

Psychological Challenges Affecting Primary School Going Orphans In Wanganui Community, Zimbabwe.

Mbwirire John, Madubani Albert

Abstract: This study sought to identify psychological challenges affecting primary school orphans in Wanganui Community in Zimbabwe. The study employed a mixed method approach combining questionnaires with teachers and care givers, interview sessions with orphans and in-depth interviews with community social/development worker. The study finds that lack of love, lack of attention and withdrawal were the main signs and symptoms of psychological challenge in the community. The study revealed that the term and symptoms of psychological challenges were understood differently between African context and Western context. The study recommended that action must be taken as soon as possible once the signs and symptoms which include lack of love, lack of attention to rectify the psychological challenges faced by the community.

Key words: Psychological challenges, orphans, poverty, academic performance

Introduction

The community is experienced an increase in number of orphaned children in the last ten years mainly due to HIV/AIDS and related diseases. Wanganui community is located 6kilometres south of Turf Growth point, and is a resettlement area. Initially the area was designed for wildlife and cattle ranching but after 1980 it was converted to resettlement area where communal farming was practised but with little success. This community is situated between Munyati and Ngezi rivers. People in the community resort to garden farming but as it demands a lot of capital, the majority of them could not manage to raise that capital. Instead people ended up looking upon the government and donations from well-wishers which constantly chipped in whenever there is food crisis yet the assistance is not enough to sustain the community. Since 2000 farming did not produce enough for proper living standards in the community. Many people ended up engaging in all sorts of anti-social behaviours like in prostitution at a nearby Turf Growth Point. Mining and poaching in surrounding conservative farms becomes the order of the day. The mining taking place at nearby Turf growth point attracted a lot of people like commercial sex workers, young men and young women who came to look for employment. Young children came to stay with relatives, friends of families and extended families in Wanganui community looking for better life and better education facilities offered at the nearby Turf Growth Point. The economic hardships gave rise to the number of people who died of HIV/AIDS and other related diseases had sped up the number of orphaned children in the community. As a result many children were loitering at the growth point; boys and girls employed as garden boys domestic workers respectively. Young girls as early as twelve years engage in prostitution and young boys made to look after gardens and fields for pests and animals instead of attending school.

Most of the children in the Wanganui community especially orphans, devoted much of their time and effort on income generating activities like selling agricultural products at the market at the growth point, so that they can look after the siblings. Girls in particular took care of aging grandparents and ailing parents or relatives due to rampant HIV/AIDS and other related diseases in Wanganui community. The increasing number of orphans is one of the most serious challenges in developing countries worldwide. In 2001 the World Bank found out that 2 000 children lost their parents due to HIV /AIDS in the year 2000 alone making a child an orphan every 14 seconds that year. According to the World Vision (2005:1) more than 15 million children most of them in Sub Sahara have lost one or both parents. According to UNICEF (2001; 1) the unprecedented economic decline in Zimbabwe resulted in 50% contraction of GDP and pushing two-thirds of the population below the poverty datum line. As a result this decline contributed a lot in increasing poverty particularly for orphaned children (UNICEF, 2005). Zimbabwe has an estimated 1,6 million orphaned children and only 5000 about 0,3% of them are living in institutions with the rest being cared for by their immediate family members, the extended families or neighbours (National AIDS Council,2001). In Wanganui community there are no such institutions like orphanage or children's home therefore, all orphans are living under the assistance of caregivers or as child headed family members. This study was prompted by the fact that more orphans were dropping out of school temporarily, permanently or never attended school at all due to different psychological challenges which were associated with ever-growing economic hardship and changing relationships within the households. Therefore, the study wanted to identify the psychological challenges and their impact on orphans in the community.

Statement of the Problem

There are limitations which hinder proper or normal development of orphans than children staying with their parents. This warrants this study to work on the question; what are the psychological challenges affect school attendance of orphans in Wanganui community?

- Mbwirire John, Madubani Albert
- Faculty of Applied Social Science, Zimbabwe Open University, P.O.BOX MP 1119 MT Pleasant, Harare Zimbabwe. E-mail: tkjmbwirire@yahoo.com

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the psychological challenges faced by orphans in Wanganui community.

Research Objectives

- To identify the psychological challenge faced by orphans.
- To assess impact of psychological challenges faced by orphans in attending school.

Research Questions

- What is your understanding of the term psychological challenge?
- How do psychological challenges affect orphans?

Methodology

The study used the descriptive survey design which incorporates the Case Study approach. This study was descriptive in nature. By handing out questionnaires and conducting interviews sessions, the research study followed the lane of descriptive research.

Study Area

Wanganui community is located 6 kilometers south of Turf

Growth point, and is a resettlement area in Midlands Province in Zimbabwe. Initially the area was designed for wildlife and cattle ranching but after 1980 it was converted to resettlement area where communal farming was practiced but with little success. This community is situated between Munyati and Ngezi rivers.

Population

The population under study consists of about 112 people who include 23 teaching staff, 2 community social workers, 55 orphans and 32 care givers.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for this study was 41 comprising of 15 teachers, (respondents to questionnaires), 20 care givers (respondents to questionnaires), 5 orphans (informants through interview sessions) and 1 community social worker (for in-depth interviews). In this study the researchers used the simple random sampling technique to come up with participants for survey data using questionnaires and purposive sampling to identify participants for the case study data. Expert sampling (a type of purposive sampling) was used to select the key informants for purposes of conducting in-depth interviews.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

➤ DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Fig 1 below indicated that 54% female and 46% males were participants in the study.

