

## Social Inclusion and Access to Public Primary Basic Education for Orphaned Children in Kibera Slum in Nairobi County, Kenya

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**ABSTRACT :** Social inclusion in education is essential for ensuring equity and equal opportunities, specifically for vulnerable groups such as orphaned children. This study assessed the aspect of enrollment rates of orphaned children in Kibera, Nairobi County, Kenya. In line with the preceding, other issues such as barriers, support systems and the impact of social inclusion programs were considered to be essential in the discussion at hand. Despite the Free Primary Education (FPE) policy introduced in 2003, orphaned children continue to face economic hardships, social marginalization and inadequate institutional support. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study revealed that while enrollment rates have improved, challenges persist. Non-governmental Organizations like Compassion International and Save the Children have contributed through scholarships, learning materials and psychosocial support yet concerns over sustainability due to reliance on external funding remains. Findings indicate that comprehensive community-driven strategies involving local leadership, tailored interventions and policy adjustments are necessary to enhance access and retention. The study emphasizes the need for targeted reforms, sustainable financial mechanisms and inclusive policies to ensure that orphaned children in informal settlements receive equitable education. Addressing these systemic gaps calls for a holistic approach which integrates community participation and institutional support to create a more inclusive learning environment.

### I. INTRODUCTION

This paper explores the status of social inclusion in public primary education for the orphaned children in Kibera by assessing the enrollment rates as well as other related issues such as the identification of barriers to education and effectiveness of existing support systems with their impacts of inclusive initiatives.

#### 1.0 Questionnaire Return Rate

Out of the research's target sample of 300 comprising 280 pupils of public primary basic education and stakeholders comprising of 10 teachers and 10 caregivers, data was collected from 167 of the sample that comprised of 157 pupils, 5 teachers and 5 caregivers., as per Table 2. Therefore, the response rate of the research was approximately 56%. The data collected from this responding sample was deemed sufficient enough to shed light on the issues under investigation.

**Table 1: Questionnaire Return Rate**

Respondents	Target Sample	Responding Sample
Pupils	280	157
School Administrators	10	5
Teachers	10	5
Total	300	167
Response Rate = $(167/300) \times 100 = 56\%$		

#### 2.0 Analysis of Student Responses

In this section, data accessed from the 157 pupils is summarized, analyzed and presented in an informative manner utilizing descriptive statistical techniques comprising of graphs (pie charts and bar charts), numerical descriptive measures of frequencies and percentages, and tabulation

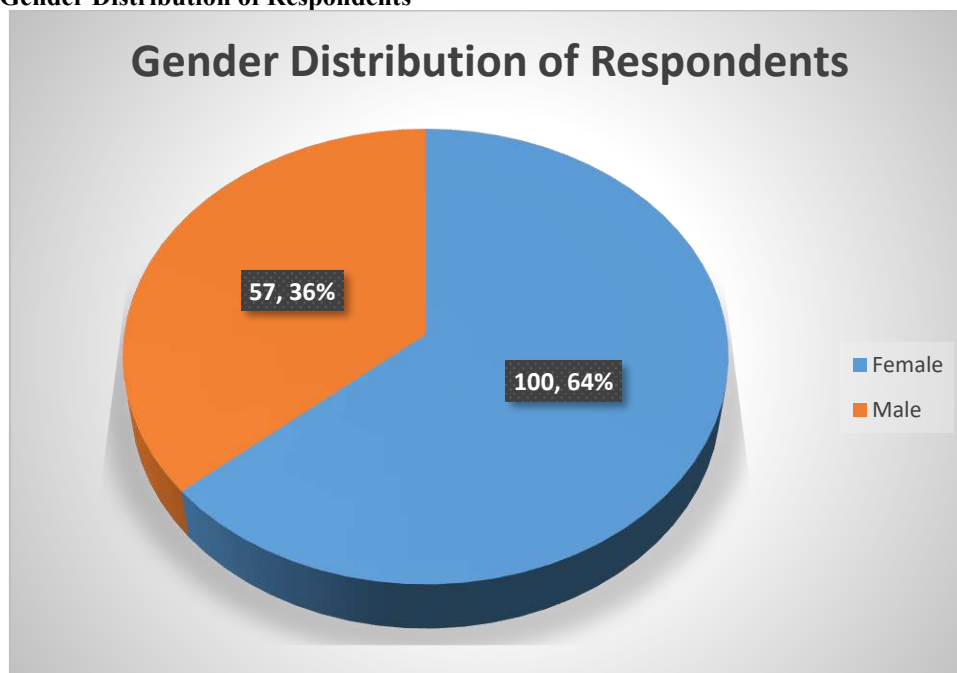
#### 2.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This subsection section provides a descriptive analysis relating to the personal and/or demographic details of respondents.

