

An exploratory study of the interface of child-headed households and academic performance: A case of primary school students in Beatrice resettlement area, Zimbabwe.

By

JAKACHIRA GODFREY

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**Department of Sociology
Faculty of Social Studies
University of Zimbabwe**

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Abstract

The study explored the impact of the child-headed household on the academic performance of primary school students in Beatrice resettlement area, Zimbabwe. The target population was 15 primary school students from child-headed households in the resettlement area, 12 school heads, 84 teachers as well the students' relatives and neighbours. The research study adopted a case study design with a purposive sample of 4 child household heads, 6 teachers and 4 school heads. Data were collected through life story narratives, content analysis and unstructured interviews. It was presented as cases and analysed using Leininger's thematic model. In interpreting the data Bourdieu's theory of practice was used.

The study established that the academic performance of students from child-headed households is impacted negatively by household responsibilities, hunger, stigma and discrimination, child labour, schooling costs, sexual abuse and ill-health. All these challenges come as a result of limited support from the government, aid organisations and the disintegrating extended family. This led to the conclusion that the socio-economic challenges of the child-headed household impact negatively on academic performance. Thus, there is need for resettlement communities to respond to the disintegration of the extended family as a safety for orphaned and vulnerable children by establishing community orphanages as alternatives to child-headed households. Governments, the corporate world and donor organisations are urged to support this community based coping strategy not only to enhance the academic performance of orphaned and vulnerable children, but also mould them into acceptable and productive members of society.

Dedication

This study is dedicated to all individuals, organisations and governments which are striving to ensure completely free education for students from child-headed households.

Acknowledgements

This study would not have been successful without the support I got from various people. I am most grateful to my supervisor Dr Maunganidze for his constructive criticism, assistance and commitment without which this study could not have succeeded. My gratitude is extended to all child household heads, school heads and teachers who took part in the study. Their invaluable cooperation and responses proved to be vital for the study. Heartfelt thanks to my family and friends whose moral and material support enabled me to complete this research study. Thanks are also due to Miss Tsitsi Masango for typing this research study.

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1.0 Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

The child-headed household is a rapidly growing phenomenon in contemporary Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular mainly due to increased death rates of parents caused by HIV and AIDS and the weakened state of the extended family safety net in taking up care and raising responsibilities for orphaned and vulnerable children. Most research studies (Foster et al, 1997; Naicher and Tsenhase, 2004; Germann, 2005) focused on causal factors of the child-headed household, the general challenges it presents as well as the coping strategies of children living in such households. This study focused on the impact of the child-headed household on academic performance. The study identified the challenges of the child-headed household and explored how they influence the academic performance of primary school students from such households in Beatrice resettlement area.

1.2 Background to the study

In traditional African societies the child-headed household was assumed to be non-existent since orphans would be easily and naturally looked after within the households of their extended families (Foster et al, 1997; Naicker and Tsenhase 2004). In this set up, the extended family acted as a social security safety net for vulnerable children. The responsibility of caring for orphans has become a major problem due to poverty which is undermining the extended family's capacity to cope with orphans (Foster et al, 1997). The situation has been exacerbated by the HIV and AIDS pandemic which is leaving many children without parents to provide them with basic needs, socialisation and education (UNICEF, 2008). This has resulted in the emergence of child-headed households and it is against this background that this study explored the impact of this phenomenon on the academic performance of primary school students.

1.3 Statement of the problem

The child-headed household has emerged as a context of child development due to the disintegrating extended family as a safety net. In this household, older children are usually forced to take up adult responsibilities of care and support for younger siblings and vulnerable elders with little or no support from the extended family and government when they themselves still need adult support and guidance. It appears as if the socio-economic conditions of this household do not foster cultural experiences which enhance academic performance. It is against this backdrop that this study sought to explore the impact of the child-headed household on academic performance.

1.4 Justification of the study

The child-headed household has received a lot of attention in sociological inquiry in Zimbabwe. However, most research studies (Foster et al, 1997; Germann, 2005) focused on the causes, prevalence and coping strategies of child-headed households. Thus, most research studies tend to leave a knowledge gap on the impact of the child-headed household on academic performance. It is against this background that an exploratory study was required to provide an in-depth understanding of the impact of child-headedness on academic performance. The study will inform educators, communities, nongovernmental organisations and the government of the needs of students from child headed households. The adoption of the recommendations of this study as policy may enhance the retention and academic performance of students from these households.

1.5 Research objectives

The study seeks to:

- identify socio-economic challenges faced by primary school students from child-headed households in resettlement areas,
- determine how these challenges influence their academic performance ,and

- suggest strategies to mitigate the challenges.

1.6 Research questions

The study intends to address the following research questions:

- Which socio-economic challenges are faced by primary school students from child-headed households in resettlement areas?
- How is their academic performance influenced by these challenges?
- What is the impact of gender dynamics on the academic performance of primary school students from child-headed households?
- How can society mitigate these challenges?

1.7 Delimitations

The study focused on Beatrice resettlement area located 53km South of Harare, Zimbabwe. The four resettlement areas which were selected as cases were former commercial farms. The findings of this study illuminated the nature of challenges that influence the academic performance of students from child-headed households in similar settings in Zimbabwe.

1.8 Definition of terms

A child-headed household is one where there are no adult carers available and children under the age of 18 live on their own (Sloth-Nielsen, 2004). In this study, households in which a child under the age of 18 was the main caregiver for incapacitated adults were also regarded as child-headed.

Gordon (1995) defines academic performance as passing an objective test. In the context of this study, academic performance refers to passing progress tests, end of term tests as well as grade seven examinations at primary school level.

1.9 Conceptual framework

This research study is informed by Bourdieu's theory of practice. The theory attempts to reconcile the structure and agency dichotomy in sociological inquiry. Bourdieu (1988) argues that, human behaviour is enabled and constrained by pre-existing structures which were created by human action. The fundamental idea of the theory is that human behaviour is influenced by the interplay between structure and agency. In this regard, the structural conditions of the child-headed household as well as the student's agency influence academic performance.

The central concepts of Bourdieu's theory are habitus, field and capital. He used the following scheme to represent his theory:

$$\text{HABITUS} + \text{CAPITAL} + \text{FIELD} = \text{PRACTICE}$$

In the context of this study, habitus, capital and field are structural constraints of the child-headed household which can enable or constrain academic performance (practice).

According to Bourdieu, habitus refers to socialised norms that guide human behaviour. What Bourdieu calls habitus is actually cultural capital which is gained within the family environment and through education. He argues that, the educational system reinforces the habitus of middle and upper classes and as a result, students from these class backgrounds experience academic success. Students from other class backgrounds may underachieve because of the variance between culture in the home and culture in the school curriculum. Thus, the congruence between the habitus gained in the home and that in the school curriculum tends to enable academic performance while a disjuncture between the two may constrain it. In this regard, the academic performance of students from child headed households may be constrained by lack of primary socialisation from adult caregivers.

