SOCIAL WORK ROLES AND THE WELLBEING OF ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN CALABAR MUNICIPALITY, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
The main focus of this study was on Social Work Roles and the Wellbeing of Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State, Nigeria. To achieve this, three specific objectives were formulated to guide the study thus: to examine the condition and challenges of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) and their wellbeing in Calabar Metropolis; to identify the roles of the government and non-governmental organization towards the wellbeing of orphans and vulnerable children in Calabar metropolis, and to examine the roles of social workers toward the vulnerable and orphan children and their wellbeing in Calabar Metropolis. These specific objectives were further used to formulate research questions and hypothesis for the study. Relevant literatures were reviewed based on the subject under discussion. The study was further supported by two theories: Human Capital theory and John Bowly's Attachment theory. The study employed the cross-sectional research design, the population of the study comprised of 371,022 as the main population of the study area. The sample size for the study was 150 respondents randomly selected from the total population of the study area. The questionnaire was the main instrument for data collection. The research utilized the primary and secondary sources of data collection. From the analysis of findings, the following recommendation was made amongst others: Social worker should help using social work skills in the enumeration of the effects associated to orphan and vulnerable children.

Introduction

A social worker is a professional who focuses on enhancing the overall wellbeing of the general population, assisting to meet the basic and complex needs of individuals and/or communities, prioritizing the vulnerable, orphans, oppressed, and those living in poverty. They contribute greatly to care, support, promotion of right, as well as empowerment of vulnerable populations (Bess and Collins, 2014).

The Social Work practice as a helping profession adopts the use of skills and theories of human behavioral and social system in alleviating and resolving social problems that affect individuals like: the vulnerable groups and communities (Asquith, 2005).

To this effect, social Work can also be seen as the professional activities that involves in helping individuals, groups, or communities to enhance the capacity for social functioning or improve the quality of life for everyone by working towards the enhancement of the social and physical environment (Ofem, et al, 2021).

Social workers believed in a society that takes care of its vulnerable mostly the orphans and other members that need support, in a world where children do not suffer from Hunger, abuse, check, illness and hardship. Social workers provide timely services to orphans and vulnerable children before dysfunction develops and include programs and activities such as parent education, nutrition education, family planning and premarital counseling across the globe (Otti, 2005).

Today social workers provide a wide range of services to orphans and vulnerable children across the globe. Some of the role social workers perform includes the role of broker or human services, re role of a teacher, counselor, an advocates, case manager and the role of an activist. Social worker as a broker links the orphans and vulnerable children to appropriate human services and other resources. The social worker is always placed in a position of being the professional person most likely to facilitate linkage between the Orphaned and vulnerable children and community resources. According to Sheafor (2004) as a human service broker the social worker must be knowledgeable about the various services and program available, maintain up-to-date assessment of each one's strengths and limitations.

The social worker as a teacher prepares the OVC with knowledge and skills necessary to prevent problems or enhance social functioning. The purpose of social work practice here is to help oversee change dysfunctional behaviour and learn effective patterns of social interaction, and effective service plan to orphaned and vulnerable children is a part of social work practice because it is an agreement to guide the shared efforts of households' members and sources that are present to support them in achieving change around specific behaviour that contribute to conditions that make their children vulnerable (AIHA, 2008).

Social workers in health care provide preventive education and counseling to individuals relating to family planning, nutrition, human growth and development social workers also advocate for the needs of orphans and vulnerable children at all levels of the environment including the OVCS families and Other Healthcare settings (FMWA, 2006). In the other hand, orphan and vulnerable children are children who have lost or modify the store but turns to any cause (UNICEF 2008). The death of parent to the child is an upsetting events (Report in World orphans, 2014), in most cases, rejection, aggression, idealization, and guilt. The parents' death affects the living system that children had been undergoing before (Mchau, 2010 in Ofem, 2020).