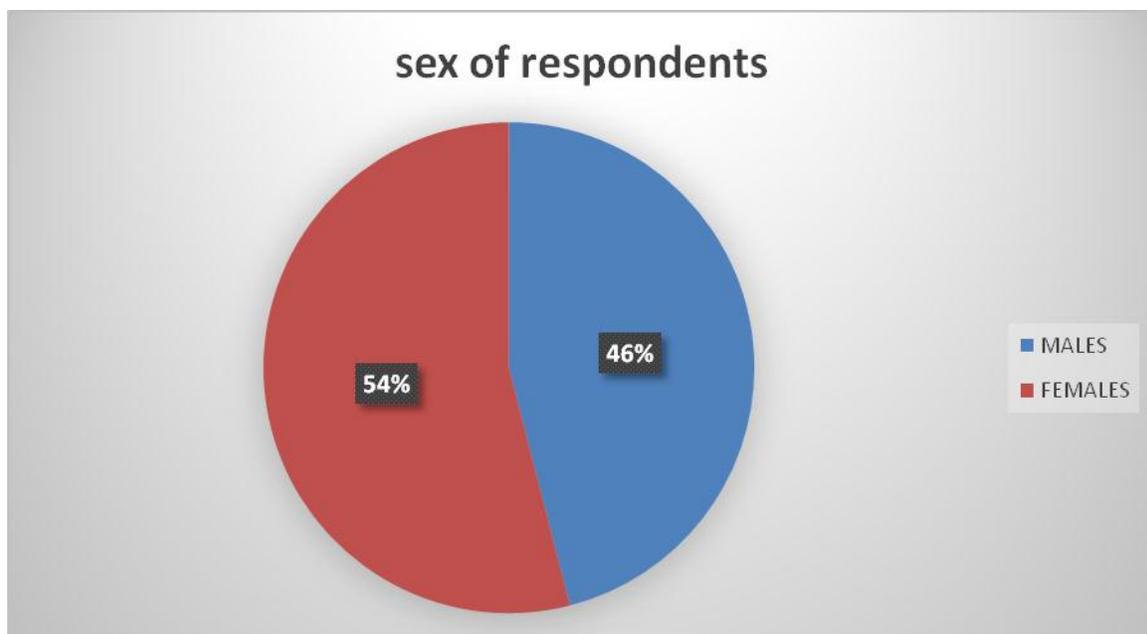


FIG 1: SEX OF TEACHERS (N=15)

The demographic data indicated that there are more females who participated in the research than males. This is so because there are more women who are looking after orphans in the community. Again there are more female orphans than male orphans and in general the population of the female is studying greater than males. Fig 1 above shows that there were slightly more females than the male.

Therefore males dominated the findings of the research. This is because females were marginalised in taking the leading roles in school like administrators or other high post year the total population indicated that there are more females than males.

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

Fig 2 below indicated that no participant had certificate in teaching. 78% of the respondents had diploma in

education, 11% had degree and also 11% had master's degree. No one had P.H.D

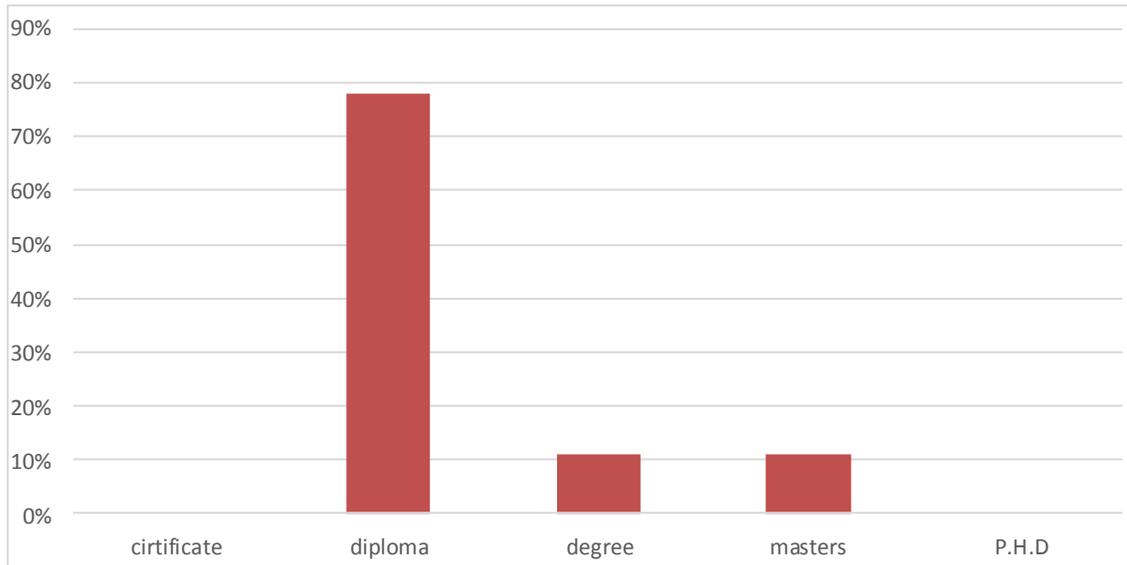


FIG 2: EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF TEACHERS (N=15)

The participants were all qualified since the minimum qualification is diploma in education. According to the findings most teachers possess diploma in education as compared to the first degree in education and master's degree. This shows that teachers were content with their basic qualification of teaching instead of pursuing further. Also the Fig 3 indicated that the majority of the teaching staff was inexperienced because they had 0-9 years of teaching experience. Only the minority were quite

experienced.

