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INFLUENCE OF THE ORPHANAGE ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN EGOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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ABSTRACT

ABSTRACT The study sets to explore the influence of orphanage home on child development in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State. Specific objectives were to examine the effects of orphanage on child development and ascertain the morals and attitudes of children raised in orphanages. A survey research design was adopted, allowing for diverse methods of participant recruitment and data collection. The study targeted five registered orphanages within the study area, including Trinitarian Foundation for Orphans and the Helpless, Daughters of Merciful Heart Compassionate Home, Holy Child Shelter and Orphanage, Cole Orphanage, and Bright Future Orphanage. Each orphanage was represented by a caregiver to respond to the questionnaire. Purposive sampling was employed to select respondents, comprising individuals working within these orphanages. Findings revealed orphanage homes provide stability, structure, and emotional security for children, challenging the perception that institutional care is inherently detrimental. Most respondents reported that children in orphanages do not consistently experience sadness and that caregivers provide adequate affection and protection. However, concerns regarding child labour, social belonging, and resource limitations were identified as areas requiring improvement. The study highlights the need for enhanced caregiver training, improved welfare services, social integration programs, and stricter child protection policies. Strengthening alternative care models and fostering collaboration among stakeholders were also recommended. By addressing these challenges, orphanages can better support the holistic development of children under their care. Keywords: Orphanages, Child, Development, Orphans, Moral, Attitude

Vol. 3. Issue 1.
ISSN: 3115-6940
EISSN: 3115-6932

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, the orphanage is one of the numerous social institutions that have emerged over the years to cater for some of the social needs of children associated with such problems like abandonment, lack of care, maltreatment, displacement and insurgency (Alhassan, 2017). Motherless babies have nowadays become common because of the moral decadence of the society, young people who cannot cater for themselves find themselves put in the family way they end up abandoning those innocent helpless babies. The increasing hardship caused by the present economic recession has increased the incidence of burden in families and the consequent loss of firm control of family members (Asogwa & Onyezere, 2018). According to Omorogiuwa (2023), the number of vulnerable children in Nigeria has been on the increase over the years despite multi-sectorial efforts aimed at combating child vulnerability through universal health and education coverage. In 2019, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) noted that the number of people living with HIV in Nigeria is among the highest of any country in the world, and launched the Integrated Child Health and Social Services Award (ICHSSA) to reduce the impact of HIV/AIDS on orphans and vulnerable children (USAID, 2019, Section A.2). In Nigeria, a major cause of child vulnerability is the death of parents and this is because loss of either or both parents can affect various aspects of a child's development. This can also result in loss of shelter, non-enrolment or drop-out from school, poor health outcomes, malnutrition, child abuse, child trafficking, and economic exploitation, stigma and discrimination, all of which increases vulnerability (Yuka & Omorogiuwa, 2026; Deb et al., 2020). Due to the increasingly poor levels of socio-economic situation in the country, there are more children who need special protection from situations such as orphanhood, child abuse, trafficking internal displacement and homelessness.

Orphanages can have a significant impact on child development, yet children raised in orphanages may experience challenges in forming secure attachments, developing social skills, and regulating emotions (Wilkinson, 2016). Lack of consistent caregiver interaction and individualized attention can lead to delays in cognitive and emotional development. However, it is important to note that the quality of care provided in orphanages varies widely, and some facilities may offer supportive environments that promote positive outcomes for children.

Child development, on the other hand, is a continuous process that begins at conception. Once an infant is born, they begin to experience complex physical, cognitive, and emotional changes (Labouvie-Vief, 2015). The author opined that these changes are gradual and occur throughout the life span and these lifespans have been divided into stages by theorists such as Krischer et al. (2020) identified emotional deprivation and noted that where warmth in the family is lacking, the child is more likely to develop deviant behavior, particularly of an antisocial type. A child that suffers complete deprivation does not experience the warmth affection and care of his mother. The absence of emotional contact with a mother implies the absence of the specific, formative influence inherent in the mother–child tie (Bowlby, 2018). This situation led to retardation and may give rise to symptoms of physical and mental illness as it is believed that early experience of material deprivation account for neurotic and allied disorders in the child as care from parents or love ones is very important and should not be compromised (Polat 2021, Yuka & Omorogiuwa, 2026). The author emphasized that the father plays a very significant role which should be seen as a necessary complement to the role of the mother in bringing up a child as where parental (as opposed to materials) care is inadequate in the early stages of a child's life, it will manifest it effects in the child's later in life during the development.

