AN ASSESSMENT OF PSYCHOSOCIAL CHALLENGES OF CHILDREN IN CHILD HEADED HOUSEHOLDS IN KASARANI CONSTITUENCY, KENYA.

Submitted by
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This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the award of a Masters of Development Studies (MDS) from St. Paul's University.

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September 2012

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Dedication

To my son Sylvester and daughter, Mercie you are my school of parenting; and my late mum, Martha who ensured that I was schooled, guided and loved all my childhood ; to all the children who reach out to assist fellow children- never forget that in so doing, you light a candle for someone in the darkness of life.

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Abstract

Providing care and support for vulnerable children is one of the biggest challenges in Kenya today. There is the growing numbers of children without a constant primary care giver, (Meintjes et al,2010).This situation seem to overwhelm both human and capital resources in society in general. According to the research findings ,child vulnerability is a distressing consequence of not only HIV and AIDS, but also high poverty levels, neglect in parenting and adults irresponsibility. This situation has resulted in children taking care of fellow children, even without having grown up themselves.

This study sought to assess the magnitude of effects on personal attributes and especially the impact on lifeskills development of the child in a child headed.It also tied to articulate the emotional traumas of children who have to shoulder the burden of providing themselves not only basic survival needs and emotional support.

The complex issue of acknowledging the existence of Child headed house holds is compounded by very little research in this area and hence lack of data to make the phenomenon well understood. This study herein sought to confirm the existence of child headed households right in the periphery of the city of Nairobi, precisely in Kasarani constituency. The research also aims at clarifying emotional and cognitive difficulties encountered by children growing up in households lacking in firm guidance and care of a parent figure .A descriptive survey was carried out in Kasarani constitiuency ; where both qualitative and quantitative data was collected. Questionnaires were filled by adults in position of responsibility, who were perceived to have direct link with child welfare. Ten adults were sampled. The 24 children sampled were adolescents purposely sampled as they were identified to be living in households without an adult guide. An observation checklist was also filled on characteristic of the child respondent. Triangulation in this study enabled the researcher to acquire different perspectives on the children's situation and community reaction to the needs of the children. This increased the trustworthiness of information generated herein. The findings show that there is quite a big group of children who have taken up *siblings parenting*. There seems to be a subtle agreement of the need for siblings to stay and grow together to keep family identity .It is also a reaction to society which they interpret as stigmatizing of their situation. The findings also indicate that the children in such household have bottled up emotional problems, which impede their maximization of their potentials. The researcher proposes that mitigation for vulnerable children take cognizance of child led households, involve the child in mitigation programmes so that actual needs are addressed. Further the researcher recommends that care and support should include measures to foster psychosocial competences in children. There is need to carry out further qualitative research for better practices in child care and to foster development of positive attributes in children.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge God my helper, for faith in Him has enabled me reach this far.

I will not fail to take this opportunity to acknowledge my supervisor, Dr.Chemorion who despite all my short comings and inconsistency journeyed with me through the rough waters of adult learning. I wish to thank all the 2009-2011 lecturers of the MDS course and especially our HOD, Dr. Charity Irungu for her patience, commitment and guidance to a group that had so many dynamics and her zeal to see the establishment of Christian based development officers in service of the people, God bless the work of your hands.

Charles my dear husband and special friend who sat up many lonely hours to keep me company in writing things that were of least interest to him. He also bought me a lot of reading materials and bore with my technological illiteracy in buying and reading on line material but never a day did he give up on me. I also wish to thank Mrs. Monica Kilonzo ,a mentor in my career who literally pushed me to acquiring higher education even in the face of parenting and tough career times, you are my 2nd mother ,madam.

Special thanks go to the various respondents especially the children who opened their hearts and inner secrets to my team. My prayers will always be with you. Lastly my two research assistants, Wilson Mungai and Florence Njeri for your commitment to duty for the two weeks we worked together. May the field based experience help you grow in your service to people.

All those who in one way or another have said a word of encouragement, you ensured that I never gave up, you are my hand in times of confusion, and may God bless you all.