## 2.2 Gender Distribution of Respondents

Data was collected to determine the gender distribution and/ or representation in the sample of 157 pupils that formed part of the research.

**Figure 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents**

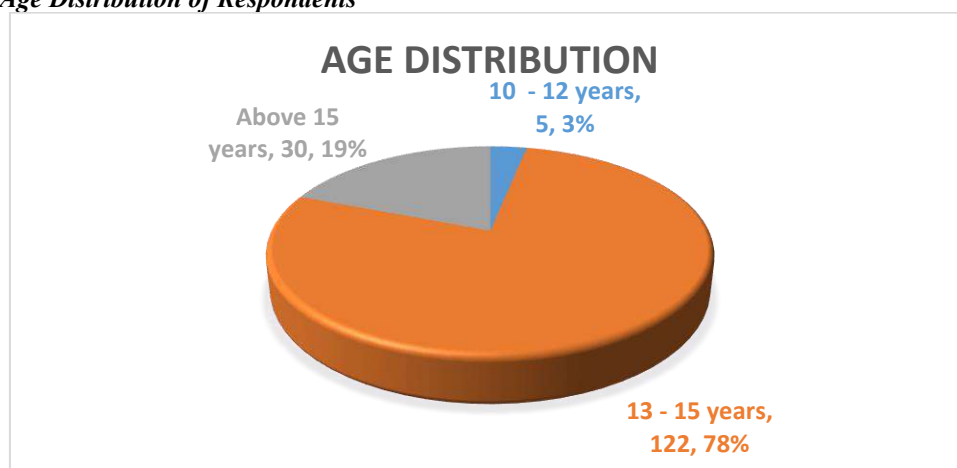


The findings in Figure 2 show that , the responding sample of orphaned children had a considerably large number of females at 100 (64%) as compared to males at 57 (36%). This might be an indication of a larger number of female orphaned children enrolling for primary basic education as compared to male orphaned children.

## 2.3 Age Distribution of Respondents

Data relating to the age of respondents was collected to provide general information on age distribution of the orphaned pupils