Statement of Research Problem

Vol. 3. Issue 1.
ISSN: 3115-6940
EISSN: 3115-6932

Nigeria has one of the largest burdens of Orphans and Vulnerable Children in the world and is facing an orphaning and vulnerability crisis of potentially appalling proportion, (Ayuk et al., 2023, Yuka & Omorogiuwa, 2024). In sub-Saharan Africa especially in Nigeria, traditional residential institutions usually have too few caregivers and are therefore limited in their capacity to provide children the affection, attention, personal identity, and social connections that families and communities can offer (Milligan et al., 2017). Developmental risks can thus be substantially heightened in institutional settings as institutional care tends to segregate children and adolescents by age and sex and from other young people and adults in their communities, instead of encouraging independence and creative thinking, institutional life tends to promote dependency and discourage autonomy. For many adolescents, transition from life in an institution to positive integration and self-support as a young adult in the community is difficult, because they lack essential social and cultural skills and a network of connections in the community. Existing literature has shown that Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Nigeria live in deplorable conditions and are sometimes exposed to neglect, exploitation, and abuse and deprived of basic human rights and needs, which means that Nigeria is facing an emergency situation in which millions of children are in exigent need of care and special protection measures. (Ayuk, et al., 2023 Yuka & Omorogiuwa, 2024). Musungu (2021) posited that orphans need a stimulating environment with adequate support facilities to foster the growth and development of their full potential as many of these children are left unattended and exposed to many problems regarding their growth and development including health, education, protection, nutrition and psychological development with varying degrees of harm to both the children and society.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the specific objectives to the study:

Determine the influence of orphanage on child development in Egor local government area

Ascertain the morals and attitudes of children raised in orphanages in Egor local government area.

Brief review of literature

Positive influence of Orphanage homes on child development

According to Cervone and Pervin (2022), personality is a unique organization of relatively enduring psychological characteristics possessed by an individual as revealed by his interaction to the environment. They opined that it is through education and healthy physical upbringing that children in the orphanage can have bright future opportunities which is exactly what the orphanage aims at providing. They further stated that the security of a foster mother and child relationship is in certain respects greater than that of the biological mother and her child.

The orphanage, in spite of these arguments, is still a very important instrument in socializing helpless children, as maids or even nurses do not have enough time to love and play with the children (Nsabimana, 2016). He opined that children need attention all the time from their loved ones yet, the practice of fostering is far from being detrimental to the development of the child. The benefits gained by children through fostering in orphanages are emotional as well as social, as most foster mothers have no children living with them either because they are grandmothers or not yet a mother (Ntshongwana & Tanga, 2018). Family factors influence personalities and there are about three factors that are important in the family, they include the socialization process, identification process and birth order. Socialization process helps an individual to acquire certain behaviour from a wide range of behaviour. The kind of family a child emanates from determine the attitudes open to him from the family e.g. compelling a child to conform to certain acceptable behaviours for a long time makes that behaviour to become a part of that child.

Identification: This is the process by which a normal child becomes emotionally attached to significant adults by imitating them and acquiring appropriate

Vol. 3. Issue 1.
ISSN: 3115-6940
EISSN: 3115-6932

social roles. The child therefore tries to behave like the parent and, in the process, adopts the personality of the person he feels is ideal.

Birth order: This is another factor that influences the personality of an individual, and some psychologists have found that there is a difference in the personality of a firstborn, who is likely to be more dependent, rational, and ambitious (Orji et al., 2017).

Orphanages are often associated with negative impacts on child development, whereas there can be some positive effects as well. In some cases, orphanages provide a stable and structured environment for children who may have experienced trauma or instability in their previous living situations, while offering access to education, healthcare, and basic necessities that children may not have had otherwise. Feldman (2020) describes resilience as grounded in supportive, affiliative relationships, which suggests that positive interactions with peers and caregivers in a communal setting may help children to develop resilience. It is important to recognize that the effect of orphanages on child personality development is complex and can vary depending on individual circumstances and the quality of care provided.