LENGTH IN SERVICE FOR TEACHERS

Considering duration in service, Fig 3 below indicated that 78% were between 0-9 years of teaching experience. There was no respondent between 10-19 years and 22% of the respondents were between 20-29 years of teaching experience.

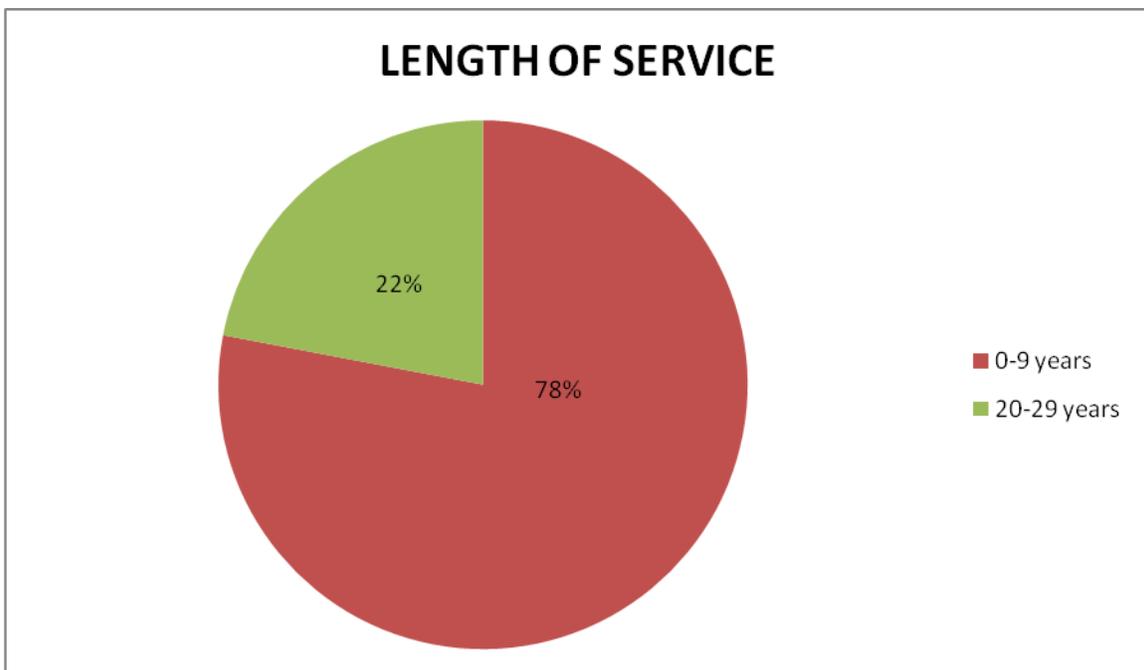


FIG 3: WORKING EXPERIENCE (N=15)

Length of service for teachers was unsatisfactory because majority of participants had no or little experience in working with children. Only the minority were quite experienced. The minority comprised of the administrators of the school.

NUMBER OF ORPHANS IN CLASS

Fig 4 below shows that age range 1-5 had 56%, age range 6-10 had 22% and age range 11-15 had 22% while 16 and above had nothing.

