

# Repositioning Civic and Counseling Education for Improving Psychosocial Development of Orphaned Children in Orphanage Homes in Nigeria

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## Abstract

The repositioning of civic and counseling education with a specific focus on enhancing the psychosocial development of orphaned children in Nigerian orphanage homes, especially Nigeria is not only a moral imperative but also a transformative societal opportunity. This paper explores the potential of customizing the curriculum, providing specialized training for educators, fostering nurturing and inclusive environments, engaging the community, and establishing collaborative partnerships to address the unique needs of orphaned children. By doing so, one can equip these vulnerable individuals with knowledge, essential life skills, and emotional resilience. This approach empowers them not only to overcome adversity but also to emerge as active, responsible citizens capable of contributing meaningfully to society. Ultimately, this holistic strategy not only enriches the lives of orphaned children but also sets the stage for a more compassionate and just society, where every member has the opportunity to thrive and make a positive impact. The study therefore recommended that government and relevant stakeholders should prioritize the inclusion of psychosocial support components in the civic and counseling education curriculum for orphanage homes.

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### **Background to the Study**

The predicament of orphaned children in Nigeria represents an ongoing and deeply troubling issue, casting a long shadow over the nation. Within this grim landscape, countless youngsters find themselves grappling with the harsh realities of abandonment, bereavement, and an agonizing scarcity of fundamental necessities crucial for their comprehensive growth and well-being. Yet, amid this sea of hardships, there is one crucial facet that frequently escapes our attention: the critical importance of psychosocial development (Muhammad, 2020). Motherless babies have nowadays become common because of the moral decadence of the society young people who cannot cater for themselves find themselves put in the family way they end up abandoning those innocent helpless babies. The increasing hardship because of the present economic recession has increased the incidence of burden family relationship and the consequent loss of firm control of family members. This has tended as evidence by the increasing number of abandoned babies such babies have become the central focus of the orphanage home the impact of orphanage home on child personality development that is the behaviour pattern of social behaviour on child personality development. An orphan child is one whose parents are no more (dead), desertion, or unable to provide care (UNICEF, 2008).

Orphans are the susceptible children, below the age the threats to food, accommodation, health care or to make short their education. A huge number of orphans universally are alive with no natural relations due to diversity of causes together with: death of parents, separation between parents, domestic injurious treatment and disregard. The most frequent causes of separation of children from parental care include poverty, lack of access to basic services, abuse, neglect, disease, disabilities, and emergencies (Bilson & Cox; 2007). It is an indignity of all social members who are not giving attention and economic assistance towards orphans (Meintjes & Bray, 2006).

Psychosocial development, often overshadowed by more immediate concerns like food, shelter, and healthcare, plays an immensely pivotal role in shaping the lives of these orphaned children. It encompasses the intricate interplay between their psychological and social well-being, comprising their emotional resilience, cognitive development, and their ability to form meaningful connections with others. In this dire context, civic and counseling education emerge as a beacon of hope, offering a potential lifeline for these young souls. It carries within it the power to effect profound transformation, not solely by imparting knowledge about their rights and responsibilities as citizens but also by nurturing their emotional well-being and fostering a deep sense of belonging in these exceptionally vulnerable children (Gatumu, Gitimu & Oyugi, 2010).

Through civic and counseling education, these orphaned children can begin to unravel the complex tapestry of their own identities and roles within society. They gain an understanding of their rights as individuals and learn about the principles that underpin a just and equitable community. This knowledge not only empowers them but also instills a sense of agency, helping them become active participants in shaping their own destinies (Muhammad, 2020). Yet, the impact extends far beyond the realm of civic knowledge. By

engaging with their emotional needs and helping them process the trauma of their past experiences, counseling education serves as a salve for their wounded hearts. It provides a safe space for them to explore their feelings, share their stories, and build connections with peers who have faced similar challenges. In doing so, it cultivates emotional resilience, enabling these children to navigate the complex emotions that often accompany their tumultuous life journeys (Mudasir, Rashimi & Fahim, 2012).