Negative influence of Orphanages on Child Development

Orphanages can have negative effects on child development due to a lack of individualized attention, consistent caregiver interaction, and emotional support (McCall et al., 2019). Children in orphanages may experience challenges in forming secure attachments, developing social skills, and regulating emotions (Wilkinson, 2016). The institutional environment of orphanages can lead to delays in cognitive and emotional development, as well as issues with self-esteem and identity formation. Yuka and Omorogiuwa (2024) highlighted that children raised in orphanage homes may be at higher risk for mental health issues, behavioral problems, and difficulties in forming healthy relationships later in life. It is important for orphanages to prioritize the emotional well-being and individual needs of each child to mitigate these negative effects on their development. Ekekwe (2023) underscored that children in orphanages often face disruptions in their early relationships, leading to difficulties in forming secure attachments and this can impact their ability to trust others and develop healthy relationships later in life. The lack of consistent caregivers in orphanages can hinder the development of social skills, as children may not have the opportunity to learn appropriate social behaviors through interactions with adults and peers (Worku et al., 2018). This can result in difficulties in understanding social cues, forming friendships, and resolving conflicts effectively. In terms of emotional regulation, children in orphanages may struggle to manage their emotions due to the lack of consistent emotional support and guidance from caregivers. This can lead to difficulties in coping with stress, regulating their behavior, and expressing their feelings in a healthy manner.

The lack of consistent caregivers and individualized attention in orphanage settings can hinder the formation of secure attachments, which are crucial for healthy emotional development (Ekekwe, 2023). The limited opportunities for social interaction and peer relationships in orphanages can impede the development of social skills as children may struggle to learn appropriate social behaviors, such as sharing, taking turns, and resolving conflicts, which are essential for building positive relationships with others (Adeniyi & Omigbodun, 2016). Furthermore, the absence of consistent emotional support and guidance in orphanages can make it difficult for children to regulate their emotions effectively. Orphans may have trouble managing stress, expressing their feelings, and coping with challenging situations in a healthy manner (Doku et al., 2019). It is important for caregivers and professionals working with children in orphanages to provide nurturing and supportive environments that promote secure attachments, social skill development, and emotional regulation. Interventions aimed at addressing these challenges can help improve the overall well-being and development of children in orphanages. Sopekan and Ignatius-Ihejirika (2020)

Vol. 3. Issue 1.
ISSN: 3115-6940
EISSN: 3115-6932

reported that lack of consistent and nurturing caregiving in orphanages can lead to emotional and psychological challenges for children. Therefore, making children raised in orphanages to experience higher rates of mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder due to early life adversities and disruptions in attachment relationships. These challenges can persist into adulthood and impact their overall well-being. Also, the institutional environment of orphanages can contribute to behavioural problems in children, including aggression, impulsivity, and difficulties in self-regulation, as lack of individualized attention and support in orphanages may exacerbate these behavioural issues and hinder the development of healthy coping mechanisms. (Riley-Behringer, 2015). In terms of forming healthy relationships later in life, children raised in orphanages may struggle with trust, intimacy, and communication skills due to their early experiences of instability and neglect. This can affect their ability to establish and maintain meaningful connections with others, leading to difficulties in forming secure and supportive relationships (Kyei, 2024).