**Figure 2: Age Distribution of Respondents**

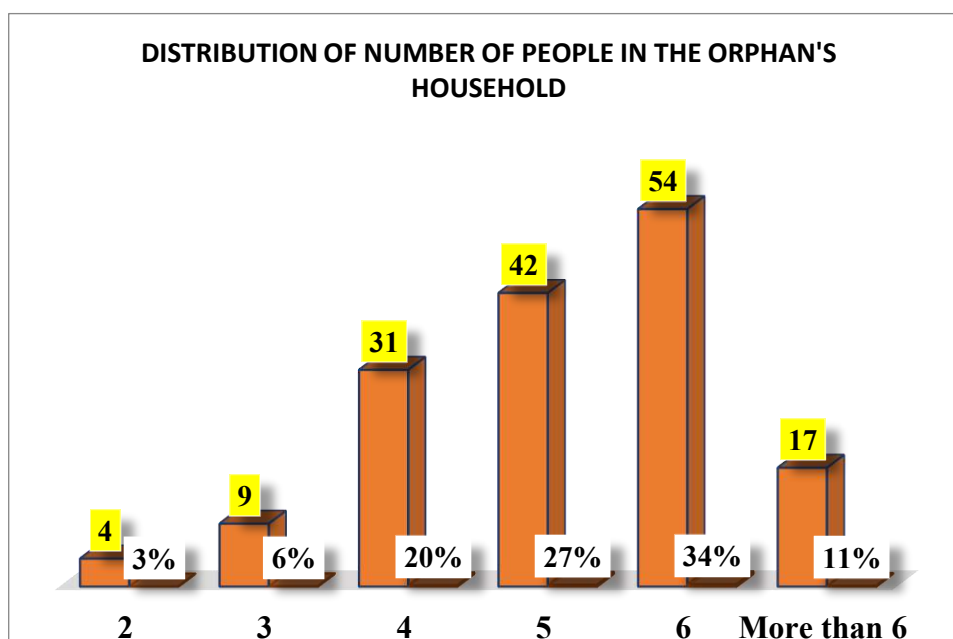


The findings in Figure 3 indicate that the age of the 157 pupils in the sample was skewed towards the age bracket of 13 – 15 years with the majority, 122 (78%) of the pupils falling in this age group of 13 – 15 years as compared to 5(3%) and 30(19%) falling in the age brackets of 10 -12 years and above 15 years, respectively. This is not surprising because the data was drawn mostly from grade 8 learners, who more or less are expected to fall in this age bracket, safe for a few outliers. This age group was also deemed as academically mature enough to provide the information sought for the study.

### 2.4 Distribution of Number of People in the Orphan's Households

Information was also sought to determine the number of people that the orphaned children had in their households.

**Figure 3: Distribution of Number of People in Orphan's Household**



According to Figure 4, of the 157 households of orphaned children, 54(34%) of the household had six members, followed by 42(27%) that had five members, while 31(20%) had 4 members. The households with the least number of people comprised of 2 people and which was associated with 2 (3%) of the households. While 17 (11%) of the households had more than 6 members. This results are indicative of the fact that most of the households or about three-quarters (72%) had 5 or more members.

### 3.0 Findings according to the research questions

This section presents findings according to the research questions of the study. Under each research question findings from teachers, head teachers and pupils are presented, discussed and compared to other recent studies to identify the real contribution of the researcher to that research question.

### 4.0 Enrollment rates of orphaned children in public primary schools in Kibera slum, Nairobi County, Kenya

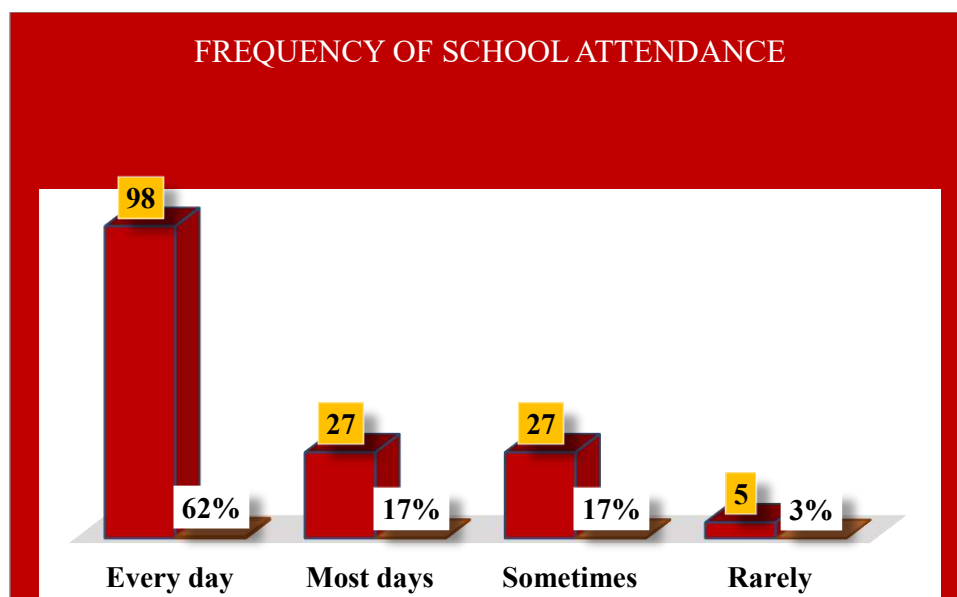
The first research question sought to determine enrolment rates of orphaned children in public primary schools in Kibera slum. To answer this question, pupils were given Likert scale statements to respond to in their questionnaire. The questionnaire also had open ended questions. The Guardians, teachers and head teachers were interviewed using KIIs. We present the quantitative data from the pupils' questionnaires in Tables, percentages and figures. Qualitative data from the head teachers and caregivers are presented in words.