With the assertion above, the place of a social worker to orphans and vulnerable children cannot be overemphasized as their role can help to make or mar the orphans and as well bring them out of their daily challenges that seems to constraints their social functioning. The role of social worker encompasses the survival of the Orphaned and vulnerable as a result of the vulnerability of this set of children whose hope has become a thing of interest to the government non-governmental organization and the social workers.

To this effect social workers play Direct and indirect role using the three levels of social work which include the micro mezzo and macro in order to render effective services to the orphans and vulnerable children and become more result-oriented during their dealings with their clients and it is against this background that this research has become a study of interest.

Statement of problem

In 2003, the UN estimated the total number of orphans and vulnerable children to be over 34 million that is 12.3% of all children in the region. This increases of over 1.3 since 1990. According to Spiegel (2004), the highest concentrations of orphans and vulnerable are in countries that have a high HIV prevalence level or recently have been involved in armed conflict and it is noted that within the ambit of this countries, these children will suffer as a result

of this worst situation and they may miss out on their education and other factor that would aid the developmental processes. From the above local studies little has been done on the challenges affecting orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) in the western world and this has become a threat to its society.

In African orphans and vulnerable children are the most vulnerable in development countries, especially in sub-Saharan Mhcan. USAID (2010) estimated that of the 16.6 million children (aged 0-17) who have lost one or both parents to AIDs, 14.8 million are in Sub-Saharan Africa. Within Ethiopia, 5.5 million children, around 6% of the total population, are categorized as orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). OVC comprises almost 12% of Ethiopia's total children population. Over 83% of these OVC are living in rural settings of which 855.722 of them are orphaned and vulnerable children as a result of the death of one or both parents (Save the Child, UK, 2008).

Over the time and across the world, orphans and vulnerable children have been suffering from a lot of problems associated with these vulnerability factors. Some of the challenge they faced include hunger, lack of access to health and education, physical and psychological abuse, lack of love and affection and negative communities' attitude towards them (Berry and Guthrie, 2003).

In Nigeria, the responses to the crisis of orphans and children due to the death of parents has been largely support for most orphans and vulnerable children and their families but evidence of such good practice and services remains limited due to lack of autonomy, and unavailable active policy environment. It is also a thing of concern to state that, the impact of increasing prevalence of orphans and vulnerable street children is on the high number and these set of children are exposed to series of vulnerability within the ambit of street and on daily basis. The insufficient data available depicts a desperate picture of social exclusion, exploitation and abuse facing a large percentage of orphans and vulnerable children which in turn threatens their overall wellbeing in Nigeria. 39% of children aged between 5-14 years are engaged in sex; 43% of girls were married out before they were 18 years, high rate of infant, child and adolescent mortality, low access Id health care services, high malnutrition, and high burden disease, tow education enrolment, poor school performance, intra household neglect, maltreatment and undue harassment from other peers that vulnerable children encounter in Nigeria.

Failure for adequate platforms that will help in harnessing the problem of orphans and vulnerability this will adversely affect the country's chances to meet the other MDGs, as this will continue to pose a threat and impede efforts to reduce extreme poverty and hunger, provide universal primary education. With this, it has become a thing of interest to state that, there are many scholarly contributions regarding this research work, and I the researcher has found out a gab in knowledge that call for my attention. In Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State, there are some certain factors that brings about orphans and vulnerable children which later result to street and deviant children and this pose a threat to the peace of the city.

Conceptual review

The Concept of Social Work and it Roles

Social work is an academic discipline and practice based profession concern with meeting the basic needs of individuals, families, groups, communities and society as a whole to enhance their individual and collective well-being. Social work practice draws from areas such as psychology, sociology, health, political science, community development, law and economics to engage with systems and policies, conduct assessments, develop interventions and enhance social functioning and responsibility. The ultimate goal of social work is the achievement of social justice (Francis, 2005).