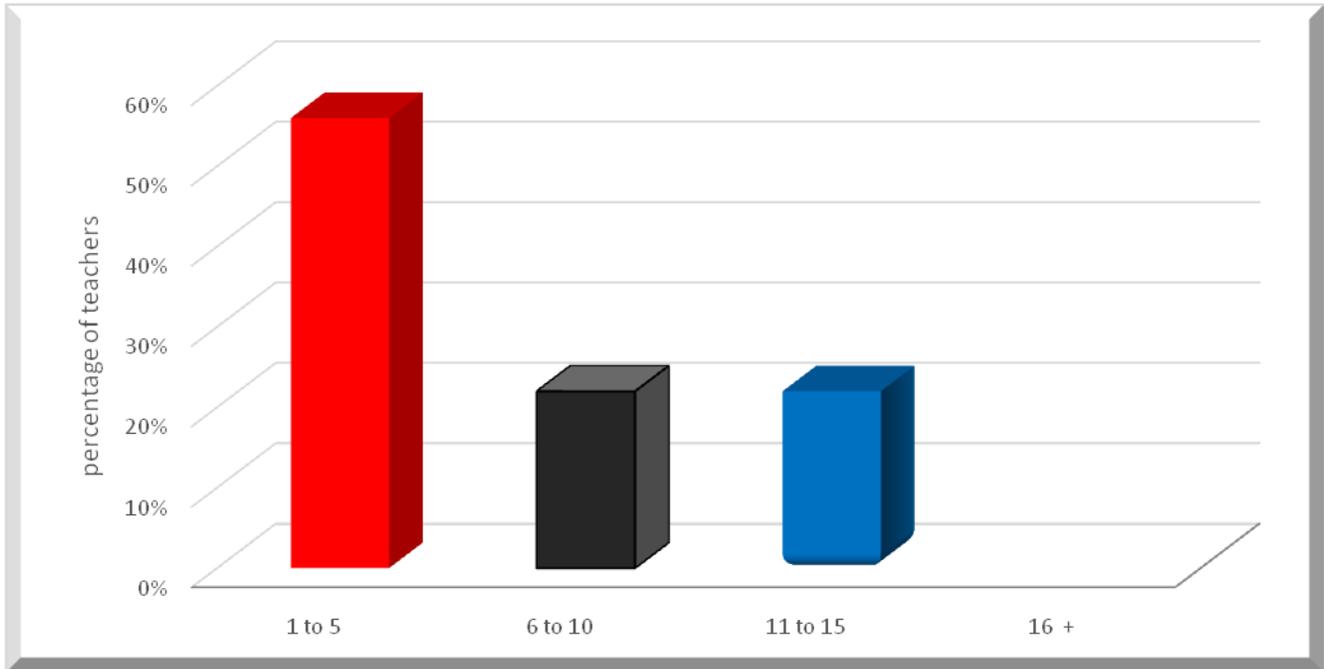


FIG 4: ORPHANS PER CLASS (N=55)

Fig 4 above indicated that twice number of orphans were in the range 1 to 5 compared to 6 to 10 and 11 to 15. There were a good number of orphans in each class which ranges from 1 – 15, orphans. This assisted the teachers in having experience of different psychological challenges from orphans of different backgrounds.

ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS OF CAREGIVERS

Academic qualifications of care are shown on Fig 5 below. 25% had grade seven certificates only. 50 % of the respondents had ordinary level while 25% had advanced level.

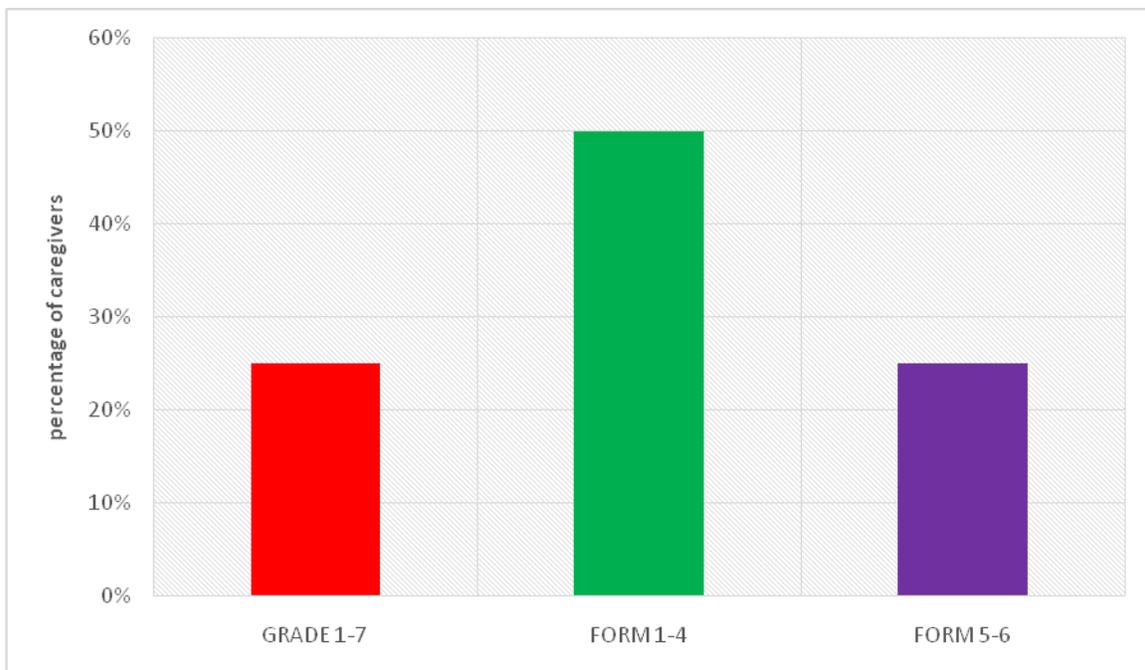


FIG 5: LEVEL OF EDUCATION FOR CAREGIVERS (N=20)

This makes the participants gaining experience of psychological challenges of different orphans. This is because most of the caregivers in the Wanganui community are female which concur with the ration of female caregiver to male caregiver. The academic qualifications shown on Fig 5 above shows that only a quarter had advanced level while the remaining three quarters either reached Form 4 or above.

LENGTH OF STAYING WITH ORPHANS

Fig 6 below indicated that 25% stayed with orphans between 1 and 5 years and 50% of the respondents stayed with orphans between 6 and 10 years while 25% stayed with orphans for 11 years and above.