Morals and Attitudes of Children Raised in the Orphanage Home

Recent studies have shown that children raised in orphanages may experience disruptions in their early relationships, which can impact their moral reasoning and decision-making abilities (Igbokwe et al., 2015). Children in orphanages may also struggle with issues related to self-esteem, identity formation, and feelings of belongingness. Lack of consistent caregivers and stable environments in orphanages can contribute to feelings of insecurity and low self-worth among these individuals. Moreover, the institutionalized setting of orphanages may influence the attitudes of children towards authority figures, rules, and social norms. Therefore, the children raised in orphanages may exhibit behaviours such as defiance, aggression, and difficulty in following rules, which can be attributed to their experiences in the institutional environment. The lack of consistent and nurturing relationships in orphanages can impact a child's sense of self-worth and identity. Akpotor , (2020) stated that without positive reinforcement and emotional support from caregivers, children may internalize feelings of abandonment, rejection, and inadequacy, leading to low self-esteem. Also, the institutional environment of orphanages, with its focus on routine and efficiency, may not prioritize the emotional needs of individual children and this can result in a lack of personalized attention and validation, which are essential for building a healthy self-esteem. Children in orphanages may also face stigma and discrimination from society, which can further contribute to feelings of worthlessness and low self-esteem. The lack of opportunities for social interaction and positive feedback from peers can also impact a child's self-perception and confidence (Doku et al., 2019; Yuka, 2026).

Skoog et al., (2015) proposed that the absence of stable caregivers and family connections can affect a child's sense of self and belonging, and in the absence of a secure attachment to a primary caregiver, children in orphanages may struggle to develop a strong sense of identity and self-worth. Orphans may have difficulty understanding their place in the world and forming a coherent sense of self. This can lead to feelings of confusion, low self-esteem, and identity crisis as they navigate through adolescence and adulthood. Saraswat and Unisa (2017) posited that the lack of a supportive and loving family environment in orphanages can contribute to feelings of loneliness, isolation, and not belonging. He further maintained that children may yearn for meaningful connections and a sense of community that is essential for their emotional well-being and social development. In the exclusion of these connections, orphans may struggle to establish a sense of fitting in and may feel disconnected from others. It is important for children in orphanages to receive support and opportunities to build positive relationships, explore their interests and talents, and develop a sense of belonging within a supportive community. Interventions that focus on promoting positive identity formation and fostering a sense of belonging can help

Vol. 3. Issue 1.
ISSN: 3115-6940
EISSN: 3115-6932

address the emotional and psychological needs of children growing up in orphanages (Oluwamotemi, 2015, Yuka & Omorogiuwa, 2024).

The institutionalized setting of orphanages can influence the attitudes of children towards authority figures, rules, and social norms in several ways. Evidence from previous studies suggests that the lack of consistent and nurturing caregivers in orphanages can lead to a sense of detachment and mistrust toward authority figures. Also, children may struggle to form positive relationships with caregivers, which can impact their perception of authority and their willingness to follow rules. Kapange et al., (2023) affirmed that the structured and regimented environment of orphanages may enforce strict rules and routines that limit children's autonomy and independence. This can lead to a sense of helplessness, powerlessness, hopelessness, and resentment towards authority figures, as children may feel controlled and restricted in their actions. Adebayo and Ogunbanwo (2017) asserted that the lack of exposure to diverse social interactions and experiences in orphanages can hinder children's understanding of social norms and expectations. He emphasized that children may struggle to navigate social situations outside of the orphanage setting, leading to difficulties in adapting to different social contexts and forming meaningful relationships with others.

As a final point, Onwuka (2018) stated that the institutionalized setting of orphanages can shape children's attitudes towards authority figures, rules, and social norms by influencing their sense of trust, autonomy, and social competence. Interventions that promote positive relationships, autonomy, and social skills development are essential in supporting the healthy development of children in orphanages.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Attachment theory, developed by John Bowlby and extended by Mary Ainsworth (Ainsworth, 1978; Bowlby, 2018), explains the attachment figures and behaviours of infants and older children. Attachment theory is a psychological, evolutionary and ethological theory concerning relationship, between humans according to this theory children need to develop a relationship with at least one primary caregiver for normal social and emotional development. Infant's behavior within attachment is usually associated with seeking of proximity of an attachment figure in stressful situation. It further that emphasized how infants become attached to adults who are sensitive and responsive in social interactions with them, and who remain as consistent care givers for some months to two years of age. During the latter part of this period, children begin to use attachment figures. Bowlby clarified that parental response led to the development of patterns of attachment, these in turn lead to internal working model which will guide individual's feeling, thought and expectation in later relationship. Children are often filled with anxiety or grief when an attachment figure is not handy and this increase the probability of their survival. This attachment figures could be parent or care givers and when a child is taken away from attachment figure, he or she often feels depressed. Most orphanage homes do not have a permanent care giver who could stand as an attachment figure to the child.