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Table of Contents **Page**

Title page…….. i

Declaration…… ii

Dedication…… ….iii

Abstract…… …..iv

Acknowledgement…… …..v

Table of content…… …..vi

List of figures ……viii

List of tables……ix

Abbreviation and acronyms……x

CHAPTER 1.0 INTRODUCTION…….... 1

1.1 Background to the study…….. ..1

1.2 Statement of the problem……..... 2

1.3 Objectives of study……..... 3

1.4 Research questions…… .3

1.5 Significance of study…… .3

1.6 Justification of the study……...4

1.7 Scope…… .5

1.8 Delimitation and limitation of study……..5

1.9 Definition of terms…… ...6

CHAPTER 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW……..8

2.1 General state of the child in sub-Saharan Africa…… .8

2.2 Ecological model of human growth and development…… .9

2.3 personality development……11

2.3.1 Personality development by Erik Erickson……..11

2.3.2 Psychosocial development……..... 12

2.3.3 Attachment and psychosocial development…….. 14

2.4 Stress in children and the problems of adjustment…….. 15

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2.5 Vulnerable children…….. 16
2.5.1 Child Headed House Holds and vulnerability…….. 16
2.5.2 Effects of Poverty on children in Child Headed Households……...17
2.5.3 Causes of poverty for the child head of household……19
2.6 Care for orphans and vulnerable children……..... 20
2.6.1African traditional family and care of orphans…….. .21
2.6.2 Biblical guide on care of orphans and the venerable…… 23
2.6.3 Family dynamics in the 20th century and care for the vulnerable child….. 24
2.7 Child Rights and the issue of child heading siblings…….. 25
2.8 Conceptual frame work……... 28
2.9 Chapter Summary…… 30
CHAPTER 3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY……..31
3.1 Research design…… 31
3.2 Target Population……. .31
3.3 Sampling and Sample Population…….. 32
3.4 Research Instruments…… 32
3.5 Reliability and validity: ……..... 33
3.6 Data Management & Analysis……33
3.7 Ethical Consideration…… 34
CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS……..35
4.1 Quantitative phase…… 35
4.1.1 Summary of Findings from the Key Informants…… 38
4.1.2 Summary of Findings from the children…….42
4.1.3 Data from observation of children……..….53
4.2 Qualitative phase……54
4.3 Summary of findings……..…….61
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS……62
5.1 conclusion…… …..62
5.2 Recommendations……..…. …64
References……66
Appendices……...

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List of figures Page

Figure 1: A representation of effects of poverty in child headed household……. 18

Figure 2: Conceptual framework…… 28

Figure 3: Age distribution of key informants..…… 36

Figure 4: Gender of key informants.……36

Figure 5: Position held by the key informants in the neighborhood……37

Figure 6: Age of child respondent in the study…….. .42

Figure 7: Gender of child respondent …… 43

Figure 8: Time use for children in CHH…… 48

Figure 9: Issue of play for children in CHH…… 49

Figure 10: Support sources…….. 51

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List of tables **Page**

Table 1: Awareness of CHH…… 38
Table 2: Difficulties faced by children……39
Table 3: children and how they spend their time…… ……... 40
Table 4: Rating of children in CHH…….. 41
Table 5: Source of livelihood for CHH…… 44
Table 6: Sources for authority and guidance for CHH……..45
Table 7: Difficulties experienced by Children CHH……46
Table 8: Relations with relatives ……..…… 50
Table 9: Support for CHH…….. 52
Table 10: Summary of observations of the child respondent……..……53

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Abbreviations and acronyms

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CHH	Child headed household
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
HIV	Human Immuno-Deficiency Virus.
KDHS	Kenya Demographic and Health Survey
NGO	Non governmental Organization
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
OVC	Orphaned and Vulnerable Child
UN-	United Nations
UNAIDS -	United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP-	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF-	United Nations Children's Education Fund

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APPENDICES

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CHILDREN

(Please ensure that you let the child know you will be asking questions but he/she is not obligated to answer but you would appreciate if all questions are answered. Remember to discuss the use of the information being gathered it is essentially for academic purpose, but should a forum arise for its greater sharing to the benefit of all children who find themselves in such situation then information shared will protected the source of the information .The name or description of this particular child will not be given.)