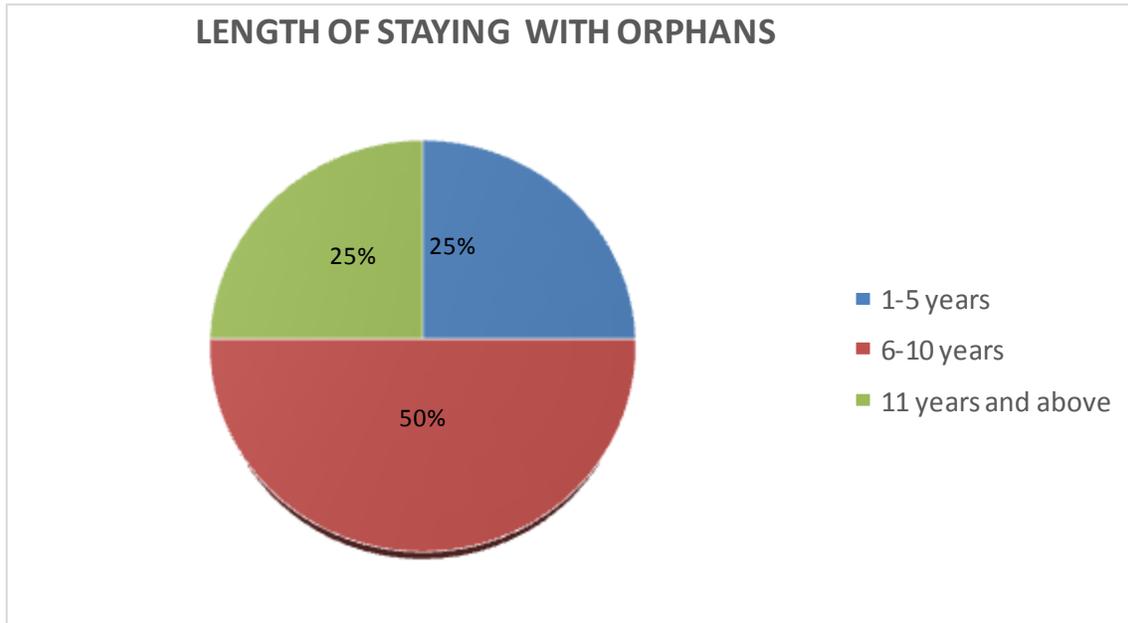


FIG 6: NUMBER OF YEARS STAYING WITH ORPHANS (N=55)

This facilitated gaining of experience of different psychological challenges encountered by orphans over a period of time.

➤ MEANING OF THE TERM PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGE

Fig 7 below indicated that 11% of the respondent has no idea at all while 89% respondents have the idea what psychological challenge mean.

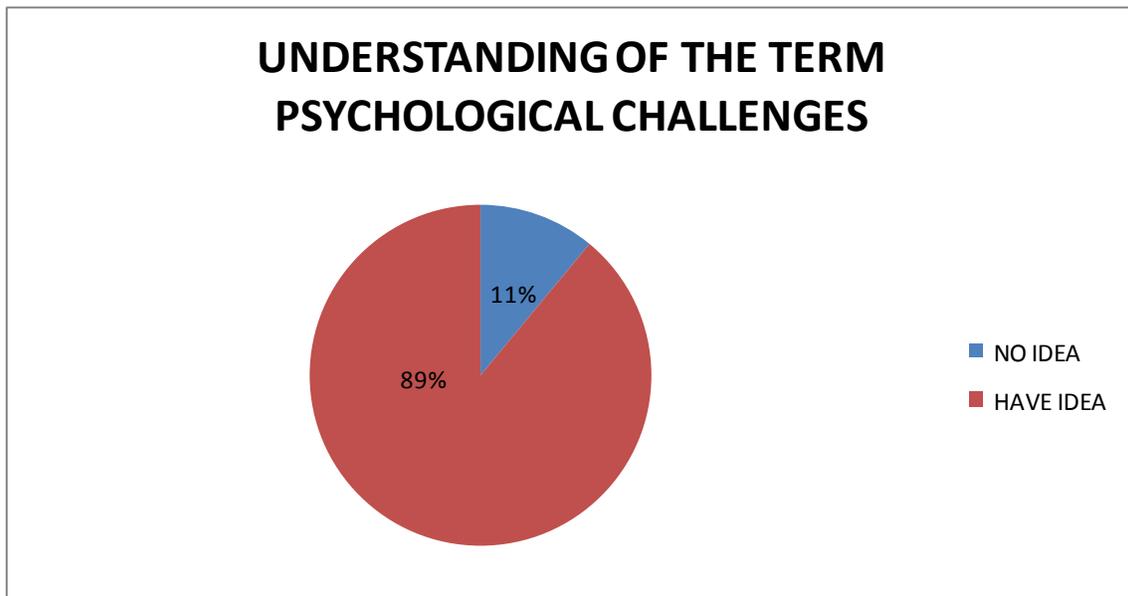


FIG 7: UNDERSTANDING OF THE TERM PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES BY TEACHERS (N=15)

Fig 8 below indicated that 25% had no idea and 75% had an idea of what psychological challenges meant