Attachment is an affection bond or tie between an individual and an attachment figure usually a caregiver. Bowlby explained that such bonds may be reciprocal between two adults, but between a child and a caregiver this bond is based on a child's need for safety, security, and protection, which are paramount in infancy and childhood. For an orphan living in an orphanage, the best attachment figure is home for the child which can be achieved through adoption. When the child is adopted, he/ she becomes part of the family, faces in the family are constant as family members stay together. Caregivers in the family are constant and this will aid in the child's development unlike an orphanage home where they may be numerous or few inconsistent faces. Bowlby (1951) argued that infants and young children need a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with a mother or a permanent mother-substitute. This insight contributed to the gradual replacement of large

Vol. 3. Issue 1.
ISSN: 3115-6940
EISSN: 3115-6932

orphanages with foster care and family-style homes in most developed countries (Berens & Nelson, 2015), in order to aid the child's effective physical, emotional, mental, behavioural and personality development. Attachment theory is simply explaining the behavioural pattern of children with attachment figures. Children will definitely develop better if there are permanent, loving and caring faces in the orphanage that would pay attention to the children's emotional needs and provide mothering support to them.

Methods and Materials

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design is appropriate for describing the perceptions and experiences of a defined group of respondents at a particular point in time.

Study Area and Population

The study was carried out in Egor Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. The population comprised caregivers working in the five registered orphanages in the area, namely Trinitarian Foundation for Orphans and the Helpless, Daughters of Merciful Heart Compassionate Home, Holy Child Shelter and Orphanage, Cole Orphanage, and Bright Future Orphanage. At the time of the study, these orphanages had a total of 45 caregivers.

Sample and Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was used to select caregivers who worked directly with the children and could therefore report on their development and behaviour. Of the 45 caregivers in the five orphanages, 10 were selected. Because the orphanages differed in size and in the number of caregivers on duty during data collection, the number of respondents differed across orphanages: Trinitarian Foundation for Orphans and the Helpless (4) Daughters of Merciful Heart Compassionate Home (4), Holy Child Shelter and Orphanage (4), Cole Orphanage (7) and Bright Future Orphanage (4), Corner stone of Hope (6). Ten Questionnaires were completed, returned and used in the analysis (Tables 1 and 2).

Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers. The respondents were caregivers, and the instrument measured their perceptions of the children in their care; no data were collected directly from children. Section A of the questionnaire covered the respondents' background information like sex, age, education, marital status and religion. Section B contained six items on the influence of the orphanage on child development (Table 1), rated on a five-point scale: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree and undecided. Section C contained five items on the morals and attitudes of children raised in orphanages (Table 2): three items were rated on the same five-point scale and two items were answered "Yes" or "No".

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The face and content validity of the questionnaire were established by two experts in Social Work, University of Benin. Reliability was established through a pilot test with five caregivers in an orphanage outside the study area, which yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.78.

Method of Data Collection

The questionnaires were administered in person by the researcher to the selected caregivers in their respective orphanages over a period of three months in 2026. and were collected on completion.

Method of Data Analysis

The data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) with SPSS. The results are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted as part of a postgraduate programme under the supervision of the Department of Social Work, University of Benin, which approved the research proposal and instruments; formal approval from a research ethics committee was not obtained. Permission was also obtained from the management of

Vol. 3. Issue 1.
ISSN: 3115-6940
EISSN: 3115-6932

each orphanage. The researcher obtained informed consent from all participants before carrying out the exercise of administering questionnaires to the participants. The general outline of the topic and the type of information was enumerated. All the participants were informed of the duration of the interaction and given sufficient time before and after the interaction to ask any questions related to the research topic. The participants signed the consent form expressing their willingness to participate in attending to the questionnaire while also ensuring confidentiality and anonymity throughout the process. The researcher was sensitive to both the questions and the possible vulnerability of the participants, and attention was given to the researcher's approach to the subject.

