely, and 1 = Never). To ensure the validity of the instruments, face and content validity was established. Pupils' Adjustment Rating Scale (PARS) was given to the lecturers in the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education, and experts in Test Measurement and Evaluation, Faculty of Education, Kwara State University, Malete. To ensure the reliability of the research instrument, a pilot study was conducted before the main study. This phase involved administering 20 copies of the instruments to pupils residing in different orphanage homes, situated outside Kwara State. The responses obtained from this pilot study were used to check the internal consistency, the reliability coefficient of the instrument was done using Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.90 for Pupils Socio-Emotional Skill Rating Scale (PSESRS). The data gathered were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentages, meaning, and standard deviation to answer the research questions. While analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypotheses, tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question One: What is the level of school Adjustment of pupils in Orphanage Homes in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Table showing the level of school Adjustment of pupils in Orphanage Homes in Kwara State, Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	Remark
1.	The pupil is always happy coming to school.	3.35	0.74	Always
2.	The pupil actively participates in class discussions and activities.	3.28	0.66	Always

3.	The pupil understands and follows instructions given in class.	3.41	0.63	Always
4.	The pupil demonstrates a positive attitude towards school activities.	3.23	0.60	Sometimes
5.	The pupil seeks help when they do not understand a task or subject.	3.48	0.60	Always
6.	The pupil manages stress related to school tasks effectively	3.18	0.54	Sometimes
7.	The pupil remains calm during school tests or assessments.	3.22	0.71	Sometimes
8.	The pupil endures when faced with challenges in school.	3.13	0.72	Sometimes
9.	The pupil can handle failure related to school tasks.	3.12	.767	Sometimes
10.	The pupil shows respect and cooperates with the teacher.	3.55	0.58	Always
11.	The pupil interacts well with peers in group work or activities.	3.39	0.61	Always
12.	The pupil feels comfortable asking for help from classmates when needed.	3.34	0.80	Always
13.	The pupil can easily make friends and maintain positive peer relationships.	3.52	0.54	Always
14.	The pupil participates actively in social activities or events in the school.	3.63	0.56	Always
15.	The pupil consistently complete class activity on time.	3.46	0.68	Always
Weighted average		3.35		

Decision: Never: 1.00-1.74, Rarely: 1.75-2.49 Sometimes: 2.50-3.24, Always : 3.25-4.00

Table 1 shows the level of school Adjustment of pupils in Orphanage Homes in Kwara State, Nigeria. The weighted average is 3.35, which is greater than 2.49, the baseline for positive opinion. This therefore shows a numeric indicator that the level of school Adjustment of pupils in Orphanage Homes in Kwara State, Nigeria was high.

Research Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in School adjustments of pupils living in Orphanage Homes in Kwara State based on gender.

Table 2: Summary of independent sample t-test showing difference in School adjustments of pupils living in Orphanage Homes in Kwara State based on gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	Sig.	Remark
Male	78	50.48	4.927	.269	141	0.78	Not Significant
Female	65	50.24	5.790				

Table 2 shows the significant difference in School adjustments of pupils living in Orphanage Homes in Kwara State based on gender. There was no significant difference in School adjustments of pupils living in Orphanage Homes in Kwara State based on gender ($t = .269$; $df = 141$; $P > 0.05$). Therefore, in the light of the result, the hypothesis is not rejected, it implies that there was no significant difference in School adjustments of pupils living in Orphanage Homes in Kwara State based on gender, since the significance level (.780) is greater than 0.05.

Research Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in School adjustments of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara state based on duration of stay in the orphanage

Table 3: The summary of ANOVA showing differences in School adjustments of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara state based on duration of stay in the orphanage

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	426.185	2	213.093		

Within Groups	3591.423	140	25.653	8307.	.000
Total	4017.608	142			

Table 3 showed a difference in School adjustments of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara state based on duration of stay in the orphanage. ($F_{(2,142)} = 8.307$; $P < 0.05$). Since the significance value is less than 0.05, the hypothesis is therefore rejected in light of the result.

Table 4: Summary of post Hoc pairwise comparison of differences in School adjustments of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara state based on duration of stay in orphanage

Duration	Mean	1-5 Years	6-10 Years	11 and above
1-5 Years	50.59		*	*
6-10 Years	51.58	*		*
11 and above	46.25	*	*	

Table 4 revealed that there is a significant difference in School adjustments of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara state based on duration of stay in orphanage:

1-5 Years

6-10 Years

11 and above

This implies that 6-10 years (Mean= 51.58) were significantly better than the other respondents (1-5 years and 11 and above).

Research Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in school adjustments of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State based on school location.

Table 5: Summary of independent sample t-test showing difference in school adjustments of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State based on school location

School Location	N	Mean	SD	T	Df	Sig.	Remark
Schooling within the Orphanage Home	44	50.25	6.56	-.191	141	0.15	Not Significant
Schooling outside the orphanage Home	99	50.43	4.70				

Table 5 shows the significant difference in school adjustments of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State based on school location ($t = -.191$; $df = 141$; $P > 0.05$). Therefore, considering the result, the hypothesis is retained; it implies that there was no significant difference in school adjustments of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State based on school location, since the significance level (.152) is greater than 0.05.