The second concept introduced by Bourdieu is that of capital which he extends beyond the notion of material assets to capital that may be social, cultural and symbolic. Bourdieu noted that, capital is not evenly distributed throughout the class structure and this largely accounts for class differences in academic performance. In his view, dominant classes possess economic capital which can be used to enhance academic performance. In this set up, the academic performance of students from child-headed households may be constrained by lack of economic capital to meet schooling costs and other basic needs. According to Bourdieu, social and symbolic capitals are inextricably linked to economic capital. This implies that, lack of social and symbolic capitals may also impact negatively on academic performance.

The third concept of Bourdieu's theory is that of field. It refers to various contexts in which agents express and reproduce their dispositions or habitus. The child-headed household is a field in which children develop a habitus. Bourdieu argues that fields are characterised by relations of power and domination which influence human behaviour. Therefore, gender dynamics in the child-headed household may influence differential academic performance between male and female students from this household.

2.0 Literature Review

Much of the research on the child-headed household phenomenon has focused on its causes, prevalence as well as the coping strategies of children living in this household. The impact of the child-headed household on academic performance seems to be a relatively under-researched area hence this knowledge gap is the focus of this study.

2.1 The concept of child-headed household

Gow and Desmond (2002) state that, a child-headed household refers to children living in a household without direct adult supervision as they have been

orphaned or abandoned by parents or the parents are working elsewhere. According to this definition, a child-headed household consists only of children. However, Sloth-Nielsen (2004) and Germann (2005) observed child-headed households in South Africa and Zimbabwe respectively in which children took over the responsibility of providing for the household when they lived with terminally ill parents or a very old grandparent. In this context, the child-headed household comprises incapacitated adults under the care of a child household head. The child-headed household is therefore a fluid social phenomenon which varies over time and space and lacks a precise definition. Foster et al (1997) developed two typologies of child-headed households namely accompanied and unaccompanied, that is, with an adult and with no adult respectively. Although accompanied orphans often live with a very old grandparent or a terminally ill adult as was the case in two households in this study, they are usually the sole providers of basic needs for the households. In this study, the concept child-headed household is therefore used to refer to children only households as well as households with incapacitated adults under the care of a child household head.

2.2 Factors influencing the origin of child-headed households

Foster et al (1997) carried out a case study of factors leading to the establishment of child-headed households in Zimbabwe and found out that, some children were left to live on their own because their close relatives did not want to take up the responsibility due to economic strains; in other occasions the children opted to stay together in their own home due to the risk of separation or in keeping family property; for some it was the fear of mistreatment and exploitation by foster families; in other cases relatives lived close and could visit them often; some had no known close relatives capable of taking care of them; and some relatives did not want to take care of orphaned children due to AIDS deaths fearing infection and stigmatisation. Naicher and Tsenhase (2004) found the same factors in a survey of child-headed households in South Africa.

2.3 The prevalence of child-headed households

The 2001 census report in South Africa estimated that there were 248 000 child-headed households in that country (Sloth-Nielsen, 2004). The number is likely to have increased significantly since then. The Central Statistical Office cited in UNICEF (2004) estimated that by the end of 2000, over 40 000 children were living in child-headed households in Zimbabwe. The figure rose to 50 000 in 2002 (UNICEF, 2004). The figure could have increased tremendously to date due to the economic meltdown which Zimbabwe experienced in the decade 2000-2010 as well as the HIV and AIDS pandemic which is creating orphans at an alarming rate.

2.4 Coping strategies of children living in child-headed households

The coping strategies of child-headed households in urban areas are well documented. Germann's (2005) case study in Bulawayo urban, Zimbabwe reveals that, some child household heads cope with economic strain through begging as well as engaging in part-time employment in butcheries, shops, domestic work and the informal sector. In a study in Uganda, Luzze (2002) observed that, some child household heads especially girls engage in casual commercial sex to raise household income. A study by Foster et al (1997) in Mutare urban, Zimbabwe found out that, utilising part of the house left by parents to rent out to lodgers is another coping strategy for the children. In this regard, parental house ownership might be a contributing factor for child-headed households being established, as ownership not only provides them with a place to stay together, but is also an income source. These research studies tend to focus on the coping strategies of child-headed households in urban areas. It seems there is very little research on coping strategies of children living in child-headed households in resettlement areas and the impact of these coping strategies on academic performance.

3.0 Methodology

This section discusses and justifies the methodology that was adopted for this research study.

3.1 Research design

The exploratory case study design was adopted for this study. A case study design focuses on a phenomenon to be studied, the case, unit of analysis and focus of the study (Gall et al, 2007). The phenomenon is the child-headed household and the case is Beatrice resettlement area in Zimbabwe. Primary school students living in child-headed households in the Beatrice resettlement area, their school heads, teachers, community leaders, guardians, relatives and neighbours made up the unit of analysis. The focus of the study is the impact of the child-headed household on academic performance.

A case study is a qualitative research design best suited for gaining an in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon within its cultural, social and situational context without imposing pre-existing expectations (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). In line with this view, child household heads and key informants were studied in their natural settings rather than in artificial ones as with most quantitative designs. As part of the phenomenological paradigm, the case study design stresses that reality is rooted in the perceptions of the participants (Yin, 2003). Gall et al (2007) agree and add that, the case study is appropriate for studying children because it views them as competent informants and interpreters of their own lives and experiences. Therefore, the case study design enabled me to gain an in-depth understanding of the impact of the child-headed household on academic performance from the perspective of the research participants.

The case study design adopted for this study was exploratory. This implies that, research was done on a relatively unknown topic to gain new insights on a phenomenon (Creswell, 2003). This made the exploratory case study design the most ideal design for exploring this knowledge gap.

The exploratory case study design adopted for this study consisted of both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. Emphasis was however put on qualitative methods to allow the study to be descriptive and contextual. The quantitative part of the research design (content analysis) examined the association between independent variables such as sexual abuse, child labour, ill-health, stigma, school attendance, hunger and domestic responsibilities, and academic performance the dependent variable. The qualitative part of the research design (life story narratives and unstructured interviews) explored why the child-headed household influenced academic performance. Thus, the research design ensured a holistic understanding of the impact of the child-headed household on academic performance.

The main disadvantage of case studies is that findings are based on a limited number of cases and can therefore not be generalised (Gall et al, 2007). The findings of this study are therefore generalisable to Beatrice resettlement area. However, the findings illuminate the structural constraints of the child-headed household which can constrain the academic performance of students in similar settings in Zimbabwe.

3.2 Population of study

The population for this study consisted of 15 primary school students from child-headed households in Beatrice resettlement area, 12 school heads, 84 teachers, community leaders as well as the students' guardians, relatives and neighbours.

3.3 Sampling

Participants for this study were selected using purposive sampling. It is a non-probability sampling procedure in which the researcher purposely chooses participants who are relevant to the research topic (Schutt, 2009). From a population of 15 students from child-headed households, I purposively sampled

4 child household heads(2 male and 2 female). The heads of the 4 primary schools where the child household heads were students became part of the sample. I also purposively sampled 6 teachers (4 female and 2 male) who were teaching students from child-headed households in the 4 schools. Purposive sampling enabled me to select research participants who supplied rich and detailed information about impact of the structural constraints of the child-headed household on academic performance.