RESULTS

Vol. 3. Issue 1.
ISSN: 3115-6940
EISSN: 3115-6932

Table 1: Influence of the orphanage on the development of children in Egor Local Government Area (N = 10)

ITEMS / RESPONSES	**FREQUENCY**	**PERCENTAGE (%)**
1. Children raised in orphanages always feel inferior		
Strongly agree	1	10.0
Agree	1	10.0
Disagree	5	50.0
Strongly disagree	2	20.0
Undecided	1	10.0
2. Children raised in an orphanage cannot take decisions on their own		
Strongly agree	1	10.0
Agree	3	30.0
Disagree	4	40.0
Strongly disagree	2	20.0
Undecided	0	0.0
3. Children raised in orphanages always feel sad		
Strongly agree	0	0.0
Agree	0	0.0
Disagree	8	80.0
Strongly disagree	2	20.0
Undecided	0	0.0
4. Children raised in orphanages lack parental care from the caregiver		
Strongly agree	0	0.0
Agree	2	20.0
Disagree	6	60.0
Strongly disagree	2	20.0
Undecided	0	0.0
5. A child in the orphanage is more likely to combine school with child labour, which affects his/her educational development		

Vol. 3. Issue 1.
ISSN: 3115-6940
EISSN: 3115-6932

ITEMS / RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Strongly agree	4	40.0
Agree	4	40.0
Disagree	1	10.0
Strongly disagree	1	10.0
Undecided	0	0.0
6. Orphanages influence a child's development negatively		
Strongly agree	0	0.0
Agree	1	10.0
Disagree	5	50.0
Strongly disagree	4	40.0
Undecided	0	0.0

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

The responses collected in Table 1 provide insight into the perceptions surrounding this issue. A small proportion of respondents (20%) agreed that children raised in orphanages always feel inferior, while 70% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 10% were undecided. Similarly, while 40% agree that children in orphanages struggle with decision-making, a slightly higher percentage (60%) disagree or strongly disagree, suggesting that many believe orphanages do not necessarily hinder a child's ability to make independent choices.

All respondents (100%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that children in orphanages always feel sad, indicating that emotional well-being may not be as adversely affected as often assumed. Likewise, 80% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the claim that children in orphanages lack parental care from caregivers, while 20% agreed that some deficiency exists in this regard. In contrast, a notable proportion (80%) agree that children in orphanages are more likely to combine school with child labour, which could negatively impact their educational development. Lastly, when asked whether orphanages generally have a negative influence on a child's development, 50% disagreed, and 40% strongly disagreed, with only 10% supporting the claim. The responses suggest that while there are some concerns regarding orphanage care, particularly regarding education and child labour, most respondents do not perceive orphanages as having a wholly negative impact on child development.

Vol. 3. Issue 1.
ISSN: 3115-6940
EISSN: 3115-6932

Table 2: Morals and attitudes of children raised in orphanages in Egor Local Government Area (N = 10)

ITEMS / RESPONSES	**FREQUENCY**	**PERCENTAGE (%)**
1. Children raised in the orphanage lack sound moral standards		
Strongly agree	0	0.0
Agree	1	10.0
Disagree	5	50.0
Strongly disagree	4	40.0
Undecided	0	0.0
2. Children in orphanages usually have the feeling of hopelessness		
Strongly agree	1	10.0
Agree	2	20.0
Disagree	4	40.0
Strongly disagree	3	30.0
Undecided	0	0.0
3. Children in orphanages have the courage to ask for help whenever they are in need		
Yes	7	70.0
No	3	30.0
4. A child raised in the orphanage does not have a sense of social belonging		
Strongly agree	1	10.0
Agree	4	40.0
Disagree	3	30.0
Strongly disagree	2	20.0
Undecided	0	0.0
5. Children raised in the orphanage cannot relate freely with other children outside the orphanage		
Yes	2	20.0
No	8	80.0

