

**THE CONTRIBUTING ROLES OF CHARITY ORGANIZATIONS AND
THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE LIVING STANDARD OF THE LESS
PRIVILEGED CHILDREN**

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ABSTRACT

This study was motivated by the excessive population of the less privileged children on the streets of Lagos. The problem is defined by the consequences of lack of family planning, improper upbringing of children, the decay of societal values and the failure of women to maintain their traditionally ascribed roles as sisters, wives, mothers and home makers in quest for material wealth. Five hypotheses were formulated for the study. The survey research design was adopted for the study, with a sample size of two hundred and fifty five. The questionnaire and interviews were used for data collection. The analysis of the data was based on simple percentages. Some of the findings were that, (i) economic constraints, socio-cultural decay, and psychological factors influence parents attitudes and decisions towards child abandonment (ii), that family size influences the degree of child abandonment and that it is more prevalent in larger families than smaller ones as a result of financial pressure, (iii) that Nigerian Legal System does not adequately safe guard the rights of children, (iv) that charity organization have to a large extent render assistance to the less privileged. Based on these findings, recommendations were made which include that, (i) Government should formulate policies that will help to reduce the level of poverty in Nigeria, (ii) the government should assist parents to take care of their children through the provision of welfare services, (iii) families should try to reduce the number of children they bear, through maximum use of family planning facilities, (iv) the public should from time to time, be given proper enlightenment on sex related issues, as well as the benefits of efficient parental upbringing.

Keywords; Motherless children, family planning, mothers, population growth and Government

INTRODUCTION

The commercial city of Lagos State Nigeria, is one characterized by industries, companies, good roads, good drinking water, steady power supply, etc. Amidst all these, the city still faces problems such as heavy traffic, existence of hoodlums and thieves, over-population and above all, the existence of street and abandoned children.

Seeing infants abandoned by street corners in small boxes or nylon bags, crying out in a completely helpless state is one of the reasons that struck the researcher and thus prompted the decision to carry out a study on this research topic. The plight of children amidst the hustling and bustling of Lagos metropolis is indeed pitiable. Some children have been abandoned by their parents as a result of poverty, some abandoned their children on the road side, others left them willingly in the care of orphanages promising to return at a particular time to collect them but in most cases, they never returned.

Also of major concern to the researcher is the case of children between the ages of 3 and 15 years who live on the streets of Lagos. Some of them are children of beggars who live on the streets themselves, some are children who ran away from their homes in search of greener pastures, while others comprise of children who live in other states in Nigeria but were told by people who visit their towns that Lagos is a promise land filled with big opportunities to make their lives better. These children on getting to Lagos State are engaged in menial jobs and exploited by those who brought them in, when some of them can no longer bear the situation anymore, they run away to live under bridges, in front of shops and other unsafe places, only to vacate the area at dawn before the owners resume their daily businesses.

In order to make ends meet for themselves in an already tight economic situation, these children engage in jobs like shoe shinning, car washing, some even work as bus conductors. Prostitution becomes attractive for young girls as a way of seeking solution to desperate economic problems. With that, the females rely emphatically on wealthy male adults to cover their expenses. By this they do not only abuse themselves but face the terrible consequences such as teenage pregnancy and diseases, most times alone.

Due to the situation these children are exposed to, the females are sometimes victims of rape, not knowing how to fend for the baby, as she too needs to be provided for, she then resorts to the only option she has which in most cases is to abandon the baby.

Other reasons for child abandonment include: illness, sex choice (male preference), having more number of children than one can take care of, refusal of sex partner to accept parental responsibility of the child, young girls claiming they are too young to mother children and still have school to attend, cultural restrictions, improper sex education, poverty, etc. These children are abandoned with totally no regards as to the kind of harm they are exposed to physically or mentally, Bisi (2009:12).

The situation of the less privileged children is indeed pitiable but several non-governmental organizations have shown interests in rescuing, rehabilitating and returning these less privileged children either to their parents or foster homes. These organizations also seek to

give the children a chance for a better life. Among these organizations are little Saints Orphanage, Child life line and the heart of Gold, all in Lagos, Nigeria.

Charity organizations could be social institutions like the church, family, the community and private philanthropists that have come to assume responsibility for satisfying the needs of these less privileged children. These organizations have reached the understanding that these children have needs that are beyond their economic, emotional and physical support. They need love and attention and charity organizations are established to help them achieve some of these.