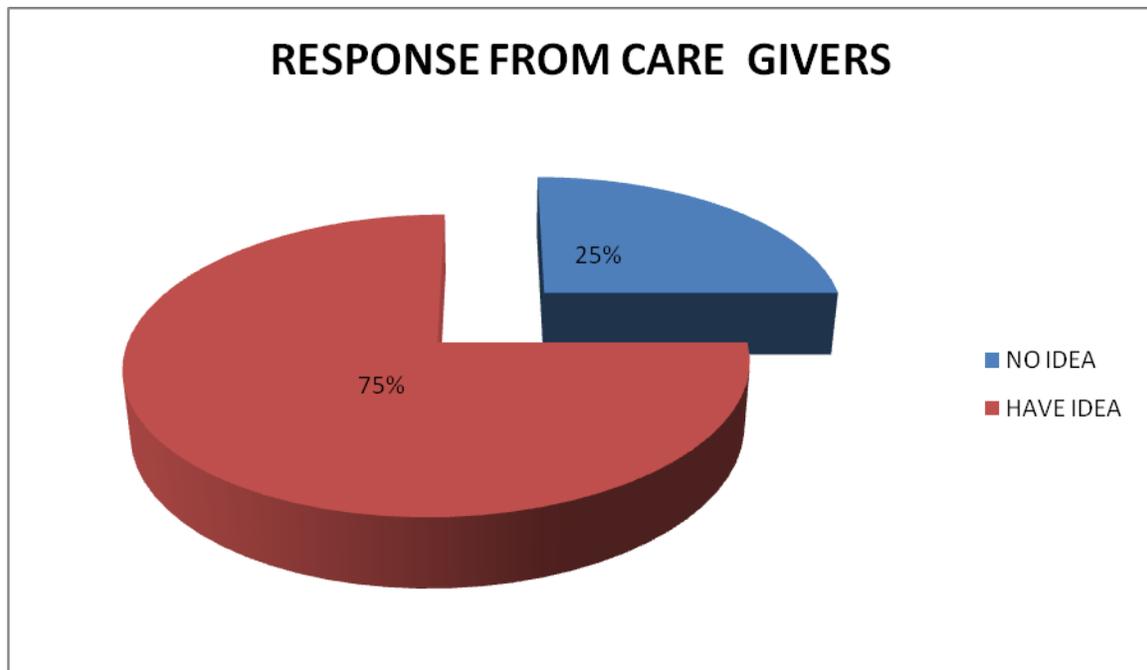


FIG 8: RESPONSES FROM CAREGIVERS (N=20)

According to the findings of Fig 7 and Fig 8, 67% of females were interviewed and 33% males were interviewed. Therefore females dominated the findings of the research. This is because in terms of ration there are more female orphans than male orphans at the school. These findings outlined that there is no consensus in the definition of the term psychological challenges. Majority of the teachers defined the term as the challenge of mental status whilst the majority of the caregivers and majority of orphans had no idea at all. Very few orphans had an outstanding of the term psychological challenge. One responded outline that psychological challenge as, “kushungurudzika kwatinoitaisuvana kana tichingetatadzakuwana kana kuitirwazvatnofanirakuitirwasemwana”. (Its emotionally experiences suffered by us children as we fail to be provided with what we are supposed to get). The majority of them had no idea of what the term psychological challenge mean. The community development worker interviewed defined psychological challenge as challenge to do with the mind. He went on to say that, “this makes difficult for one to operate normally because the mind is not settled”. According to the information gathered it is agreed that the teacher and the care giver understand the term psychological challenge as majority defined the term. This has proved that almost all teachers, caregivers, community development worker and very few orphans had an idea of what the term psychological challenge means through their definitions. Majority of them referred to problems of mental nature. Few of the respondents didn't respond to the

question which indicated that they don't know what the term psychological challenge means. Some of them said that psychological challenges are evil spirits which some orphans experience in their life. There is a Western and an African perspective towards the definition of psychological challenge. It is clear that the definition of psychological challenge pertaining to the mind of or to mental phenomena as the subject matter. It deals with or affecting the mind especially as a function of awareness, feeling or motivation therefore the loss of parents profoundly affects the child psychologically. There is no exact word in definition of psychological challenge in Shona. If someone is psychologically challenged he is regarded as someone mentally disturbed or mentally ill. This agrees with data from literature review linked to Bhargara's (2004) definition which state that in relating to characteristics directed towards influencing, arising in or acting through the minds especially in its affective or cognitive functions.

➤ THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES INDICATED BY TEACHERS

Fig 9 below indicated that Lack of love had 78%, Lack of attention had 89%, and withdrawal had 56% and hopelessness 33% while others had 11%.