Moreover, counseling education offers a powerful tool for instilling a sense of belonging and community in these vulnerable young souls. It helps them forge connections with their peers, teachers, and mentors, creating a support network that can act as a surrogate family. This sense of belonging is not just a mere nicety; it is a lifeline, a source of comfort and stability that can counteract the overwhelming sense of abandonment that plagues so many orphaned children (Wanjiru & Gathogo, 2014). However, the plight of orphaned children in Nigeria is a grave concern that demands attention and action. While addressing their immediate material needs is undoubtedly vital, one must not overlook the equally crucial realm of psychosocial development. Civic and counseling education hold the potential to be a transformative force in the lives of these children, equipping them not only with knowledge but also with emotional resilience and a profound sense of belonging, offering them the chance to rise above adversity and reach for a brighter future. Therefore, this paper aims to examine the civic and counseling education and its potential impact on the psychosocial development of orphaned children in Nigerian orphanage homes.

### **Orphaned Children in Nigerian Orphanage Homes**

Orphaned children, the most vulnerable among us, are those who have experienced the profound and heartbreaking loss of one or both parents. This tragic loss can be attributed to a multitude of harsh and unforgiving circumstances, ranging from the relentless scourge of disease and the brutal toll of armed conflict to the relentless grip of poverty and the capricious wrath of natural disasters. In Nigeria, a nation deeply affected by these challenges, a substantial number of orphaned children have found their only solace and sanctuary in the welcoming embrace of orphanage homes (Nigeria Orphan & Vulnerable Children National Plan of Action, 2011). These orphanage homes stand as beacons of hope in a world shrouded in darkness for these bereaved youngsters. They assume the pivotal role of primary caregivers and guardians, taking on the immense responsibility of not only meeting their basic needs but also nurturing their emotional and intellectual development. In the face of the often heart-wrenching circumstances that these children have endured, orphanage homes become a haven, providing them with the essential elements for survival. Shelter, the most fundamental of human necessities, is provided, offering them a roof over their heads, protection from the elements, and a semblance of security in an otherwise tumultuous world (Muhammad, 2020).

Furthermore, these compassionate institutions extend a lifeline in the form of sustenance, ensuring that every orphaned child's hunger is satiated. Through nutritious meals, these homes strive to not only curb the pangs of hunger but also promote healthy growth,

ensuring that these young lives have the opportunity to flourish despite their daunting challenges (Mudasir et. al., 2012). Basic education, a cornerstone of personal growth and empowerment, is yet another invaluable offering from orphanage homes. These institutions recognize that education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty and providing these children with a brighter future. They strive to instill knowledge, foster creativity, and nurture the seeds of curiosity within each child, empowering them to envision a life beyond their current circumstances (Wielenga & Chikova, 2020).

However, orphanage homes are not merely sheltering, refectories, or classrooms. They are sanctuaries of love, support, and care. In the absence of biological parents, the caregivers within these institutions step into the role of surrogate families, offering comfort, guidance, and the emotional support that every child deserves. Through the bonds formed within these walls, orphaned children learn the invaluable lessons of trust, compassion, and resilience (Myers, 2009). Therefore, orphaned children in Nigeria, like their counterparts around the world, grapple with the heavy burden of loss and adversity. Orphanage homes serve as beacons of light within their lives, offering not only the basic necessities of shelter, food, and education but also the love and care that can mend wounded hearts and inspire dreams of a brighter tomorrow. These institutions are a testament to the indomitable human spirit, showing that even in the face of profound loss, there is still hope, compassion, and the potential for a brighter future for orphaned children.

### **Psychosocial Development**

Psychosocial development, a multifaceted concept that lies at the very core of human growth and flourishing, represents the intricate interplay between the psychological and social dimensions of an individual's life. It is a dynamic process that unfolds throughout one's lifespan, encompassing emotional, cognitive, and social development. These facets are not isolated but rather intricately interconnected, working in unison to shape the complex tapestry of an individual's existence. For orphaned children, psychosocial development takes on profound significance, as they navigate the tumultuous waters of life without the presence of stable family structures (Gatumu et. al., 2010).