Information was also directly sought from the pupils regarding their school enrolment and attendance. Regarding school enrolment, the teachers indicated that the number of orphaned children attending public primary schools had been on the increase, with the numbers growing from a few hundred a decade ago to over 1000 currently. The responses regarding school attendance are summarized below. All the 157 pupils in the sample were enrolled in a public primary school in Kibera slum.

### 4.1 Frequency of School Attendance

Information was collected in regard to frequency of school attendance by the orphaned child and the information is provided below.

Figure 4: Frequency of Orphaned Children School Attendance



From Figure 5, the majority of pupils, that is 98(62%) attend school on a daily basis (every day) while only a small minority, that is 5(3%) indicated that they rarely attend school. A notable number, that is 27(17%) indicated that they attend school most of the days and an equal number, that is 27(17%) attend school sometimes. Therefore, incidents of orphaned children not being able to attend school on a daily basis as required are evident among these pupils.

#### 4.2 Main Reasons for Not Attending School Frequently (Daily)

As follow up to the prior question collecting data on the frequency of school attendance, information was also sought on the reasons that contributed to the student not being able to attend school, if any. The findings are presented in figure 6.

Figure 5: Reasons for Not Attending School Frequently



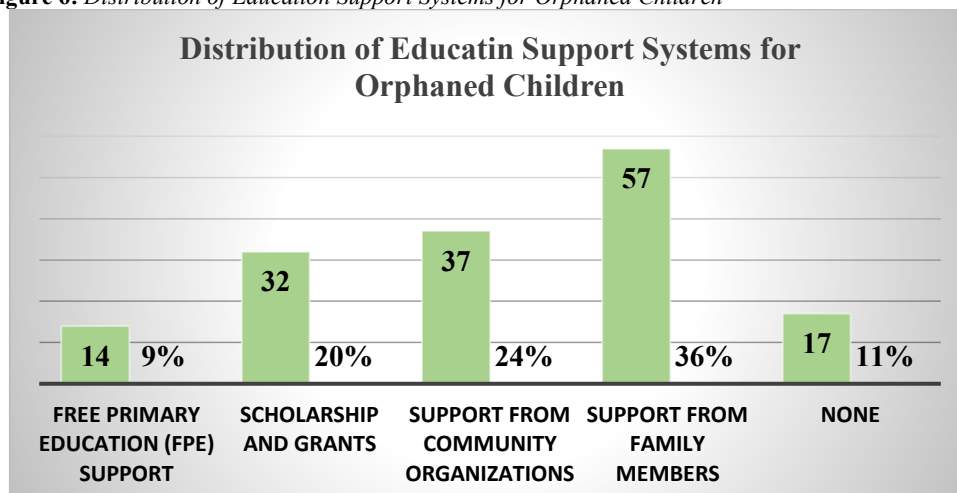
From figure 6, the most prevalent reason cited for missing school was illness or health issues, by 59(38%) of the sampled pupils. This was followed by family responsibilities such care giving, cited by 44(28%). Lack of school fees as a reasoning for not attending school was cited by 29(18%) of the respondents, while lack of school of supplies such as uniforms and books was cited by 25(16%).

#### 4.3 Educational Support and Challenges

Further information sought from the orphaned children related to their views on educational support and challenges. The findings from this line of enquiry is presented in the below subsections.