1. Age of child: _____ 2. Gender: male_____ Female_____

3. Schooling or not schooling: _____

If not schooling what is the child engaged in?

_____

_____

4. Use the table below to capture data on the child source of authority and guidance.

Query	**Brother/s**	**Sister/s**	**cousins**	**grandparents**	**Others(specify)**
Who stays with you?					
Who reads your report book?					
Who takes care when you are sick?					
Who pays for the house?					
Who gets you clothes?					
Who cooks food ?					
Who disciplines at home?					

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5. What are some of the difficulties you are experiencing where you are living now?

_____
_____
_____
_____

(b)Probe further into the difficulties raised.

_____
_____
_____

(c) How is she/he trying to overcome the difficulties?_____
_____
_____
_____

6. (i) Do you have friends? Probe on age and where they live and what they do?

_____
_____
_____

(ii)When you want to share good news whom do you talk to?

_____

(iii)What of when issues are tough whom do you go to?_____

(iii) Why is that person picked out as important?

_____
_____
_____

(iv) Do you have free time, do you enjoy play?

_____
_____
_____

(People's skills.)

7. Do you know of any of your relatives? If **Yes** how do they relate with them?

_____

8 Do your teachers and fellow students support you in any way?

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_____
_____

- Is there support that comes from

Religiousgroup:_____
_____

socialworker:_____
_____

NGO.:_____
_____

Neighborhood:_____
_____

9. What support would you want to be given to your family by;

- Neighbours:_____
  _____
- Thechurch:_____
  _____
- NGOs:_____
  _____
- relatives:_____
  _____
- government:_____
  _____

Note: Remember to thank the child for his/her time and give room for future counseling if they will be interested.

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QUESTIONAIRE FOR KEY INFORMANTS

The researcher is undertaking a study on vulnerable children in Kenya. This is work is being undertaken for academic purpose. The researcher seeks information on children living in households without daily adult guidance and attention; the research is seeking an in-depth understanding of the psychosocial impact of this living arrangement on the child. Any information shared herein will be treated with utmost respect and confidentiality. Please respond to all the questions.

The researcher is grateful for your time and support.

Demographic data

1. Approx age of respondent.

   20 – 30 ☐
   31 – 40 ☐
   41 – 50 ☐
   51 and above ☐

2. Gender M ☐ F ☐

3. Position held in the neighborhood?

   (Councilor, chief, teacher, shop keeper, Religious leader)

   If others, please specify: _____

4. a) Are you aware of children in this area who do not live with any one of their parent?

   No._____ Yes_____

   b) If **yes** , Please explain briefly who takes care of the children's daily needs

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

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5. What are some of the difficulties you have known to be faced by children in such homes?

(**Tick as many as possible**)

Issue	**Most of the time**	**Sometimes**	**Never**
Availability of food			
Attendance to school			
Sickness			
Fights or bullying			
Lack of motivation/Happiness			
Lack of love and guidance			
Cleanliness and care			
Shelter			
Tired and sleepy			
Others (specify)			

6. What are the most common activities that these children spend their time on?
Please explain briefly

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____.

7. What is your understanding of children growing up alone in a house without adult supervision?

_____
_____
_____

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8. Use the table below to rate children growing up alone in a household without adult supervision.

Area of interest	**highly**	**Average**	**Lack**
Discipline			
Maturity			
Self esteem			
problematic			
Affectionate with strangers (clinginess)			
Anxiety			
Peer relations			
Self expression			

(b) Give a brief explanation for the observations made above.

_____
_____
_____

9. In your own opinion what should be done about children living on their own in this neighborhood.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you so much for your time and knowledge shared.

Mungu akubariki.

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Observation checklist for the respondent child

(This should be marked immediately after the one to one interview with the child)

Gender: Male: ___ Female: _____ Age: _____ Code: _____

Issue	**Yes**	**No**
Vibrant/high self-esteem		
Clean and organized		
Healthy		
Good people skills		
Articulate & focused		
Trusting		
Traumatized		
Clingy		
Futuristic and hopeful		
Negative self concept		
Phony and cunning		

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