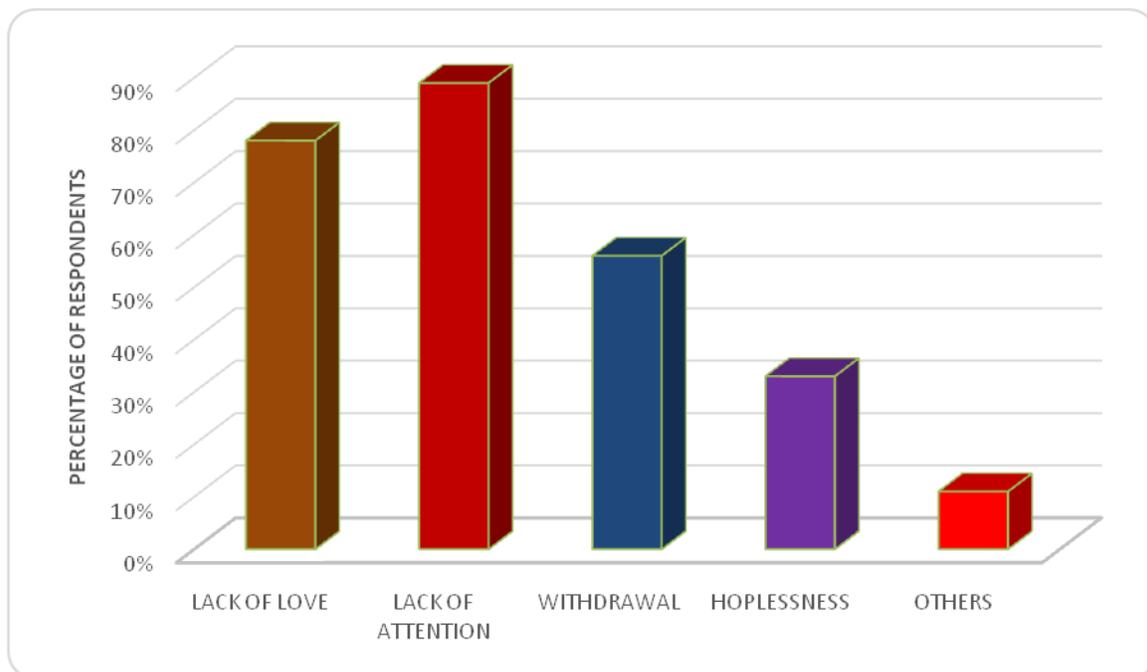


FIG 9: RESPONSE FROM TEACHERS (N=15)

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS INDICATED BY CAREGIVERS

According to Fig 10 below the respondents indicated that 50% was for lack of love, 50% again was for lack of attention, 25% was for withdrawal and 25% was for hopelessness while 25% was for others.

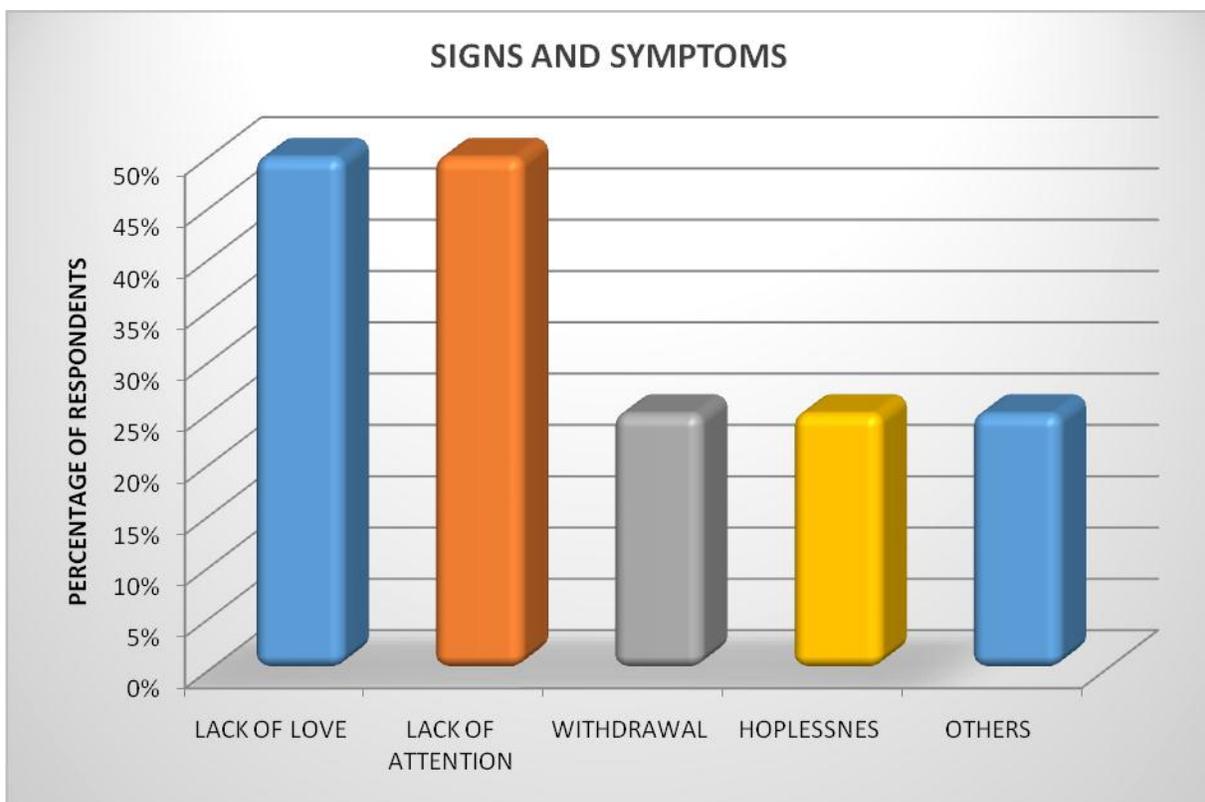


FIG 10: RESPONSE FROM CAREGIVERS (N=20)