LITTLE SAINTS ORPHANAGE

(i) Origin

This research has little Saints Orphanage, Lagos as the charity organization of study. Little Saints Orphanage is a non-governmental charity organization established in 1994. Its founder, Rev. (Mrs.) Bamidele George was formerly a banker who had to fore-go her family business to establish the orphanage with family resources. Her original intent was to cater for just twenty five children but the number kept increasing. Today, there are more than a thousand children in the orphanage.

Little Saints Orphanage has its headquarters located at Palm-Groove Estate, Lagos, South-West, Nigeria. For the large number and adequate care and monitor of the children, three branches have been established in different locations, all within Lagos State. They are located at Akowonjo, Ogudu and Abuie Egba.

(ii) Aims and Objectives

Little Saints Orphanage has as its aims and objectives, to rescue socially disadvantaged children from the dire circumstances in which they live by providing them accommodation, health and educational services and also create leverage of equality for them with peers in the world.

(iii) Economic Base

In order to achieve the aims and objectives, the orphanage raises its funds through musical concerts which hold in different parts of Nigeria. These concerts are usually organized by compassion band, a group affiliated to the orphanage. Other sources of their funds include, donations made by companies, co-operate bodies, private individuals, organizations, collection boxes and joy nights, which is also a musical concert organized to raise funds for the up keep of the children.

(iv) Socio-Cultural Based

Little Saints Orphanage is a home filled with care, love and hope. The children are raised as one tribe, even though they all bear surnames according to the different tribes in Nigeria that they came from in order to portray the diversity in the Nigerian cultures.

(v) Administration

The effective administration and care of the children, the founder categorized the children into three:-

- (a) Those children abandoned but found at obscure locations where their parents had dumped them.
- (b) Those without traceable relations for reconciliation or reunification.
- (c) Those that are victims of either physical or sexual abuse and were referred by the order of the court to the home for protection and care.

For proper care, the home has been established in four locations within Lagos State, according to age, sex and health status.

The Palm-Groove headquarters accommodates one day to one year old of both sexes. The Akowonjo and Ogudu extensions accommodate the boys and girls respectively, while the Abule - Egba outlet accommodates only children with one disability or the other.

Each of these outlets, for effective co-ordination, is headed by an administrator known and addressed as aunty and assisted by in house staff, including nannies and cooks.

(v) **Religion**

The founder of Little Saints Charity Organization Rev. George, is a good Christian and she devotes her time in raising the children in the fear of God, ensuring that they grow in the love of God and see each other as a family.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The involvement of Nigerian Youths in teenage pregnancy and child abuse is a source of concern for the parents, communities and the society at large. This can be buttressed by the various seminars, campaigns and workshops organized by UNICEF, religious bodies and other non-governmental organizations as well as, well meaning members of the society, as to create awareness about the growing threat of child abuse in the society.

The duties of these organizations revolve around eliminating as much as possible, inhibitions to good living conditions and the development of the ideal personality in youths. Such inhibitions have made the girl child to find her into sexual abuse and prostitution in exchange for money.

It is important to know that the primary goal of charity organizations is to promote and protect the rights of children and women through enhancing their capacity; this is in collaboration with the commitment of the government and the civil society.

This study therefore focused on the following:-

- (i) Lack of family planning
- (ii) Improper upbringing of children
- (iii) The decay of societal values
- (iv) How women have abandoned their roles as sisters, mothers, wives and home-makers; in quest for material wealth.

THE CONCEPT OF CHARITY ORGANIZATION

The concept 'charity organization' developed in connection with the social problems of medieval society. Poverty, sickness, suffering and social disorganization have existed throughout the history of mankind but it is in recent times that the society has to face so many problems that the traditional institutions such as the family, neighborhood, church and local communities could no longer adequately cope with. Friedlander (1968:9)

For Durudola (2009:4) charity organizations are organizations that carry out charitable activities or exist exclusively for charitable purposes.

Kendrick (1967:4) holds that charity organizations deal directly and differentially with persons who have probable relating primarily to their social situations and endeavors and individual to individual as to understand what help is needed and to assist the individual to utilize the help indicated.