#### 4.4 Type of Support Received for Education

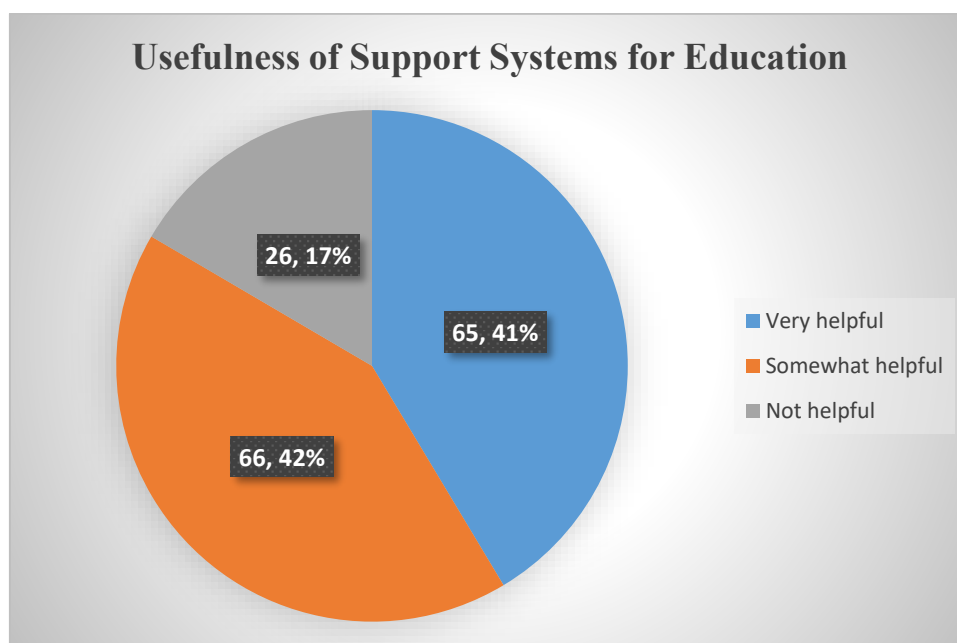
The inquiry on the type of support of education received, if any, elected the following results.

**Figure 6:** *Distribution of Education Support Systems for Orphaned Children*

From Figure 7, a good number of orphaned children cited their source of support for their studies (education) to emanate from family members (57, 36%). Other sources of support for studies came from community organizations (37, 24%) and scholarship and grants as cited by 32(20%) of the respondents. Free primary education (FPE) was cited as a source of support for studies by 14(9%) of respondents while 17(11%) indicated that they no source of support (none).

### 5.0 Usefulness of Support System in Ensuring the Student Attends and Stays in School

A follow up question to the kind of support systems that that aided orphaned children to attain education was whether the systems were helpful or not. The results were as below.

**Figure 7:** *The Usefulness of Support Systems in Aiding Access to Education*

From Figure 8, a notable number of orphaned children, that is 65(41%), found the support systems for education, and especially those emanating from family members as very useful, while an almost equal number, that is 66(42%), and especially the support system associated with support from community organizations, FPE, or scholarship and grants, indicated that the support systems were somewhat useful. A small percentage of respondents, that is 26(17%) indicated that the support systems were not useful.

### 6.0 Challenges Faced in Accessing Education

Another enquiry related to educational support and challenges sought to establish the challenges faced by the orphaned children in accessing education. The results are as follows.

Table 2: Challenges Faced in Accessing Education

Challenge	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Financial constraints preventing payment of school fees and acquiring necessary school supplies	64	40.8	40.8	40.8
Responsibilities at home, such as care-giving for siblings or household chores, affecting school attendance	35	22.3	22.3	63.1
Social stigma and discrimination at school due to orphaned status	14	8.9	8.9	72
Lack of adequate transportation or long distances to school, making attendance difficult	44	28	28	100
Total	157	100	100	

From Table 3, financial constraints that prevent payment of school fees and acquiring of necessary school supplies and lack of adequate transportation or long distances to school that make attendance difficult were cited by a good number of children, that is 64(41%) and 44(28%), respectfully, as challenges faced by the orphaned children in accessing education. The other notable challenge cited by 35 (23%) of the respondents was the responsibilities at home, such as care-giving for siblings or household chores, which affected school attendance. Social stigma and discrimination at school due to orphaned status, was viewed as a challenge in accessing education by a few of the pupils (14, 9%).