3.4 Methods of data collection

Data were collected using unstructured interviews, life story narratives, and content analysis.

3.5 Unstructured interviews

Since the study was conducted with exploratory research in mind, unstructured interviews were used. An unstructured interview consists of guidelines on pertinent issues to be discussed rather than structured questions to be asked every respondent (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). This allowed respondents to openly disclose their thoughts, feelings and perceptions (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) regarding the impact of the child-headed household on their academic performance. The unstructured interviews also allowed me to probe extensively for sensitive issues such as sexual abuse and child labour. In this regard, unstructured interviews enabled me to obtain in-depth data from the perspectives of the child-household heads, school heads and teachers.

The main drawback of unstructured interviews is interviewer bias (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003) that is, the degree to which the characteristics of the interviewer influences the responses of the interviewee. I cross checked the trustworthiness of data from unstructured interviews with that from life story narratives and content analysis to minimise the effects of interviewer bias on the findings of this study. I conducted unstructured interviews with 4 child household heads, 4 school heads and 6 teachers. Interviews with school heads and teachers were

in English and those with child household heads were in Shona, the local language. I concluded interviews when themes became saturated as evidenced in repeating themes and translated data gathered from Shona interviews into English.

3.6 Life story narratives

Life story narratives mainly utilise unstructured interviews to enable participants to give accounts of their life experiences which are of interest to the researcher in the form of a story (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995). The 4 child household heads narrated their life experiences on the impact of the child-headed household on their academic performance. The basic concern of the life story narrative is the presentation of experience from the perspective of the subject or subjects themselves (Plummer, 1992). This allowed me to understand the impact of the child-headed household on academic performance from the perspectives of the child household heads.

The authenticity and accuracy of life story narratives tend to be based on the ability of the participants to recall their life experiences (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995). I had to cross check the validity of data from life story narratives with that from content analysis and unstructured interviews to enhance the trustworthiness of the research findings. Like in Robson's (2001) study of young carers in Zimbabwe, life story narratives brought memories that often led to children crying as they narrated the deaths of their parents. For example, Grace cried when she spoke about the death of her mother. This raises questions on the appropriateness of using this approach with children particularly on topics involving sensitive issues. However, despite these limitations child household heads as competent agents were able to give information rich accounts of their experiences on the impact of the child-headed household on their academic performance.

3.7 Content analysis

Content analysis involves the examination of the content of recorded information (Schutt, 2009). The academic performance of students living in child-headed households was analysed from school progress record books, report books as well as the Zimbabwe School Examinations Council (ZIMSEC) Grade Seven Results Slips. School report books and progress record books cover long periods of time, for example, grade zero to seven. This made content analysis very useful for studying trends in academic performance. Content analysis also enabled me to compare the academic performance of the students before and after living in child-headed households. School attendance is one of the independent variables which influence academic performance (Gordon, 1995). In this regard, the class register allowed me to analyse the relationship between school attendance and academic performance. I used data from content analysis to cross check the trustworthiness of data on academic performance and school attendance yielded from life story narratives and unstructured interviews. Another advantage of content analysis is that documents unlike humans are non reactive (Gall et al, 2007) and as a result, reliable data could have been gathered.

3.8 Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using the Thematic Analysis Model. This is an approach for analysing data which focuses on identifying recurring patterns of behaviour in collected data (Leininger, 1985) with research questions as the frame of reference. The recurring patterns gathered from life story narratives, unstructured interviews and content analysis were then synthesised into the following themes: the impact of household responsibilities on academic performance; the impact of hunger on academic performance; the impact of stigma, discrimination and isolation on academic performance; the impact of child labour on academic performance; the impact of schooling costs on

academic performance; the impact of ill-health on academic performance; and the impact of sexual abuse on academic performance.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Research on child-headed households poses the difficulty that often there is no known legal guardian for the children. In such situations, I sought consent from school heads and community leaders. Even with permission from adults, I respected Peter's right to decline to participate in the study. Informed consent detailing the nature, purpose, duration, procedure, benefits and possible risks of the research was obtained from all participants (Schutt, 2009). Each participant was informed that the research was voluntary and they could quit any time in the process (Gall et al, 2007). They were also informed that the information was only going to be used for the purpose of the research.

When I visited Tambudzai to conduct an interview she had no food and I found it immoral and unethical to interview the hungry child. Following Robson (2001), I had to offer assistance instead of remaining impartial and sticking to regulative codes of ethic procedures. The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants was guaranteed through the use of pseudonyms (Schutt, 2009). This method was explained to the participants before the commencement of the study.

3.10 Limitations of the study

The study sample ought to have been larger in order to obtain a representative insight of the impact of the child headed household on academic performance in resettlement areas. However, I realised that it was not feasible in six months if the study had to be detailed and exhaustive. I also faced financial constraints to meet the costs of travelling to some remote parts of the resettlement area.

4.0 Presentation Of Research Findings

This section presents the findings of this study as cases. Data for each of the four cases was gathered from life story narratives, unstructured interviews and

content analysis. The cases were named after the pseudonyms of child household heads and schools. Pseudonyms were also used for the child household heads' siblings to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. The names of the child household heads' classmates were withheld in extracts scanned from class registers and progress record books for ethical reasons.

4.1 Case 1: Tariro of Hopely primary school

Tariro is a fourteen year old boy who is doing grade six. His sister Mary is twelve years old and she is in grade five. Their mother died of AIDS in March 2010. The two siblings live with their father who is terminally ill because of AIDS. Their father's brother and his family are their only relatives in the resettlement area. They often visit to check on their father's health, but according to Tariro, they do not assist with caring responsibilities. He narrated how they care for their father during school days,

When he is seriously ill we change shifts. My sister cares for him like today while I attend school and the next day it will be my turn to stay at home to care for him.

Mary's school attendance rate was however more sporadic than that of Tariro as evidenced by **Extracts 4.1 and 4.2**.

Extract 4.1: Term 3 school attendance rate for Mary, 2011.

	Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending				
	09/09/11					16/09/11					23/09/11					30/09/11					07/10/11					14/10/11				
Surname	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F
Forename(s)																														
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	Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending
	21/10/11					28/10/11					04/11/11					11/11/11					18/11/11					25/11/11					02/12/11
Surname	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	
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Extract, 4.2: Term 3 school attendance rate for Tariro, 2011.

	Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending				
	09-09-11					16-09-11					23-09-11					30-09-11					07-10-11					14-10-11				
Surname Forename(s)	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F
Tariro																														

	Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending				
	21-10-11					28-10-11					04-11-11					11-11-11					18-11-11					25-11-11				
Surname Forename(s)	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F
Tariro																														

An analysis of the data in **Extracts 4.1** and **4.2** revealed that Tariro attended school for 52 out of 63 days while Mary only attended 40 days. Tariro was absent for 11 days while her sister was absent for 23 days. This suggests that Mary was performing more caring responsibilities than Tariro and as a result, she could have missed more concepts than him.