Friedlander (1968:5) is also of the view that the objective of any charity organization should be to secure for each human being the economic necessities, a descent standard of health and living conditions, equal opportunities with his fellow citizens and the highest possible degree of self-respect, of freedom of thought and action without interfering with the same rights of others.

Bosanquet (1977:46) opines that charity organizations are organizations that seek to help the poor, distressed or deviant persons. She added that charity organizations are more than just alms givers whose ultimate goals are to restore as much self sufficiency and responsibility as an individual could manage. It is important to have a proper institution for philanthropy where there will be board members to run the affairs in order to have a proper structure for children to build on. (Adeleke (2010:4).

Ogunbanwo (2010:2) added that, taking care of children in organizations requires a lot of wisdom, strength and energy, noting that when these children come to the orphanage newly, they exhibit different kinds of bad habits such as using foul languages, bed-wetting and aggression to mention but a few. But with constant care, counseling and prefers, all these gradually fade away and within a few months, these children become reformed and transformed.

THE PHENOMENON OF ABANDONED CHILDREN

Children are very vital part of the society and with them; there is an assurance and hope for a bright future. But the development of these children has been jeopardized as various factors affect their lives causing them to respond to issues in negative ways. Among these factors are: poverty, poor socialization process, physical and sexual abuses, all these and more lead these children to take to the streets in search of better means of survival. The lives of these abandoned children expose them to danger as most of them live under bridges, in shops after the traders must have retired for the day, in buses parked along the streets and in other unsafe places Ginika (1996:26).

The phenomenon of homeless children in Nigeria has gone beyond the children being just orphans, i.e. having no father or mother. Homeless children now result mainly from broken homes which could be as a result of marital problems or instability in the home, poverty, hunger, insecurity, abuse and violence from parents, displacement caused by clashes in the community, insufficient parental care, death of one or both parents, inadequate family income, unemployment of one or both parents and abandonment by parents. Balogun (2001:3).

Children in urban areas are quickly caught up in the daily struggle for survival and for material gain. A situation analysis of child abuse and neglect in Nigeria, undertaken through the medium of Nigerian newspapers, found that child abandonment, sexual abuse, child neglect, vagrancy, kidnapping and hawking were the most reported forms of child abuse and neglect. Ebigbo (1980:36).

In many instances young girls and boys migrate from rural areas to urban cities in search of greener pastures. Izuora and Ebigbo (1975:22) examined some of these migrant children and found them to be below average in intelligence due to the breakdown of traditional foster culture which erodes children's avenues for growth. In order to make ends meet in a rather competitive society, these migrants with little or no skills engage in service type jobs such as selling pure-water on busy streets, begging, washing or watching cars, working as bus-conductors, etc. Not earning enough to satisfy their basic needs, these migrants find themselves living in the depressed areas of the city, some even take to sleeping in buses, under bridges, in shops, etc, only to leave at the first light of day, before the owners come for their business; they are therefore subjected to different kinds of abuses.

At this juncture, emphasis is narrowed to Palm-Groove Estate, Lagos where most youngsters live. They are however forced to agree that work is "whatever" one has to do in order to survive. The girl child runs a higher risk here because she is exposed to different men who promise to make her life better in exchange for sex. When the young girl eventually becomes pregnant, the man involved usually threatens her to stay away from him and at other times the man runs away. Odotayo (1996:10).

Okafor (1990:2) remarked that hundreds of children grow up in misery and alienation. Millions drop out of school early if they attend at all. Driven by low family income, many are forced to start working at a very young age in order to support themselves and their families. These children, while working, are vulnerable and can be readily exploited.

According to Taco (1987:41), the work children are exposed to encompass selling fruits and vegetables or it may be selling themselves, sexually. Everyone wish to work as to earn a living and stay alive hence, most children of the poor engage in most activities not because they want to, but because they have to as to survive. The attitude of these children is centred on survival.

Medina (1984:16) observed that, the situation of street children was recognized by UNICEF during a review of its programmes in the Philippines and discussed with the government's department of Social Welfare Agencies Foundation of the Philippine Inc. (SWAFPI), which is an association of non-governmental organization engaged in development work and welfare services and the national economic and development authority, which is the government planning body. The purpose was to respond with a more deliberate programme to the growing problem of abandoned children.