Historically, the practice of social work has a relatively modern and scientific origin and is generally considered to have developed out of the three strands, the first was individual case work a strategy pioneered by the charity organization Society in the mid-19th century which was founded by Helen Bosanquet and Octavia hills in London. Most historians identified community service as a pioneering organization of the social theory that led to the emergence of social work as a professional occupation. Community service had its main focus on individual case work. The second was social administration which include various forms of poverty relief of statewide poverty, relief could be said to have its roots in the

English poor law of the 17th century but was first systematized through the effort of Charity organization society, the third consisted of social action rather than engaging in the resolution of immediate individual retirement the emphasis was placed on political action working through the community and the group to improve their social conditions and thereby alleviate poverty.

This approach was developed originally by the settlement house movement. On the other hand, professional social work originated in 19th Century in England and had its roots in the Social and economic upheaval wrought by the industrial revolution in which was founded by Helen Bosanquet and Octavia hills in London, England, most historians identified community service as a pioneering organization of the social theory that led to the emergence of social work as a professional occupation. Community service had its main focus on individual case work. The second was social administration which include various forms of poverty relief of statewide poverty, relief could be said to have its roots in the English poor law of the 17th century but was first systematized through the effort of Charity organization society, the third consisted of social action rather than engaging in the resolution of immediate individual retirement the emphasis was placed on political action working through the community and the group to improve their social conditions and thereby alleviate poverty.

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While on the other hand, the roles of social workers have an immense impact on Communities and the people that occupy them. However, the social worker roles have shifted over the last few years and continues to evolve to match the rapid changes of the 21st century. Social workers who have grown to include crisis management as well as rules of empowerment and advocacy for The Orphanage and vulnerable children. Social workers can empower children in communities by encouraging them to take an active role in shaping social services mostly the ones that are between 15 to 18 years and above, providing education programs and enabling economic needs. A notable example is the inspiring story of Nafine who was abandoned at the age of 9 at night funeral in Lusaka, Zambia.

The challenges of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC)

Orphanhood and vulnerability of children are now the greatest threat to child development and wellbeing in many parts of the world, this problem threating children in many ways and different challenges caused by orphanhood vulnerability are frequently mentioned. African child policy forum (ACPF, 2014 in Ofem, et al, 2018) acknowledge that orphanhood and vulnerability are threats to children's well-being which are frequently accompanied with multi-dimensional problems including educational, psychological and social problems that can further expose children to less school enrollment and lack of access to education, physical and psychological abuse, lack of love and affection, negative communities attitude towards them, poor psychological well-being and poor social interaction.

United Nations program for HIV and AIDS and Catholic Relief Services (USAID & CRS, 2008) which have dealt with educational programs for Orphaned and vulnerable children noted that orphans and vulnerable children stand in particular needs of an educational intervention as they are amongst the children most in danger of becoming infected with HIV due to economic hardship reduce parental care and protection and increased susceptibility to abuse and exploitation. These factors contribute to the barriers orphans and vulnerable children face when pursuing an education. These challenges can be categorized as hidden the child, through impaired health including impaired development, and through emotional stress within the family including the child but adding the Dynamics of the family function as a group, within the community and within the school system and the school.

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2006) noted that serious barriers to school enrollment of orphans and vulnerable children includes the Direct costs to households which is not just school fees, board textbooks, educational access to school supplies and compulsory uniforms. Orphans and vulnerable children are even less noted that serious barriers to school

enrollment of orphans and vulnerable children. With the assertion above, it has become evidence that the roles of social workers to OVC are very pivotal and vital to the optimal functioning of OVC across the globe and in Nigeria and should not be taken for granted for the betterment of the society.

Theoretical framework

Human capital theory by Theodore Williams Schultz (1961)

Human capital theorist argues for investment in people most especially the orphans and vulnerable children's Education and health care, risking a short -term loss of resources for long term gains. According to human capital theory, economic growth depends not only on the nation's physical capital (such as roads) but also on the education and health of poor children. Human capital theorist suggest that schooling promotes economic and social development because the benefits to the individual spill out to help society.