Discussion

The finding of the study reveals that the level of school adjustment among pupils in orphanage homes in Kwara State, Nigeria, was high. A possible reason for this could be that the pupils are provided with a stable and structured environment within the orphanage home and in school, including consistent routines, caregiver support, and access to educational resources, all of which may contribute positively to their ability to adapt to school life. The high level of school adjustment observed may indicate that, despite the absence of parental care, these pupils are developing social demands and emotional demands necessary to cope with academic and interpersonal demands in school. This outcome supports the position of Khurshid and Nighat (2021), who emphasized the importance of balancing personal needs with environmental demands to ensure students' overall adjustment and well-being. Similarly, Palak et al. (2017) found a strong link between school adjustment and academic motivation, arguing that students who are better adjusted are more motivated and perform better academically. Furthermore, Hacibekiroglu and Yilmaz (2019) demonstrated that school adjustment is significantly influenced by positive student-teacher relationships and peer interactions. While their study focused on first-grade pupils, its findings are relevant in showing that emotional and social connections within school settings are central to school adjustment. Altogether, these studies affirm that a nurturing institutional environment, such as that found in well-managed orphanage schools, can enable pupils to overcome the challenges associated with the absence of parental care and develop the skills necessary to thrive academically and socially.

The finding of this study indicates that there was no significant difference in school adjustment of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State based on gender. This suggests that both male and female pupils adjust to school life in similar ways, regardless of their gender. A possible explanation for this outcome could be that the structured nature of the school environment provides equal

access to academic, social, and emotional demands for both boys and girls, thereby creating a balanced environment that fosters school adjustment uniformly across genders. This result supports the findings of Odiba (2024), who reported that while female pupils may perform better academically, school adjustment was not significantly influenced by gender. Similarly, Amedu and Dwarika (2023) emphasized that although gender can moderate certain academic outcomes, the influence of teacher support and student engagement plays a more prominent role in school adjustment than gender itself. These findings suggest that equitable caregiving and educational opportunities within orphanage homes can minimize gender-based disparities in school adaptation.

The finding of this study indicates that there was a significant difference in school adjustment of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State based on the duration of their stay. This suggests that the length of time spent in the orphanage plays a vital role in shaping how well pupils adapt to the school environment. Those who have stayed longer in the orphanage may have had more time to adjust emotionally and socially, form consistent routines, and receive stable academic and emotional support, all of which contribute to smoother school adjustment. This result is consistent with the findings of Ashimolowo et al. (2023), who noted that adjustment strategies among orphans often develop over time and are influenced by the length of their stay in care. Similarly, Akpan and Akpakip (2024) found that emotional skill, which are often enhanced with time, significantly impact the social and academic adjustment of orphans. The study by Okon et al. (2020) also supports this view, emphasizing that continuity in caregiving and school attendance positively influences educational outcomes among orphans. Therefore, the longer duration of stay in a structured and supportive orphanage environment may provide pupils with the emotional stability and coping mechanisms necessary for successful school adjustment.

The finding of this study shows that there was no significant difference in school adjustment of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State based on school location. This implies that whether a pupil attends school within the orphanage or outside the orphanage does not substantially affect their ability to adjust to school life. One possible explanation is that the pupils receive similar levels of support and structure within the orphanage setting, which may play a more critical role in their school adjustment than the external environment. The caregiving environment, emotional support, and access to basic educational resources within the orphanage could serve as a basis against the potential disparities associated with different school locations. . Likewise, Alade (2021) and Unugo (2023) concluded that while school location may influence certain educational variables, it does not necessarily determine students' ability to adapt to school demands. This suggests that the internal stability provided by orphanage care can help mitigate location-based inequalities, promoting similar levels of school adjustment regardless of the location.

Conclusion

The findings of this study collectively highlight that pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State exhibit a high level of school adjustment, irrespective of gender or school location, while duration of stay in the orphanage significantly influences their adaptability. The structured and supportive nature of orphanage environments appears to offer consistent emotional, social, and academic support that fosters resilience and enables pupils to cope effectively with school-related challenges. These outcomes underscore the importance of sustained caregiving, stable routines, and equitable educational opportunities in promoting positive school adjustment among vulnerable populations. Therefore, efforts aimed at enhancing the well-being of orphans should prioritize the quality and consistency of care within institutional settings, recognizing its pivotal role in shaping academic and social success.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

In light of the high level of school adjustment demonstrated by primary school pupils in orphanage homes, teachers should maintain and enhance partnerships with orphanages to ensure ongoing academic support, psychological services, and access to extracurricular opportunities that facilitate positive school experiences.

Since gender did not significantly influence school adjustment, equal opportunities should be given to both male and female primary school pupils by the school administrators to participate in school programs, to support academic, social and emotional services adjustment-related activities without gender-based differentiation.

In view of the significant difference in school adjustment based on duration of stay, caregivers should develop structured orientation programs for new arrivals in orphanage homes to facilitate smoother academic transitions and promote faster social integration within school environments.

Given that school location did not significantly influence school adjustment of primary school pupils in orphanage homes, policymakers should ensure that both schools located within the orphanage and outside the orphanage should maintain equitable access to pupil-centered teaching methods, and inclusive learning environments

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