Apart from caring responsibilities, the two siblings indicated that they are subjected to stigmatisation by their peers. Tariro narrated how the stigma is manifested,

Some children say we have AIDS because we care for our father who is terminally ill because of the disease. Most of them do not want to associate with us because they fear that we may infect them with AIDS.

Their school head confirmed that cases of stigmatisation occur in the school and her typical response on this issue was,

Children who care for their HIV and AIDS infected parents are usually associated with HIV and AIDS infection by their peers and they may be isolated. However, we now have very few such cases because of the AIDS Education lessons we offer.

Stigmatisation can be a barrier to peer socialisation which provides children with opportunities to develop interaction skills which are crucial for mutual learning and academic performance.

During a food distribution exercise by Hope Orphan Support Services (HOSS) in the schools, I observed that, each child household head received 10kg of mealie-meal, 15kg of porridge meal and a 750 ml bottle of cooking oil. Tariro indicated that the food handouts did not last a month and he had to request for more food provisions from his uncle. Being hungry at school was however his main concern as his narration revealed,

We don't carry any food to school because of financial constraints. After break time I find it very difficult to concentrate because of hunger.

His class teacher echoed the same sentiments on the impact of hunger on learning. He said,

Most students from child-headed households do not bring food to consume during tea and lunch breaks and this affects their participation in class activities.

When students fail to concentrate and participate in class activities, their academic performance may be affected.

The other challenge that Tariro had to meet was schooling costs. In his narration he revealed that,

Our tuition fees and levies are paid through BEAM and our main problem is stationery. Most of the times we do not do write exercises because we can't afford exercise books and pens. I was very excited when we got stationery from UNICEF, but the supplies have since run out.

A close analysis of the two siblings' exercise books confirmed that they were not doing written exercises regularly. It should be noted that, written exercises are important because they consolidate learnt concepts.

Extract 4.3 juxtaposes Tariro's academic performance before being a child household head (term 3, 2010) and as a child household head (term 3, 2011). The two progress reports were scanned from his school report book.

Extract 4.3 School termly progress reports for Tariro, 2010 and 2011.

SCHOOL .. [REDACTED] Hopely Primary	NAME [REDACTED] Tariro
SURNAME [REDACTED]	TERM <u>3</u> GRADE <u>5</u>
YEAR <u>2010</u>	OUT OF <u>35</u>
CLASS POSITION <u>15</u>	

SUBJECT	Possible Mark	Actual Mark	Teacher's Comment
ENGLISH	100	60	Can do better
SHONA	100	65	Wagorwa
MATHS	100	58	Satisfactory
CONTENT	100	70	Well done
TOTAL	400	253	Pass

SCHOOL [REDACTED] Hopely Primary	NAME: [REDACTED] Tariro
SURNAME [REDACTED]	TERM <u>3</u> GRADE <u>6</u>
YEAR <u>2011</u>	OUT OF <u>34</u>
CLASS POSITION <u>20</u>	

SUBJECT	Possible Mark	Actual Mark	Teacher's Comment
ENGLISH	100	40	Work hard
SHONA	100	61	Wagorwa
MATHS	100	40	Put more effort
CONTENT	100	56	can do better
TOTAL	400	197	FAIL

A close analysis of the two progress reports revealed that, he passed all subjects before being a child household head and only two subjects after assuming that role. His teacher had this to say about his deteriorating academic performance,

In the previous grade he always passed all subjects, but it is now very difficult for him to perform well against the background of the death of his mother, a terminally ill father and the responsibility of fending for the whole family.

Extract 4.4 School termly progress reports for Mary, 2010 and 2011.

SCHOOL .. [REDACTED] **Hopely Primary**
 SURNAME [REDACTED]
 YEAR 2010
 CLASS POSITION 17

NAME: [REDACTED] **Mary**
 TERM 3 GRADE 4
 OUT OF 40

SUBJECT	Possible Mark	Actual Mark	Teacher's Comment
ENGLISH	100	62	GOOD
SHONA	100	70	WAGONA
MATHS	100	65	WELL DONE
CONTENT	100	69	FAIR
TOTAL	400	266	PASS

SCHOOL .. [REDACTED] **Hopely Primary**
 SURNAME [REDACTED]
 YEAR 2011
 CLASS POSITION 28

NAME: [REDACTED] **Mary**
 TERM 3 GRADE 5
 OUT OF 40

SUBJECT	Possible Mark	Actual Mark	Teacher's Comment
ENGLISH	100	42	WORK HARDER
SHONA	100	59	ZVAITWA
MATHS	100	36	PUT MORE EFFORT
CONTENT	100	44	CAN DO BETTER
TOTAL	400	181	

The termly progress reports cover the same period as in **Extract 4.3** above. Mary's academic performance like that of Tariro deteriorated. She passed all subjects in term 3 of 2010 when her mother was still alive, but managed to pass only one subject in term 3 of 2011 when she had died. A close analysis of the progress reports of the two siblings revealed that, Mary's academic performance was better than that of Tariro in the 2010 end of year examinations. Although the two siblings both failed the 2011 end of year examinations, Tariro's performance was better. This suggests that caring responsibilities affected

Mary's academic performance to a greater extent as evidenced by her teacher's typical response on the issue,

Mary's academic performance is declining drastically because she is always absent caring for her father. It is not culturally acceptable for a girl to care for her ailing father. Her relatives should assist with such responsibilities.

4.2 Case 2: Tambudzai of Thornwell Primary School

Tambudzai is a fifteen year old girl who is doing grade seven. She lives with her brother Moses who is in grade five. Their parents were of Malawian origin and former commercial farm workers. When their widowed mother died in January 2011 the two siblings had no close relatives in the resettlement area to look after them as most of their relatives work on farms in the Norton resettlement area, Zimbabwe. During their mother's funeral and burial their relatives promised to take them to Norton, but by the time this study was completed none of them had turned up.

Tambudzai like Mary (in case 1) was overburdened by household responsibilities as her narration revealed,

I have a lot of household responsibilities to do before and after school and my time for homework and home study is very little. I don't have relatives who can assist me with these responsibilities.

Therefore, household responsibilities tend not to offer students from child-headed households particularly girls the opportunity to focus on their education. Her food rations from the Hope Orphan Support Services were like those given to Tariro (in case 1) above. She appreciated the food handouts, but indicated that they were inadequate. Her typical response on the issue was,

Our food rations always run out before the end of the month and I find it difficult to raise money to supplement them. I usually do

piece jobs such as weeding people's fields for some days to raise money for food and other basic needs and then go back to school.

The piece jobs that she does are not only strenuous, but they also deny her schooling for a couple of days. The piece jobs are more of child labour than child work as her school head indicated,

Child labour is pervasive in this resettlement area because most of the new farmers pay very low wages and are always in short supply of labour. As a result some of them take advantage of these desperate children.