Theodore William Schultz introduced his theory of human capital in the early 1960s during his presidential address at the eleventh-thirty annual meeting of the American Economic Association. In 1961, published an article in the American Economic review entitled "investment in Human capital", asserted that the transition from traditional to modern society require investment in people. This investment in orphans and vulnerable children through Education and health care create human capital. He argued that both knowledge and skills are a form of capital, and this capital is a product of deliberate investment that can harness the challenges of raced by OVC.

He went to state that Education, training and investments in education and health can create opportunities and choices that otherwise would be unavailable to many children, and further compares the acquisition of knowledge and stills to acquire the "means of production," where workers no longer have to be at the mercy of others, instead they can be in control by increasing their own productivity and earnings.

To him, investment in OVC must focus on supporting them to acquire an education, since it is skill and knowledge that affect one's ability to do productive work and be self-independent. He believes that investment on OVC enhance self-realization, capacity to deal with challenges and conditions, and human productivity. He thus argued that the role of social worker, government and -nongovernmental organization to invest on the OVC following the assertion of the theory, and in partnership to making sure that the full social functioning of the OVC is restore. To him, the social workers should note they owe the OVC a responsibility of rendering achieve and outstanding service within a short limited time and framework of social work ethics.

This theory is relevant to this study because society which encompasses the government, non-governmental organization and the social workers to partner in order to invest on the OVC as a group for the sake of effectiveness and make OVC become more productive and also increase the opportunities and choices open to them.

John Bowlby's Attachment Theory (1958)

Bowlby's attachment theory was propounded in the year (1958), the theory was new departure in object relations which went onto attain independent theoretical status. Attachment theory is built on the object relations principles of the primacy of this relationship and relational structure of the self, and goes same way in providing objective evidence for object relations concepts. Bowlby believe that when a child is faced with lacks, such a child is detached from the relationship that he or she initially lean on for survival but look for a way to access his/her wellbeing.

He further stress that, the relationship between the orphan children and the social worker is to earn a satisfactory wellbeing and the social worker must take into cognizant of his role to the orphan and vulnerable children effectively in order to maintain attachment that will help foster development and wellbeing of the orphan children.

Methodology

A research design is a structural framework for conducting a research. Its methods are essential part of the research because they determine to a large extent which analysis the outcome to expect from a study. When the

design is badly done, it could lead to margin error in the result generated (Levin, 2015). The study employed a cross sectional design to investigate the roles of social workers to orphan and vulnerable children in Calabar Metropolis of Cross River State. A cross section design is a study that is conducted within a short period of time. This method will assist the researcher to study the characteristics of interest experiences and perception of people towards the roles of social workers on orphans and vulnerable children at a particular point in time (Olsen and St. George, 2004; Lechi, 2000). This study will be a triangulation of both qualitative and quantitative research method of data collection and analysis.

Calabar metropolis is the capital of Cross River State which comprises of Calabar Municipality and Calabar South Local Government Areas. For the purpose of precision, the study would focus on Calabar South. Calabar South Local Government Area is in the southern senatorial district of Cross River State. The headquarter is located at Anantigha. Geographically, Calabar South is bounded by Calabar Municipality Local Government Area in the north. Its southern shores are bounded by the Atlantic Ocean to the East by Akpabuyo Local Government Area.

The population for this study is those residing in Calabar South and Calabar Municipal Local Government Area in Cross River State. The population consists of civil servants, business men and women, farmers, youth, students in the study area. The population stand currently at three hundred and seventy-one thousand twenty-two (371,022) population of National population of Nigeria and National Bureau of Statistics (Web). The population projection assumes the same rate of growth for all the local government area with the state. The under count 1991 census is estimated to be about (25 million). The population figures for Nigeria shows high error rate, census result are disputed. It is from the population the sample for the study would be drawn. The targeted sample size is 150 that would be drawn from the population of 191,630 respondents from all council wards that will be selected.

Findings

Table 4.1: Percentage distribution of respondents by sex

Sex	Respondent	Percentage (%)
Male	90	52.5
Female	70	47.5
Total	150	100

The table above shows that 80 respondents representing 52.5 are male while 70 respondents representing 47.5% females in the population.