Discussion among the organizations centered on three principles:-

- (i) Response to the problem should be within the context of the existing urban basic service programmes supported by UNICEF in a number of cities.
- (ii) Responses should build upon existing programmes of government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

(iii) Responses should focus on community based approaches where effectiveness has been repeatedly proven in many development programmes.

With all these, the problem of abandoned children could easily be combated they emphasized.

There is the urgent need to address the increasing number of abandoned children today. Governments at all levels should put structures in place for their rehabilitation. It will not be enough to say that they have been evacuated from the streets but also of importance is where they take them to. George (2008:2).

THE TRADITIONAL ROLE OF PARENTS IN CHILD NURTURING

The family is the first place where a child's socialization usually begins. Right from the time a child is born he begins to interact with first, the mother and later the father and then the siblings. Through the continuous process of interaction, the child is socialized into prevalent social practices in his family. Socialization in the family is generally built around "Vole models" to be imitated by the child. Young girls learn feminine roles by imitating their mothers or elderly girls in the family while young boys learn masculine roles by imitating their fathers or elderly boys in the family. Inconsistency in role performance or familial sanctions by adults in the family may muddle up the child thus leaving him in a confused state. In a family where unusual structure exists as a result of divorce, bereavement or death of both parents, the socialization pattern could be seriously affected resulting in abnormal personalities in the adult life of the child due to anomalous upbringing. Obasi (1988:37).

For various reasons, matters relating to sexuality and the reproductive health of adolescents have never been popular subjects for open discussion. The traditional values morals and ethnics embedded in the cultures of various Nigerian ethnic groups have never really accepted the need to educate adolescents on matters relating to their sexual and reproductive health rights. The rationale behind this is the belief that exposure to such knowledge would encourage sexual indiscretion on the part of the youths and concomittantly, that ignorance will encourage chastity, Adebusaye (2002:1). Today, as a result of the technological age, women have abandoned their roles as mothers, sisters, wives and home makers in search for material gains, thus leaving the nurturing of their children and house making duties to house-helpers. These children end up learning whatever behavior they learn from the house helps who in most cases, are as young as the children they take care of Obusai (2002:12).

CHILD NEGLECT IN NIGERIA

Children are sometimes neglected and they experience situations that make them feel deprived of the care and attention they crave for. This neglect can be either emotional or physical.

(i) EMOTIONAL NEGLECT

Children who are exposed to unwholesome or demoralizing conditions such as, having parents who are involved in continued prostitution, criminal activities, drug addiction and severe alcoholism are often emotionally debased because such children. Agencies that work in support of child neglect defined emotional neglects as failure to provide the child

the emotional support necessary for the development of sound personality. For example, subjecting the child to tension, hostility and anxiety. He also said that some children suffer emotional neglect even when they are adequately cared for physically. Pursternberg (1976:5).

(ii) PHYSICAL NEGLECT

The physical aspect of child neglect is more of a problem of absence of parental control and supervision over children. Specific types of physical neglect include:-

- (a) Child abandonment
- (b) Letting a child live in filth
- (c) Educational neglect in which the child is abused in school. For example, in some schools children are not properly supervised and in such situations, the children may walk out of the school premises without the knowledge of the teachers and gate-keepers and thus is exposed to abuse.
- (d) Medical neglect in which no effort is made to secure needed medical care for the child. In the case of begging, children who are sent to Koranic schools in Northern Nigeria by parents or guardians, are thrown into begging from childhood without any thought for their future even in this technological age. This is a form of neglect by parents or guardians. Falorin (1988:10).

REASONS FOR NEGLIGENCE AND CHILD ABANDONMENT

(i) Poor Socialization Process

The most critical phase in the socialization of a child is derived from his family. It is the foundation that is laid in the family that each child carries into later life. A child who is born into indiscipline, corrupt, indolent and morally decadent family, will be socialized into those vices from infancy and it will be difficult to erase such influences in adult life. Obasi (1988:32). According to Graham and Bowling (1995:5), family factors which may have influence on children include; the level of parental supervision, the way parents discipline a child, parental conflict or separation, criminally minded parents or siblings, parental abuse or neglect and the quality of the parent child relationship. When parents do not know where their children are and what their activities are, such children are more likely to be truants from school and associate with delinquent friends, each of which may lead the child to delinquent behavior. Lack of supervision is connected to poor relationships between children and parents, as children who are often in conflict with their parents may be less willing to discuss their activities with them. Ojo (1994:38).