Her class teacher echoed the same sentiments,

Piece jobs disrupt learning for most pupils particularly those from poor socio-economic backgrounds.

Extract 4.5 Term two school attendance rate for Tambudzai, 2011.

	Wk Ending	Wk Ending	Wk Ending	Wk Ending	Wk Ending	Wk Ending
	13/05/11	20/05/11	27/05/11	03/06/11	10/06/11	17/06/11
Surname Forename(s)	M T W T F	M T W T F	M T W T F	M T W T F	M T W T F	M T W T F
██████ Tambudzai	1 1 a 1 a 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 a 1 1 a a a 1 1 1 a a	1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
██████	1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
██████	1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 a 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1

	Wk Ending	Wk Ending	Wk Ending	Wk Ending	Wk Ending	Wk Ending	Wk Ending
	24/06/11	01/07/11	08/07/11	15/07/11	22/07/11	29/07/11	04/08/11
Surname Forename(s)	M T W T F	M T W T F	M T W T F	M T W T F	M T W T F	M T W T F	M T W
██████ Tambudzai	1 a 1 1 1 1 a a a 1 1 a 1 a 1 a 1 a 1 a 1 a 1 a 1 a a	1 1 a 1	1 1 a 1	1 1 a 1	1 1 a 1	1 1 a 1	1 1 a 1
██████	1 1 a 1	1 1 a 1	1 1 a 1	1 1 a 1	1 1 a 1	1 1 a 1	1 1 a 1
██████	1 1 a 1	1 1 a 1	1 1 a 1	1 1 a 1	1 1 a 1	1 1 a 1	1 1 a 1

Extract 4.5 is showing that she attended only 35 out of 62 days. This means that she did not attend school for 27 days which is almost a month. The concepts she missed during that long period could have impacted negatively on her academic performance as evidenced by Extract 4.6 below.

It came to light in her narration that schooling costs were her other challenge. On this issue she had this to say,

I always absent myself from school because of lack of nice clothes for civvies, the civvies charge of five South African Rands, exercise books and pens.

Data gathered from interviews with the school head and teachers confirmed that stationery was a challenge for most orphaned and vulnerable children. The school head however indicated that these children were exempted from paying civvies charges. A close analysis of Tambudzai's school attendance in **Extract 4.5** above revealed that she was absent on all the four days that civvies were held that term. When I probed her on the reasons for her persistent absenteeism on such days she said,

If your clothes are torn other children laugh at you and isolate you. They make you feel dirty, stupid and worthless. I am contemplating dropping out.

These students are therefore subjected to isolation and discrimination on the basis of their poverty reflected in torn clothes. Isolation and discrimination tend to hamper pupil-pupil interaction which can enhance academic performance.

Apart from isolation and discrimination, children living in child-headed households are also vulnerable to sexual abuse as Tambudzai revealed,

I have never been sexually abused myself, but some girls in grade six and seven have sexual relationships with male teachers and farm workers in exchange for food, money, clothes and other goodies.

The school head and the teachers who were interviewed denied any knowledge of sexual abuse cases involving male teachers and school girls occurring in the school at the time of the study. They however shared the same sentiments with Tambudzai that cases of farm workers sexually abusing school girls were rampant. In this set up, female students from child-headed households like

Tambudzai are vulnerable to sexual abuse because of poverty and lack of parental protection.

Extract 4.6: Grade seven ZIMSEC examination results for Tambudzai, 2011.

ZIMBABWE SCHOOL EXAMINATION COUNCIL GRADE SEVEN RESULTS 2011			
SCHOOL	Thornwell Primary	NAME	Tambudzai
SUBJECT	UNITS		
ENGLISH	8		
MATHS	7		
SHONA	7		
GENERAL PAPER	8		

Extract 4.6 is showing that she failed all subjects in the grade seven examinations. Her class teacher had to say about her performance,

She was an above average student in grade six, but her performance started to deteriorate when she became the household head in 2011.

Data in **Extract 4.7** below corroborated the claim by her teacher that her performance was above average before she assumed the household headship role.

Extract 4.7: School termly progress report for Tambudzai, 2010.

SCHOOL	Thornwell	NAME:	Tambudzai
SURNAME		TERM	3
YEAR	2010	GRADE	6
CLASS POSITION	17	OUT OF	40

SUBJECT	Possible Mark	Actual Mark	Teacher's Comment
ENGLISH	100	62	Well done
SHONA	100	70	Wabaya
MATHS	100	62	well done
CONTENT	100	61	Can do better
TOTAL	400	255	PASS

Data in this extract are showing that she passed all subjects in the grade six end of year examinations. It can be argued that, child headedness could be the

major factor which impacted negatively on her academic performance at grade seven level.

4.3 Case 3: Danmore of Nhamo primary school

Danmore is a fifteen year old boy who is doing grade six. Of all the child household heads he was the only one who was living alone. His two married sisters live in Harare. They sometimes visit him, but most of the time he was staying alone. His parents died of AIDS in 2009 and his uncle who has a plot in the same resettlement area had to look after him. He however ill-treated him and in 2010 he decided to stay alone at his parents' plot.

He received, like the other child household heads, some food handouts from the Hope Orphan Support Services. His narration revealed that the food handouts were not adequate,

When my food handouts run out, I usually attend school with an empty stomach and I find it very difficult to concentrate in class. When I come back from school I find nothing to eat and I just sleep.

He also lamented the isolation and discrimination that he experienced at school,

During tea and lunch breaks other children share their food, but because I always have nothing to share, they shun me. I don't have friends at school like other children. I sometimes think of dropping out.

Child-headed households are therefore food insecure. The hunger, isolation and discrimination that these children experience affect their interest in schooling as well as academic performance. I had to encourage Danmore to stay in school.

Like Tambudzia (Case 2), Danmore engaged in a number of piece jobs as his narration revealed,

I have no one to assist me with money, food, stationery, clothes and civvies charges. Therefore I am forced to do a number of piece jobs in order to survive. I weed people's fields, harvest maize and tobacco, and water gardens.

The piece jobs he does affect his school attendance as shown by **Extract 4.8** below.

Extract 4.8 Term 3 School attendance rate for Danmore, 2011.

	Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending				
	09-09-11					16-09-11					23-09-11					30-09-11					07-10-11					14-10-11				
Surname Forename(s)	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F
████████ Danmore	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	a	a	a	1	1	s	a	a	a	a	1	a	1	a	s	1	1	1	1	1
████████	1	1	1	1	1	a	1	1	1	1	s	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	a	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
████████	1	1	1	1	1	a	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	a	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
████████	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	a	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

	Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending					Wk Ending									
	21-10-11					28-10-11					04-11-11					11-11-11					18-11-11					25-11-11					02-12-11				
Surname Forename(s)	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F					
████████ Danmore	a	a	a	1	a	a	1	a	s	a	1	1	a	1	a	a	a	a	s	1	a	a	a	1	a	1	a	a	1	1					
████████	1	1	a	a	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	s	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	a	s	1	1	1	1					
████████	1	1	1	1	a	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1					
████████	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1					

An analysis of his school attendance reveals that he only attended 30 out of 63 days. Therefore he missed the concepts which were learnt during the 33 days when he was absent. His teacher had this to say about his erratic school attendance,

He lacks parental supervision and encouragement to ensure that he attends school regularly. However the major factor is the piece jobs he engages in to raise money for basic needs.