Table 4.2: Percentage distribution of respondents by age

Age (%)__	Respondent	Percentage
15-25	30	20
26-35	40	27.5
36-45	50	32.5
46 and above	30	20
Total	150	100

Source: *Field survey, 2024*

The table above shows that 30 respondents representing 20 percent were between the ages of 15-25, 40 respondents representing 27.4 percent were between the ages of 26-35, 50 respondents representing 32.5 percent were between the ages of 36-45, which makes the highest percent, while 30 respondents representing 20 percent are between the ages of 46 and above.

Table 4.3: Percentage distribution of respondents by Educational qualification

Educational Qualification	Respondent	Percentage (%)
FSLC	30	20
O'Level	50	35
B.Sc	30	20
M.Sc	20	12.5
Ph.D	20	12.5
Total	150	100

Source: Field survey, 2024

The above table shows that 30 respondents representing 20 percent had acquired FSLC. Analysis from the table also shows that the highest percentage of respondents was concentrated with in the O' level cadre who are mainly undergraduate students, consisting 35 percent of the respondents. 20 percent of the respondents were of first degree cadre. 12.5 percent of the respondents were of the master degree cadre while 12.5 percent of the respondents belong to the Ph.D cadre.

Data analysis

This section focuses on testing the different hypotheses that was formulated for the. study. Chi-square (x2) statistical tool was adopted for this study.

Hypothesis one:

H0: There is no significant relationship between the conditions and challenges of the orphans and vulnerable children and their wellbeing in Calabar Metropolis

Hi: There is a significant relationship between the conditions and challenges of the orphans and vulnerable children and their wellbeing in Calabar Metropolis

Table 4.7: Contingency table showing the relationship between the conditions and challenges of orphans and vulnerable children and their wellbeing in Calabar Metropolis

Responses	**Respondents**		**Total**
	Male	Female	
Strongly agree	49	17	66
Agree	27	35	62
Disagree	4		15
Strongly disagree		7	7
Total	80	70	150

Source: Field survey, 2024

Table 4.4: Chi-square computation for expected frequencies showing the relationship between the conditions and challenges of orphans and vulnerable children and their wellbeing in Calabar Metropolis

Responses	Respondents		Total
	Male	Female	
Strongly agree	66x80 = 35,2	66x70 = 30.8	66
	150	150	
Agree	62x80 = 33.1	62x70 = 28-9	62
	150	150	
Disagree	15x80 = 8	15x70 = 7	15
	150	150	
Strongly disagree	7x80 =8	7x70 = 3.3	7
	150	150	
Total	80	70	150

Conclusion

It has been shown that the causes of orphaning and vulnerability among others include government in ability take active measures, deaths of one parents, inadequate polices, communal clashes and the non-availability of social work services etc. government to a very large extent has some quota to contribute towards checkmating the problem of orphan & vulnerable children in our communities. Government and non-governmental organization through the assistance of social should use their interacted roles to implement preventive measures that will cut across all the OVC that will be geared toward raising the OVC above poverties by given them better opportunities that will help in their problem and challenges. Social workers with the orphans and vulnerable children should come up with effective interventive including psychological debriefings, educational enrollment, social and physical rehabilitation in order to restore the social overall functioning at the OVC.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were presented to curb the problems and challenges as well as the prevalence of orphans and vulnerable children in Calabar Metropolis.

i. Government and non-governmental organizations should create programmes that will help curb and promote the wellbeing of the OVC.

ii. Government should support OVC on how they can be enrolled into vocational skills training. Invest in vocational skills acquisition that stands to promote the wellbeing of the OVC.

iii. Parents and guardian should take full responsibilities of their children taken into cognizance of the effect of children under orphanage and vulnerability care.

iv. Social worker should help using social work skills in the enumeration of the effects associated to orphan and vulnerable children.

v. A data base should be created in order to get the number of children who are orphans and vulnerable in order to know the level of its prevalence and how to best curb it.

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