Vol. 3. Issue 1.
ISSN: 3115-6940
EISSN: 3115-6932

Source: Fieldwork, 2026

The responses suggest that while there are some challenges, children in orphanages generally maintain social connections and a sense of self-worth. A majority of respondents (90%) disagree or strongly disagree with the claim that children raised in orphanages lack sound moral standards. This indicates that most believe orphanages do not negatively impact children's moral development. Similarly, 70% of respondents disagree with the notion that children in orphanages frequently experience feelings of hopelessness, suggesting that many retain a sense of optimism and resilience despite their circumstances. Furthermore, 70% of respondents believe that children in orphanages have the confidence to ask for help when needed, highlighting their ability to seek support when necessary. However, when it comes to social belonging, opinions are divided. While half (50%) of respondents agree that children in orphanages may struggle with a sense of social belonging, the other half disagree, suggesting that experiences of belongingness vary among children. Lastly, the vast majority (80%) disagree with the claim that children raised in orphanages cannot relate freely with other children outside their institution. This suggests that orphanage-raised children generally integrate well with their peers in broader social settings. The findings indicate that while some concerns exist regarding social belonging, children in orphanages are largely perceived as morally upright, socially engaged, and capable of seeking help when needed.

Discussion of Findings

The findings provide a nuanced perspective on the influence of the orphanage on child development in Egor Local Government Area. In the view of the caregivers surveyed, orphanage care is not inherently detrimental to children’s well-being, although some challenges remain. These findings both align with and, in some respects, contrast with the existing literature.

The first objective was to determine the influence of the orphanage on child development. All respondents (100%) disagreed that children in orphanages always feel sad, and 90% disagreed that orphanages influence child development negatively. This perception contrasts with Rosenthal (2019), who argues from international human rights law and research evidence that institutional and residential care is harmful to children and that every child has a right to grow up in a family. It also differs from studies that associate institutional care with difficulties in attachment, social skills and emotional regulation (McCall et al., 2019; Wilkinson, 2016). The difference may partly reflect the fact that this study captured the perceptions of caregivers, who may view their own institutions favourably, rather than direct assessments of the children. However, 80% of respondents agreed that children in orphanages are likely to combine schooling with child labour, which may affect their educational development. This concern is consistent with Mwoma and Pillay (2016), who found that, although mechanisms exist to support the education of orphans and vulnerable children, numerous challenges still hinder their access to quality education.

The second objective was to ascertain the morals and attitudes of children raised in orphanages. Most respondents (90%) disagreed that children raised in orphanages lack sound moral standards, and 80% disagreed that they cannot relate freely with children outside the orphanage. These perceptions are consistent with the view that supportive relationships with caregivers and peers can foster resilience among orphans (Agu, 2018; Feldman, 2020). However, respondents were evenly divided on whether children in orphanages have a sense of social belonging. This echoes Skoog et al. (2015), who reported that unstable foster and institutional care can leave children feeling disconnected and without a sense of belonging.

CONCLUSION

This study provided valuable insights into the impact of orphanage on child development in Egor Local Government Area. The findings revealed that while orphanages offer stability, structure, and emotional security, there are also challenges that require attention, particularly in the areas of welfare services and social

Vol. 3. Issue 1.
ISSN: 3115-6940
EISSN: 3115-6932

integration. The idea of running orphanage differently without close monitoring from child department, Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development Edo State, makes it difficult to effect positive changes on the influence of orphanage on child development. Some individuals run the orphanage the way they feel like. How versed and skillful the orphanage owner is in child welfare and development contributes to the positive influence of orphanage on child development. In order to enhance the effectiveness of orphanage welfare, the state government should evaluate all the orphanages in the Edo State, to ensure that the orphanage proprietors/proprietresses merited the criteria and the passion for managing orphanages. Because the study relied on the perceptions of a small purposive sample of caregivers, its findings should be regarded as exploratory; future studies should use larger samples and include direct assessments of children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study advocates that:

Greater collaboration between orphanages, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and community members should be encouraged to create a more supportive ecosystem for orphaned children. Public awareness campaigns can also help dispel misconceptions about orphanage care and promote child-friendly policies.

The state government, through the Child Department, Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, Edo State, should set up a unified standard for the smooth running of orphanages by implementing friendly, unannounced monthly orphanage check-ins.

There should be policy on staff recruitment to ensure specific qualification on caregivers, social workers and other staff working in the orphanage. There should be specific professionals required to be working in the orphanage.

Declarations

Conflict of interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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