Extract 4.9: Term 3 progress record for Danmore, 2011.

	Progress check 1				Progress check 2				Progress check 3				Progress check 4				Progress check 5			
	Maths	English	Shona	Content	Maths	English	Shona	Content	Maths	English	Shona	Content	Maths	English	Shona	Content	Maths	English	Shona	Content
Possible Mark	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
Name List																				
	15	17	12	18	17	10	17	12	08	06	20	19	16	14	16	13	16	17	19	16
	16	11	18	16	15	13	18	14	19	16	18	15	14	14	20	16	17	16	18	17
Danmore	14	16	15	12	09	06	10	08	12	10	14	11	08	05	10	07	04	04	10	09
Date	16/09/11				30/09/11				14/10/11				28/10/11				11/11/11			

Data in this extract were scanned from the progress record book of his class. A close analysis of the data reveals that he performed well in progress checks 1 and 3. **Extract 4.8** above shows that he attended school daily during these two weeks, that is, weeks 1 and 6. For the weeks when his school attendance was erratic, that is, weeks 4, 8 and 10 his academic performance was respectively poor in progress checks 2, 4, and 5. Danmore could be an average student whose academic performance is being affected by the challenges of child headedness.

4.4 Case 4: Grace of Shungu Primary

Grace is a fifteen year old girl who is doing grade seven. She lives with her brother Joe who is in grade five as well as her grandmother. She shed tears when she narrated how her parents succumbed to Tuberculosis in 2008. Grace and his brother had to be looked after by their grandmother, but she is now very old and partially blind and since January 2010, it has become Grace's responsibility to look after her. She lamented the amount of work she does,

I woke up at 5am, clean the house and plates, fetch water, sweep the yard and prepare breakfast. By the time I start lessons I will be exhausted.

Her grandmother indicated that she could not help much with household responsibilities because of her advanced age and partial blindness. Grace indicated that Joe sometimes assists with household chores by fetching firewood and doing his own laundry. She elaborated on how household responsibilities were interfering with her education,

I am writing my grade seven examinations this year, so I have to study, but I can only start studying late at night after completing household chores.

Grace like Mary (in case 1) and Tambudzai (in case 2) above appeared to be overburdened by household responsibilities. Thus, older girls living in child-headed households have more primary care responsibilities for siblings, sick parents and old grandparents than their brothers. These responsibilities can influence differential academic performance between male and female students from child-headed households.

Like all the other child households heads, she depended on food supplies from the Hope Orphan Support Services. Grace had this to say about the food handouts,

They are inadequate and most of the time we do not have food to eat. I usually miss school to raise money for food through piece jobs.

Her school head raised the same sentiments on the inadequacy of the food handouts,

The food handouts are a welcome development for these children. However, they are neither reliable nor adequate. So far

they should have received them six times, but they have only received them three times.

Therefore, these children lead a life full of uncertainty of when and whether there will be a next meal. Grace expressed how food shortages affect her concentration in class,

When food supplies are about to run out, I always think about how I can supplement them even during lessons. Sometimes this affects my concentration in class.

I observed that Grace and her brother had no shoes and uniforms and the clothes they attended school in were torn. Grace revealed how she felt about her condition,

Wearing torn clothes when you are a big girl affects your dignity. I feel out of place, dejected and embarrassed about my condition. When other girls laugh at me I feel useless.

Such feelings can affect herself confidence, self esteem, motivation and participation in class and consequently academic performance.

It came to light that the other challenge that the child household heads face is transport costs to access health facilities. Grace narrated her experience,

When Joe fell ill last year, I had to borrow US\$4 for bus fare to take him to Beatrice hospital. Health facilities are far away in this community and sometimes we fail to access health services because of lack of bus fare.

Her school head echoed the same sentiments on the issue of health facilities. He said,

As a school we collect supplies of tablets for our pupils from Beatrice hospital, but for serious ailments, one has to travel to

Beatrice or Chitungwiza hospital. Transport costs to these health centres are really prohibitive such that such orphaned and vulnerable children sometimes fail to access health services.

I probed him on the issue of user fees and he had this to say,

Health user fees are not a problem because we issue orphaned and vulnerable pupils letters so that they are exempted from paying user fees.

Thus, transport costs make students from child-headed households vulnerable to ill-health which can affect their school attendance and academic performance.

Extract 4.10: The academic performance of Grace, 2011.

ZIMBABWE SCHOOL EXAMINATION COUNCIL GRADE SEVEN RESULTS 2011			
SCHOOL	Shungu Primary	NAME	Grace
SUBJECT		UNITS	
ENGLISH		3	
MATHS		2	
SHONA		2	
GENERAL PAPER		3	

Data in **Extract 4.10** are showing that she performed well in the final grade seven examinations, but what is puzzling is how she performed well against the background of the challenges she faced as a child household head. She had this to say about her academic performance,

I faced a lot of problems looking after my grandmother and brother, but I worked very hard. I will continue to work hard at secondary school because I want to pass 'O' level, get a good job and look after my grandmother and brother.

Her resilience, academic performance and future plans puzzled me. Her grade seven teacher made the following comment on her performance in the grade seven examinations,

She is a very intelligent girl who should have passed with distinctions, but the death of her parents and heading a household at such a tender age affected her socially, emotionally and psychologically, and this affected her performance.

Data in **Extracts 4.10** and **4.11** support her teacher's sentiments that her performance was much better before she assumed the household headship role. **Extract 4.11** is showing that before becoming a child household head her academic performance was **5 units** and when she assumed this role it deteriorated to **10 units** as shown in **Extract 4.10**. This suggests that the socio-economic challenges of the child-headed household impacted negatively on her potential for distinctive academic performance in the final grade seven examinations.

Extract 4.11: School termly progress report for Grace, 2010

SCHOOL	Shungu Primary	NAME:	Grace
SURNAME		TERM	3
YEAR	2009	GRADE	5
CLASS POSITION	1 (one)	OUT OF	40

SUBJECT	Possible Mark	Actual Mark	Teacher's Comment
ENGLISH	100	85	Very Good, but can do better
SHONA	100	42	Shasha
MATHS	100	90	Excellent work
CONTENT	100	90	Excellent, keep it up
TOTAL	400	357	outstanding performance

5.0 Discussion Of Findings

This section discusses the central themes that emerged from this study.