Emotional development forms one of the cornerstone aspects of psychosocial growth. It entails the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's emotions effectively. Orphaned children often grapple with overwhelming emotions stemming from the profound loss of their parents. Grief, a powerful and complex emotion, becomes a constant companion (Cluver, Gardner & Operario, 2007). The absence of parental figures can create a void that seems impossible to fill, leading to a deep sense of longing and sorrow. Nurturing emotional resilience becomes an imperative for these children, as they must learn to cope with grief and cultivate the emotional strength to face life's challenges. Cognitive development, another integral facet of psychosocial growth, involves the maturation of cognitive skills, including reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making. For orphaned children, cognitive development can be hindered by the emotional turmoil caused by their circumstances. Low self-esteem may take root, as they grapple

with feelings of abandonment and a sense of inadequacy. It is essential to provide them with the support and encouragement necessary to rebuild their self-esteem and foster a positive self-concept, enabling them to embrace their potential and face life's hurdles with confidence (Owino & Susan, 2014).

Social development, the third component of psychosocial development, revolves around the capacity to form meaningful relationships, communicate effectively, and navigate the intricacies of social interactions. Orphaned children, due to their lack of stable family structures, may encounter challenges in developing vital social skills. Isolation and anxiety can become prevalent, making it difficult for them to forge connections with peers and mentors (Myers, 2009). Therefore, interventions that focus on promoting social skills and creating a supportive social environment are essential. Through mentorship, group activities, and therapeutic interventions, these children can learn to build healthy relationships and establish a sense of belonging in a broader community.

In essence, psychosocial development according to Adeniji and Adediran (2021) is a holistic journey that encompasses the emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions of an individual's life. For orphaned children, the absence of stable family structures can pose formidable challenges to this development. Recognizing and addressing these challenges is paramount, as it empowers these young souls to overcome grief, rebuild self-esteem, conquer anxiety, and develop the social skills necessary for a well-rounded and fulfilling life. Through empathy, understanding, and targeted support, we can nurture the psychosocial growth of orphaned children, enabling them to flourish despite the adversity they have faced.

### **Civic and Counseling Education**

Civic and counseling education stand as an essential educational framework, with a noble mission at its core: to equip individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values they need to become active and responsible participants in the complex tapestry of society. This multifaceted education goes far beyond the mere transfer of information; it seeks to instill a profound sense of civic duty and a commitment to contributing positively to the well-being of one's community and the broader world (Adediran, 2022). While its primary focus has traditionally revolved around preparing individuals for civic engagement, the latent potential of civic and counseling education to support and enhance psychosocial development remains largely untapped, representing a promising frontier in education.

Civic and counseling education address the very essence of what it means to be a member of a democratic and socially just society. It delves into the intricate nuances of civil rights and responsibilities, ensuring that individuals not only understand the rights bestowed upon them but also grasp the profound responsibilities that accompany these privileges. This knowledge according to Adediran (2022) forms the cornerstone of informed citizenship, empowering individuals to actively participate in the democratic process and advocate for change when necessary. Beyond the realm of civic duty, this education imparts a deep understanding of guidance and democratic principles. It sheds light on the

mechanisms of government, the importance of checks and balances, and the value of individual voices within a diverse and pluralistic society (Dorgu, Adediran, & Yaro, 2015). This knowledge not only cultivates critical thinking but also nurtures a profound appreciation for the principles of fairness, equality, and justice that underpin counseling individual for democratic societies. These values, when internalized, become an integral part of an individual's moral and ethical compass.

What makes civic and counseling education even more powerful is its ability to transcend the boundaries of traditional education. It extends a caring hand to the psychosocial development of individuals, addressing emotional and social needs that often go unnoticed. In the case of orphaned children and those facing adversity, this educational framework can provide a vital lifeline. The knowledge and values imparted through counseling education can help these children navigate the complex emotional terrain they encounter. By instilling a sense of belonging within a broader community, it counters feelings of isolation and loneliness. The principles of social justice embedded in counseling education empower them to advocate for their rights and those of others, fostering a sense of agency and self-worth (Dorgu, Adediran, & Yaro, 2015). Moreover, by teaching communication skills, conflict resolution, and empathy, civic and counseling education equip them with the social tools necessary to build meaningful relationships and cope with the challenge's life throws their way.