(ii) Improper Sex Education

While the society shies away from addressing matters of adolescent sexuality and the possible consequences of increasing sexual activities among youths, it is faced daily with the fallout of its negligence. Even as cultural factors forbid open discussion of sexuality, a large number of adolescents are already active with devastating consequences for themselves and for the society. Studies carried out in different parts of the country by various organizations, confirmed the risk the Nigerian society is facing by shifting away from these issues. Adebuseye (2002:1). The goal of sex education is to promote reproductive health and enable teenagers to understand why they need to act responsibly in matters of sex. It is therefore wrong to believe that educating teenagers about sexuality is tantamount to corrupting them. Rather, research has indicated clearly that shielding

adolescents from the facts about their sexuality compels them to resort to other sources including peers and the media for information. Adebusoye (2002:7). Current societal norms make irresponsible sex look attractive but condemn young people's natural interest in their sexuality. Adolescents are therefore at increased risk because of lack of sexual education and poor access to health facilities. Various humane options are open to the society. One of them is to allow the young persons have adequate knowledge about sexuality so that they can accept responsibility for their actions. Allowing them to live and act in ignorance about their sexuality is so destructive to them and to the society. Adebusoye (2002:2).

(iii) Poverty

Poverty is one of the major reasons for negligence and child abandonment. The socio-economic conditions of most parents and guardians depict poverty and the people are yet to eliminate it from their midst. Problems of dependency, destitution, ignorance, illiteracy, starvation, over population, diseases, etc, are in most cases evidences of poverty. All these are problems of abandoned children among other factors which are considered as social vices. These are in conjunction with the emergence of class struggle between those who have (the privileged) and those who do not have (the less privileged who continue to wallow in object poverty. A situation where many may live a life of perpetual deprivation, exploitation and marginalization etc, instigate excessive child labour. Uzo and Roza (1983:17).

The economic situation of the country have forced families who ordinarily cannot fend for themselves to abandon their children in street corners or in areas where the rich live, hoping that a kind hearted person would take the child in and cater for it. Others have abandoned their children in orphanages promising to come back after a few years to collect them but never returned. Ogunlowo (2010:10)

In cases where children are forced to hawk goods in order to meet up with the basic needs of their families, men may lure young female hawkers by buying up all their wares and giving them money in addition and they may also pay them to run errands. The girls may equally be shown pornographic pictures in magazines or pornographic video films or the sexual organs of their would be assailants. Ebigho and Abaga (1990:6)

Since the girls have been poverty driven in their homes, they go out to sell goods from door to door and their parents are happy to receive money which may in certain instances be vital to the family survival. Ebigho (1988:9). The girls learn to beautify themselves daily as to draw the attention of the opposite sex. Parents are unable to intervene since the girls keep their activities secret because of societal taboo against sexual behaviour. Obiako (1986:2).

(iv) Cultural Restriction

It is agonizing that in some societies children are being abandoned because the culture of societies demands it. According to Oronsaye (1999:15), some cultures and traditions believe that when a mother dies during child birth, the child she delivered is evil and came to the world specifically to kill its mother, so nobody cared for them. They are usually abandoned and left to die. She also claimed that, some cultures in Nigeria such as Igbanke

in Edo State believe that twin babies are evil and so they make sure that such babies do not live within their communities therefore, they are either killed or thrown away.

METHOD FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE RESEARCH TOOL

This section describes the procedure by which the research tools were administered. In order to achieve a more efficient result, the means chosen to distribute copies of questionnaires or administer interview should be based on the comfort and suitability of the respondents. The questionnaire should either be posted to the respondents or administered face to face by the researcher or research assistants. Interview should be carried out through telephone, radio, e-mail, face to face discussion by the researcher or research assistants.

A total of two hundred and fifty five copies of the research instrument (questionnaire) alongside interview were administered face to face by research assistants to the respondents at their various homes and churches. The questionnaires were all successfully filled and returned, with no one missing.

