

The Interface of Orphan-hood and Schooling Experiences in Rural High Schools in the Republic of Zimbabwe

by

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Abstract

The child's socio-economic background is very critical in influencing the school experiences of learners. This study was conducted in February 2017 in Goromonzi district in Mashonaland East province of Zimbabwe. It explored the nexus between orphanhood and school experiences of rural high school learners in Zimbabwe. A qualitative approach was adopted to interrogate the impact of orphanhood on academic performance. Using the purposive sampling technique, orphaned learners, orphaned high school dropouts as well as teachers manning classes with orphaned learners were identified for in-depth interviews. The study also utilised the social capital theory as a theoretical framework to analyse data collected from learners and teachers. Findings from the study showed that one's socio-economic background is critical in influencing educational experiences of learners. The study also revealed that orphanhood is associated with poverty hence issues like; schooling costs, hunger, child labour as well as domestic responsibilities were seen to be detrimental to the educational experiences of orphaned learners. Last and most importantly, the study revealed that the girl child is worse hit by orphanhood as she becomes vulnerable to sexual abuse.

Key terms: Orphan hood, social capital, educational experiences, economic capital, child-headed household.