However, civic and counseling education, while traditionally designed to prepare individuals for active civic engagement and guidance, possess immense untapped potential in supporting psychosocial development. It equips individuals with not only the knowledge and skills needed for responsible citizenship but also the values and emotional resilience required to navigate life's challenges. For orphaned children and those facing adversity, this form of education can be a beacon of hope, offering them the tools to not only participate meaningfully in society but also to heal and thrive despite their circumstances (Adediran, Adeniyi, & Olawuni, 2015). It represents an educational approach that recognizes the interconnectedness of civic engagement and psychosocial well-being, forging a path toward holistic development for all individuals.

### **Repositioning Civic and Counseling Education for Improving the Psychosocial Development of Orphaned Children**

To reposition civic and counseling education for improving the psychosocial development of orphaned children in Nigerian orphanage homes, several strategies can be employed:

**Tailored Curriculum:** Develop a curriculum specifically designed to address the psychosocial needs of orphaned children. This should include modules on emotional intelligence, grief counseling, self-esteem building, conflict resolution, and interpersonal skills (Wielenga & Chikova, 2020).

**Trained Educators:** Provide educators in orphanage homes with specialized training in delivering civic and counseling education with a focus on psychosocial support. Teachers should be equipped to create a safe and nurturing learning environment (Myers, 2009).

**Supportive Environment:** Foster a supportive and inclusive environment within orphanage homes that encourages open communication, peer interaction, and mentorship. Encourage children to express their thoughts, feelings, and concerns freely (Muhammad, 2020).

**Community Engagement:** Engage the local community in civic and counseling education initiatives for orphaned children. This can help reduce stigmatization and enhance their sense of belonging (Mudasir et. al., 2012).

**Partnerships:** Collaborate with NGOs, government agencies, and educational institutions to provide additional resources, mentorship programmes, and extracurricular activities that support the psychosocial development of orphaned children (Wanjiru & Gathogo, 2014).

## **Conclusion**

Repositioning civic and counseling education to specifically cater to the psychosocial development of orphaned children in orphanage homes not only represents a moral imperative rooted in compassion and equity but also an unprecedented opportunity for profound societal transformation. By customizing the curriculum to address their unique needs, providing educators with specialized training to offer empathetic guidance, cultivating a nurturing and inclusive environment, actively involving the surrounding community, and establishing collaborative partnerships, one needs to have the power to bestow upon these vulnerable children the priceless gifts of knowledge, essential life skills, and emotional fortitude. In doing so, it will empower them to not merely endure, but to triumph over the adversities they face, ultimately enabling them to emerge as active and responsible citizens who can contribute meaningfully to the betterment of society. This holistic approach not only elevates the individual lives of these orphaned children but also paves the way for a more compassionate and just society, where every member is afforded the opportunity to thrive and make a positive impact.

## **Recommendations**

The study therefore recommended that:

- i. Government and relevant stakeholders should prioritize the inclusion of psychosocial support components in the civic and counseling education curriculum for orphanage homes.
- ii. There should be adequate supervision and monitoring through the Ministry of Youth and Social Support to ensure that operators or founders of orphanage create good living environment for the orphaned children.
- iii. Government should support and sponsor training programmes i.e workshop for caregivers, nannies, volunteers in orphanage homes in order to further improve

- their knowledge and skills on childcare and by extension, improve their social support to the orphaned children.
- iv. Orphanage homes should invest in continuous training and development of their staff to ensure they can effectively deliver psychosocial support through education.
  - v. NGOs and community-based organizations should collaborate with orphanage homes to provide additional resources, mentorship, and support services.
  - vi. Research institutions should conduct studies to assess the impact of repositioned civic and counseling education on the psychosocial development of orphaned children and share their findings to inform future policies and practices.

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