METHOD FOR DATA COLLECTION

This section describes the method and procedure of data collection. The data collection is usually carried out through the use of instruments like questionnaires, interview, observation or document. The instrument to be used can be one or a combination of the above mentioned. Agu (2008:79). The instruments used in this study were interview in addition with a structured questionnaire. These were primary sources of data collection.

A number of two hundred and fifty-five copies of the questionnaire were produced for distribution to the sample selected. The researcher chose to use the questionnaire method because it was presented anonymously and the information given were devoid of any apparent identification of the informant. The respondents had greater confidence that their responses were not identified as coming from them.

In collecting the data, interview was conducted based on a one-one-one system between the research assistants and the respondents.

The questionnaire were filled immediately and given back to the research assistants. The responses from the questionnaire were successfully gathered and in addition with the interview, all the information formed the data used for the study.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS I

This research question was what the reasons why parents abandon their children are. To answer this question the respondent were asked: what do you believe are the main reasons why parents abandon their children?

Below is a list which were the reasons given by the respondents.

- i. The poor economic situation of the country
- ii. Poverty
- iii. General hardship in the home as a result of low income earnings

- iv. Ignorance
- v. Illiteracy
- vi. High cost of living
- vii. Pressure due to large family size
- viii. Parental irresponsibility
- ix. The society's inability to educate the citizens on sex elated issues
- x. Poor wage and salary structure
- xi. Cultural beliefs

RESEARCH QUESTION II

This research question was does your custom tradition about child abandonment?

To answer this question, the respondents were asked: are you of the opinion that children should be abandoned and allowed to live in the streets, uncompleted buildings, parked vehicles, etc? Te table below shows the data relating to the research question.

TABLE 1: OPINIONS ABOUT CHILD ABANDONMENT IN STREETS, UNCOMPLETED BUILDINGS PARKED VEHICLES ETC.

OPINION	FREQUENCY (NO)	PERCENTAGE (%)
Approved	30	15
Disapproved	170	85
Total	200	100

Source: Field Survey July, 2010.

The table show that 30 (15%) of the respondents believed that their tradition permits abandonment of children in streets uncompleted buildings, parked vehicles. As can be seen from the table, a total of 170 (85%) of the respondents believed that children should not be abandoned in streets, uncompleted buildings, parked vehicles etc. This indicates that the traditions of majority of those surveyed are against the abandonment of children.

RESEARCH QUESTION III

This research question was: Does the Nigerian Legal System adequately safe-guard the rights of a child?

To answer this question, the respondents were asked: in your own view, do you think that Nigerian legal system gives adequate protection to children?

The table below shows the data relating to the research question.

TABLE 2: OPINION ON THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN BY THE NIGERIAN LEGAL SYSTEM

OPINION	FREQUENCY (NO)	PERCENTAGE (%)
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Yes	46	23
No	150	75
No response	4	2
Total	200	100

Source: Field survey July, 2010.

From the above table, it was discovered that 46 (23%) of the respondents believed that the Nigerian legal system adequately protects the right of children, while 150 (75%) of the respondents believe that the Nigerian legal system does not adequately protect the right of the children. 4(2%) of the respondents made no response.

RESEARCH QUESTION IV

This research question was: What are the main consequences of child abandonment as a form of child abuse in Nigeria?

To answer this question, the respondents were asked: What do you think are the consequences of subjecting children to abandonment?

The list below shows reasons advanced as the main consequences of child abandonment.

- I. Makes the child susceptible to dangers
- II. Subjects the child to both physical and psychological trauma.
- III. Makes children prone to kidnap
- IV. Makes children develop bad characteristics and habits such as stealing, gambling, begging, prostitution, drug addiction, etc.
- V. The girl child is at risk of getting pregnant, especially at a young age with no one to care for her, and in most cases, the boy involved refuse to accept the child,
- VI. Exposes children to diseases, sickness, rape and in most cases, untimely death,
- VII. High child mortality rate.

RESEARCH QUESTION V

The research question was: To what extent do you think charity organizations have rendered assistance in improving the lives of the less privileged?

To answer this question the respondents were asked: Are you of the opinion that charity organizations have rendered assistance in improving ht lives of the less privileged?

TABLE 3: OPINION ABOUT ASSISTANCE RENDERED BY CHARITY ORGANIZATIONS TO THE LESS PRIVILEGED

OPINION	FREQUENCY (NO)	PERCENTAGE (%)
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Yes	160	80
No	32	16
No response	8	4
Total	200	100

Source: Field survey July, 2010.