5.1 The impact of household responsibilities on academic performance

Household responsibilities increase dramatically when parents or caregivers become ill or die. The child household head is usually overburdened by domestic chores as well as caregiving responsibilities for younger siblings, ailing parents and old grandparents (Case, Paxson and Ableidinger, 2002). Household responsibilities take a gender dimension and girls find little or no time to consolidate learned concepts through home study and homework assignments. The household responsibilities they do before going to school make them exhausted to the extent that they fail to concentrate or participate in class. They also arrive late for lessons and miss concepts which affect their academic performance.

Gordon's (1995) case study in Zimbabwe revealed that, the academic performance of girls living in adult headed households (AHHs) is affected to a greater extent by domestic responsibilities. This suggests that household responsibilities tend to fall more heavily on girls than on boys. It should be noted that, in the AHHs which Gordon studied, girls shared household responsibilities with their mothers. In the absence of mothers as was the case in this study, girls are overburdened. Higher domestic work burdens for female students from child-headed households were also observed by Luzze (2002) in Uganda. This is in tandem with the radical feminist view that in a society characterised by a patriarchal sexual division of labour, women and girls are overburdened by domestic sphere oriented responsibilities (Bryson, 1992). In this regard, household responsibilities may result in obstacles in the schooling and academic performance of girls living in child-headed households that boys in the same households do not face. It can be argued that, household responsibilities not only constrain the academic performance of students from child-headed households, but also influence gender disparities in academic performance in favour of boys.

5.2 The impact of hunger on academic performance

Hunger is prevalent in child-headed households. Germann (2005) also reported severe food insecurity in child-headed households in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe and that the children sometimes go to bed hungry. While Germann simply identified hunger as a challenge, this study examined how hunger impacts on academic performance. Financial constraints and inadequate food handouts expose the students to hunger and it should be noted that, hungry children tend to have lower academic performance because they cannot concentrate in class. Incessant hunger leads to ill-health and malnutrition (UNICEF, 2006) which can affect school attendance and participation in class. When students fail to attend school or participate in class because of hunger, they lose cultural capital which Bourdieu (1988) claims is vital for academic performance. In this regard, hunger becomes a barrier to academic performance. Thus, there is need for supplementary feeding programmes in schools to enhance the academic performance of students from child-headed households.

5.3 The impact of stigma and discrimination on academic performance

Students from child-headed households who are orphaned by AIDS or are caring for parents who are terminally ill because of the pandemic are often subjected to stigmatisation. These students also experience isolation and discrimination because of their poverty reflected through torn clothes and lack of food to consume at school. Stigma devalues an actor's social identity and disqualifies the actor from social acceptance (Goffman, 1970). Thus, stigma did not offer the students the opportunity to effectively interact with their peers. Symbolic interactionists argue that, pupil-pupil interaction is one of the pre-conditions which enhance academic performance (Giddens, 2001). Becker (1963) adds that, stigma has labelling and self fulfilling prophecy effects. Therefore, students who are consistently stigmatised, isolated and discriminated may develop negative self-concepts which constrain their academic performance. In the context of Bourdieu's theory of practice, stigma lowers an actor's prestige, status and other forms of social honour (social and symbolic

capital). This tends to impact negatively on a student's self confidence, self-esteem, motivation, participation in class and consequently academic performance. Some students cope with stigmatisation, discrimination and isolation by refraining from attending school regularly. Thus, stigma, discrimination and isolation create a hostile school environment which is not conducive for effective learning and academic performance.

5.4 The impact of child labour on academic performance

Child labour is rife in the resettlement area. This is not a new phenomenon as child labour has always been prevalent in commercial farming and mining areas (Bourdillion, 2000; Walker, 2003). Child labour could have increased in these former commercial farming areas because of the First Track Land Reform Programme. Dube (2001) argues that, some new farmers lack economic resources to afford a constant supply of labour and as a result they resort to child labour. Students from child-headed households are pushed into child labour to raise economic capital for basic needs such as stationery, food, clothes and uniforms. The threats to children's welfare from child labour include inadequate socialisation, loss of schooling, exposure to pesticides and little opportunity for socialising and leisure (Bourdillion, 2000; McCartney, 2000). In this regard, child labour impacts negatively on the health, school attendance and consequently academic performance of students from child-headed households.

5.5 The impact of schooling costs on academic performance

Students from child-headed households fail to meet schooling costs such as uniforms, civvies charges, pens and exercise books. McCartney's (2000) study in commercial farming areas in Zimbabwe identified the same schooling costs. These costs are a burden to these orphaned and vulnerable children because of their poor socio-economic status. It should also be noted that, these costs are not catered for by the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) scholarship programme for orphaned and vulnerable children. Thus, primary education for vulnerable children should not be perceived as 'free'.

The students missed important concepts when they were excluded from lessons because of lack of stationery and some attended lessons, but did not do written exercises. It should be pointed out that, writing is important for the consolidation of learnt concepts. Students who attended school in torn clothes and without shoes could have developed negative self concepts which constrained their academic performance. In terms of Bourdieu's theory of practice, their social and symbolic capitals were negatively affected leading to negative self concepts and consequently poor academic performance.

Zimbabwe's cost sharing policy in education (Zvobgo, 1997; Peresuh and Nhundu, 1999) has influenced schools to increase civvies days in a bid to raise teacher incentives. This affects students from child-headed households who lack both the casual clothes and fees for such occasions. The students have a tendency of not attending lessons on civvies days and as a result their academic performance is affected. Bourdieu (1988) argues that, forms of capital can be exchanged, those students who can afford schooling costs have economic capital to trade for cultural capital and academic performance. On the other hand, students from child-headed households lack economic capital to obtain cultural capital and subsequently academic performance.

5.6 The impact of sexual abuse on academic performance

All children are susceptible to sexual abuse, but those from child-headed households particularly girls are more at risk as they are socially isolated and financially distressed. A UNICEF (2008) report states that, at least one million young girls in Sub-Saharan Africa are forced into exploitative sexual relationships because of poverty. Machakanja's (2004) qualitative study in Zimbabwe also noted that, poverty pushes school girls into sex with male teachers and sugar daddies in exchange for money to meet basic needs. Similarly, in the resettlement area poverty drives school girls into exploitative sexual relationships with farm workers. In the context of Bourdieu's theory of practice, it can be argued that, lack of economic capital pushes school girls from

child-headed households into exploitative sexual relationships. A qualitative study by Madzingira and Chizororo (2003) cited in Germann (2005) revealed that, girls living in child-headed households in Zimbabwe are vulnerable to sexual abuse by men who seek to have sex with young girls in the hope that they are free from HIV and AIDS. Therefore, lack of economic capital and parental protection exposes these girls to sexual abuse. Khembo's (1995) case study in Zambia found out that, sexually abused school girls suffer from trauma, stress, depression and mistrust of all males. It can be argued that, the mistrust of all males including male teachers can undermine the academic performance of sexually abused female students. It is important to note that, trauma, stress and depression tend to affect concentration in class and subsequently academic performance (Gordon, 1995).