According to information gathered from teachers, care givers and orphans and community development worker, the majority agreed that lack of attention was common

among orphans. Withdrawal was indicated by the majority although teachers indicated lack of love as the highest sign and symptom of psychological challenge. Popular view

according to orphans highlighted lack of attention and withdrawal as the major signs and signs of psychological challenges. However the informants were not sure of other signs and symptoms of psychological challenge especially those who are still at lower grades like grade four and five. They said the sign and symptoms they knew were the two mentioned above only. One of the orphans said “chese chausina simba pamusoro pachu unongosiyana nacho ndikokuti hupenyu hwako huendereremberi”, (Anything you don't have power over it you have to leave it like that for you to progress with your life). Interview data with community development worker outlines lack of love, lack of attention, withdrawal and hopelessness as the major signs and symptoms of psychological challenges. The respondent came up with other signs and symptoms like isolation, stress and depression. The respondent said that “other signs and symptoms of psychological challenges experienced by orphans are being isolated or isolating one self, involvement in stressful moments which might result in depression when it goes to extremes.” This has proved that the majority of teachers, caregivers, orphans and community development worker were much aware of those two signs and symptoms of psychological challenges, lack of attention and withdrawal. On the other hand there is no common view on the hopelessness and lack of love and others which were indicated by teachers, community development worker and caregivers while orphans gave nothing. According to the finding of the research respondents and informants agreed that lack of love, lack of attention; withdrawal and hopelessness were the main sign and symptoms of psychological challenges. This corresponds with the finding of Henderson (2007). That the feeling of hopelessness is very costly in terms of psychological well-being and may be reflected in lack of concern involvement and validity in social and school activities emotionally. However, Henderson (2007) indicated sadness and depression which were not noted from the findings of the research.

FINDING

Teachers understood what psychological challenge means due to their level of education. Majority of caregivers understood the term especially those stayed with orphans for a long time. The community development workers had an idea of what psychological challenge mean since he was involved much in handling cases of orphans regularly. Very few orphans seemed to understand the meaning of psychological challenges especially those who were in upper grades. The study finds that lack of love, lack of attention and withdrawal were the main signs and symptoms of psychological challenge in the community. Also, the study finds that the term and symptoms of psychological challenges were understood differently between African context and Western context.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations were made; There is urgent need for educational campaigns and the community has to be aware of what psychological challenges especially the orphans and the rest of the children. Workshops and training should be conducted to members of the community who are already involved in handling the cases of psychological

challenges affecting orphans. Action should be taken as soon as possible once the signs and symptoms which include lack of love, lack of attention to rectify the psychological challenges faced by the community.

REFERENCES

- [1] Ainsworth, E and Filmer, D (2002).Poverty AIDS and Children Schooling: A Targeting Dilemma the World Bank Washington D.C.
- [2] Ayieko, M.A (1998).From Single Parents to Child Orphaned By AIDS in Kisumu and Siaya District UNDP
- [3] Bhargava, A. (2005) AIDS Epidemic and the Psychological well being and School Participation of Ethiopian orphans Psychology. Health and Medicine; Addis Ababa
- [4] Chirwa, Y (2007). Children Youth and Economic Reforms an Expedition of the state of the State of the Street Children in Zimbabwe; Harare.
- [5] Henderson, P.C (2006).South Africa AIDS Orphans examining assumptions around Vulnerability from the perspective of rural children and youth. Apex Press; New York.
- [6] Kalembe,S.(2000). The challenge of increasing number of orphaned children in Africa what need? What need to be done? Seminar paper Chancellor College Department of Sociology.
- [7] Max- Neef, M (1989). Human Scale Development, Apex Press; New York
- [8] Bouldillon, M (1994).Street Children in Harare, Journal of the International African Institute; Harare.
- [9] Boudillon, M.F.C (1991). Poor Harassed but very much Alive, Journal of the International African Institute; Gweru.
- [10] Fanelli,C.W . Musarandega, R and Chawanda,L (2000). Child Participation in Zimbabwe
- [11] National Action Plan for Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children Progress, Challenges and Possibilities. Draft of Publication in Children Youth and Environment, Volume 16 Special issue critical International Respective on Child and Youth Participation. Harare.
- [12] Felsman,J. K (2006).Orphans and vulnerable children in Zimbabwe; Journal of social Development in Africa.
- [13] Kaseke, E (1999).Juvenile Justice in Zimbabwe; Journal of social Development in Africa, Harare
- [14] Ndamugoba, D, Mboya, M,Amini, K and Kataro, J.K (2004).The impact of HIV /AIDS on

Primary education in Bakoba Rural and Kinoniloni Districts of Tanzania; Draft Report submitted to UNICEF Tanzania.

- [15] Phiri, S, Webb, D (2002). The impact of HIV/AIDS on Orphans; Program and Policy Southern Africa Regional Office, Florence
- [16] UNICEF, (2001) Gender sexual/ and reproductive health including HIV/AIDS and other
- [17] STI's, USAID Bureau of Africa 2003 International HIV/AIDS alliance.
- [18] Government of Zimbabwe (2004). National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children; Government of Zimbabwe; Harare.