The table shows that 160 (80%) of the respondents were of the opinion that charity organizations rendered assistance in improving the lives of the less privileged, while 32 (16%) of the respondents believed that charity organizations have not rendered any assistance in improving the lives of the less privileged. 8 (4%) of the respondents gave no response.

RESEARCH QUESTION VI

This research question was: How can the incidence of child abandonment be reduced in Nigeria?

To answer this question, the respondents were asked: what suggestion will you give to reduce the number of abandoned children in your locality?

Below is a list of the respondents' suggestions,

- I. The government should formulate a policy that will help reduce the level of poverty in Nigeria,
- II. The government should introduce an adequate salary structure as a means to enable families take care of their immediate needs.
- III. Provision of adequate employment opportunities,
- IV. The government should assist parents to take care of their children through the provision of welfare services.
- V. Families should try to reduce the number of children they have through maximum use of family planning facilities,
- VI. The government should enact a law that anybody caught in the act of child abandonment will be tried in the court of law and punished,
- VII. The public should forums time to time, be given proper enlightenment on sex related issues, as well as the benefits of efficient parental upbringing
- VIII. The Government should provide welfare services that will address the needs of single parents. Such as employment, free Medicare, education and housing etc.
- IX. The public, especially those in rural communities, should be properly enlightened on the need to ensure that abandoned children are taken to orphanages for proper care and stop being regarded as taboos to the community,
- X. Abstinence
- XI. The government should provide basic amenities for families so as to improve their standard of living.

FINDINGS.

The main data collection strategy used for the study was the administration of questionnaire and this was complemented with oral interview. The respondents were randomly selected. The sample size for the study was two hundred and fifty – five, for the data analysis, the simple percentage technique was used the data was analyzed and a number of findings were made;

- That economic constraints, socio-cultural decadence and psychological factors influenced peoples attitude and decisions toward child abandonment.
- Family size influences the degree of child abandonment, it is more prevalent in larger families than smaller ones and this is due to financial pressure.
- Illiteracy, ignorance and parental irresponsibility are also factors that influence child abandonment.
- The Nigerian legal system does not adequately protect the rights of the children.
- Charity organizations have to a large extent rendered assistance to the less privileged children.
- Child abandonment as consequences attached to it such as exposing the child to Diseases, sickness, rape and in most cases untimely death.
- Being subjected to both physical and psychological trauma are also consequences of child abandonment.

CONCLUSION

Some of the findings of this study serve as the basis for making the following conclusions, The variables which influence parents' decision to abandon the children include-

- (a) The poor economic situation of the country
- (b) Poverty
- (c) General hardship in the home as a result of low income earnings.
- (d) Ignorance
- (e) Illiteracy
- (f) High cost of living
- (g) Pressure due to large family size (h) Parental irresponsibility
- (i) The society's inability to educate the citizens on sex related issues.
- (j) Poor wage and salary structure
- (k) To supplement means of subsistence
- (l) Cultural beliefs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Abandonment established the phenomenon of child abuse as a social problem with its attendant causes and consequences. We therefore make the following recommendations in order to reduce or eliminate altogether the problem of child abandonment in Lagos State and Nigeria in general.

- i. The government should formulate a policy that will help reduce the level of poverty in Nigeria,
- ii. The government should introduce an adequate salary structure as a means to enable families take care of their immediate needs.
- iii. Provision of adequate employment opportunities
- iv. The government should assist parents to take care of their children through the provision of welfare services,

- v. Families should try to reduce the number of children they have through maximum use of family planning facilities,
- vi. The government should enact a law that anybody caught in the act of child abandonment will be tried in the court of law and punished,
- vii. The public should from time to time, be given proper enlightenment on sex related issues, as well as the benefits of efficient parental upbringing
- viii. The government should provide welfare services that will address the needs of single parents such as employment, free Medicare, education and housing etc.
- ix. The public., especially those in rural communities should be properly enlightened on the need to ensure that abandoned children are taken to orphanages for proper care and stop being regarded as taboos to the community.
- x. Abstinence
- xi. The government should provide basic amenities for the families so as to improve the families' standard of living.

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