5.7 The impact of ill-health on academic performance

Ill-health is another challenge which impacts negatively on the academic performance of students from child-headed households. McCartney's (2000) study revealed that, there are few clinics in commercial farming areas in Zimbabwe. Therefore, students from child-headed households have to walk long distances in order to access free health services. The Children's Consortium Zimbabwe (2002) indicated that, orphaned and vulnerable children in commercial farming areas are failing to access health care because of transport costs. This study confirmed that, transport costs are a challenge to access to health services by people in resettlement areas particularly orphaned and vulnerable children. These children are living in poverty (UNICEF, 2006) and in this regard, transport costs delay their access to health care. This exposes them to ill-health which affects participation and concentration in class as well as school attendance. Thus, ill-health impacts negatively on the academic performance of the students. The government should pursue its goal of establishing a health centre within walking distance for all citizens (Zvobgo, 1996) particularly those in resettlement areas.

6.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

The following section presents the overarching conclusions of the study. It also outlines various recommendations that have been formulated based upon the results of the study and the central themes that were identified.

6.1 Conclusions

This study set out to explore the impact of the child-headed household on the academic performance of primary school students living in Beatrice resettlement area, Zimbabwe. In this regard, the following conclusions were drawn:

The child-headed household as a context of child development presents numerous socio-economic challenges that are not favourable for academic performance. The household often lacks adult guidance, counselling, protection, encouragement and socialisation which enhance academic performance. Gender dynamics in the child-headed household tend to mirror the patriarchal sexual division of labour in the wider society resulting in girls being overburdened by household responsibilities which impact negatively on their school attendance and academic performance. The students are vulnerable to poverty because of inadequate material support from the government, aid organisations and the disintegrating extended family safety net. They also lack financial resources or economic capital to afford basic needs and schooling costs that include food, clothes, school uniforms, school shoes, pens, civvies charges and transport costs to access free health care. This exposes them to hunger, ill-health, sexual abuse, child labour as well as stigma and discrimination. It can be concluded that, these socio-economic challenges tend not to create a nurturing environment which fosters academic performance.

Regardless of the formidable socio-economic challenges posed by the child-headed household, the academic performance of some students from this household is good. The students attributed the good performance in school work

to hard work which they claim is motivated by their desire to use education to change their poor socio-economic status. It was however noted that, their academic performance was much better before they assumed household headship roles. This led to the conclusion that, they already had the capability to perform well, but living in conditions of want and deprivation characteristic of the child-headed household could have constrained their full potential. In this regard, it is imperative for resettlement communities to support child-headed households in order to create living conditions that are conducive to the holistic development of these children, effective learning and academic performance.

6.2 Recommendations

To enhance the retention and academic performance of students living in child-headed households the following recommendations are made:

Hunger is a challenge that students living in child-headed households face. It affects participation in class, health as well as school attendance. Schools should establish supplementary feeding schemes that benefit all children in the community and enable those living in child-headed households to have food during tea and lunch breaks. The provision of such schemes tends to boost school attendance and consequently academic performance.

Students from child-headed households are failing to meet the cost of school uniforms, school shoes, civvies charges, pens and exercise books because of their poor socio-economic status. The BEAM scholarship programme which caters for the tuition fees, levies and examination fees of orphaned and vulnerable students should be reviewed to cover these schooling costs.

In addition to material support, students from child-headed households need guidance and counseling services. Such services will assist them to cope with isolation, stigma and discrimination which they are subjected to because of their poverty and the HIV and AIDS status of their ailing or deceased parents. These

services give the children hope for the future and enable them to develop to their full potential.

There is need for resettlement communities to respond to the disintegration of the extended family as a safety net for orphaned and vulnerable children by establishing orphanages as alternatives to child-headed households. The orphanages should offer the kind of support that parents would give, such as socialisation and protection, monitoring of health, clothes and food, assistance with chores as well as school visits to check on progress. The provision of these material and psycho-social needs tend to create a nurturing environment which fosters academic performance. In order for communities to sustain the financial and material needs of the orphanages, they should forge partnerships with the government, the corporate world, religious organisations as well as donor organisations.

Access to free health care is a challenge to students from child-headed households in resettlement areas because of long distance to health centres and prohibitive transport costs. This exposes the students to ill-health which affects their academic performance. The government should pursue its goal of establishing a health centre within walking distance for all citizens particularly in resettlement areas.

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Appendix I

Life Story Narratives Guide

1. Personal Information

- Name, age, school, grade and future aspirations.

2. Household size

- How many children and adults are permanently residing in this household?

3. Causes of Child-Headed Households (CHHs)

- What is the background of this household?
- What are the other causes of CHHs in this community?

4. Responsibilities of the Household Head

- How was household headship negotiated?
- What are your responsibilities and how do they affect learning?

5. Challenges faced by CHHs.

- Which problems are you facing as a CHH?

6. Domestic Chores

- What is their distribution by gender, before and after school?
- How is learning affected by domestic chores?

7. Household Food Security

- What is the household's main source of food and problems being encountered?
- Number of meals per day, if less than 3, what are the reasons?
- Do you take food to school? If no, how is learning affected?
- How is the household coping with food shortages?

8. The Home Environment

- How many rooms are household members using?
- What is the main source of energy for lighting?
- Which educational media are available in the home?

9. Parental Interest

- Who visits you on Open and Prize Giving Days and how do you feel about it?

- How do you feel when no one visits you on such occasions?
- Who assists you with homework assignments?

10. Health Care

- Is treatment sought for illness _____ s? If not, why?
- How the household copes with _____ or injuries?

11. Schooling costs

- How are you coping with schooling costs?
- Which costs are you failing to meet and how do you affect learning?

12. Schooling Attendance

- Which factors are affecting the school attendance of students in this household and what are the rates by gender?

13. Academic Performance

- What is the academic performance of all students in this household in the last three terms?
- What is influencing your academic performance?

14. Stigma and Discrimination

- Are you experiencing stigma and discrimination in the school or society?
- What are its causes and effects on learning?

15. Household Income

- What is the estimated monthly income and its source?
- How do household members cope with income shortages?

16. Sexual Abuse

- Are there children living in CHHs in this community who are being sexually abused?
- What are the main causes of this abuse?
- Are you being abused yourself? If yes, what are the main causes?

17. What are the urgent needs of this CHH?

Interview Guide for Key Informants

1. Personal Information
2. Causes of Child-Headed Households (CCHs) in resettlement areas.
3. How children living in CHHs are coping with basic needs such as food, schooling costs, health care and clothing.
4. Factors affecting the school attendance of students living in CHHs.
5. Issues of child labour in resettlement areas.
6. Issues of child sexual abuse in resettlement areas.
7. Social isolation, stigmatisation and discrimination of children living in CHHs.
8. Gender dynamics in CHHs.
9. The urgent needs of CHHs.

Appendix III

Content / Guide

Item	Comment
School Attendance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of class registers • Analysis of exercise books • Comparison of attendance rates between boys and girls • Comparison of attendance before and after child headedness. 	
Academic Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of the progress record book • Analysis of school progress report cards • Analysis of Grade seven results • Comparison of performance before and after child headedness. 	