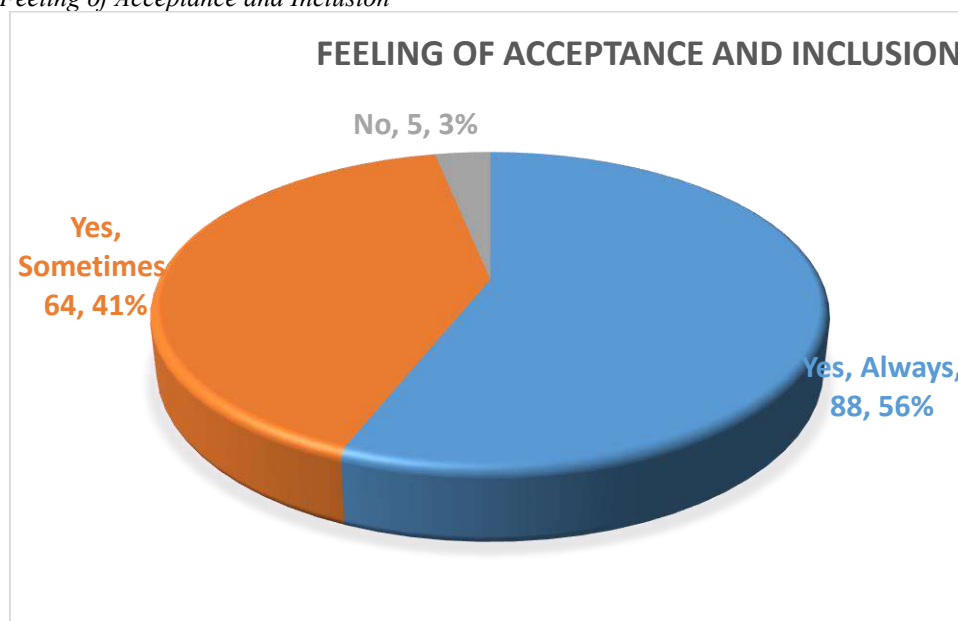
#### 7.0 Social Inclusion and Community Support

Information was sought from children in the area of social inclusion and community support as well.

##### 7.1 Feeling of Acceptance and Inclusion

In the area of social inclusion and community support, the children were asked whether they felt that they were accepted and included in school. The findings were as below

Figure 8: Feeling of Acceptance and Inclusion

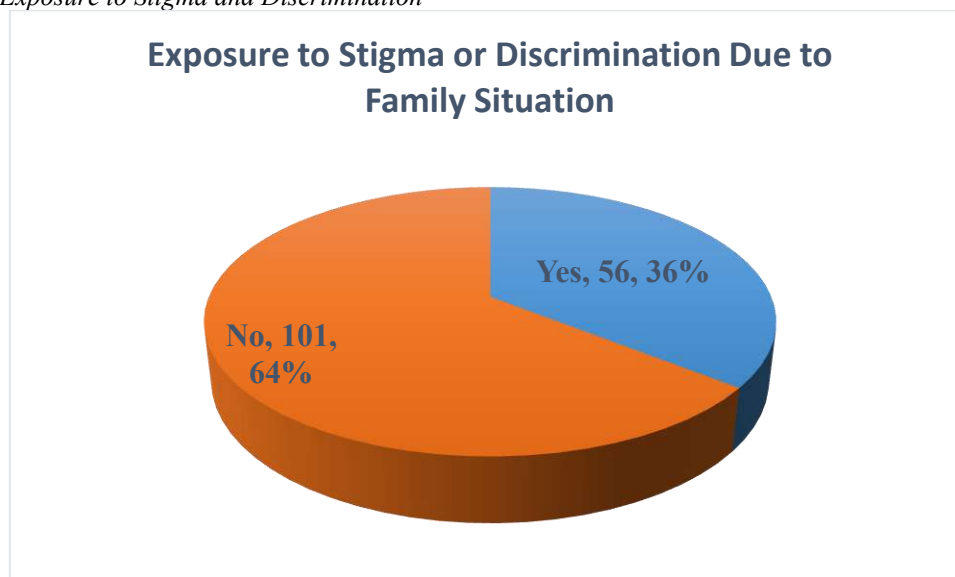


Responding to the question of whether they felt that they were accepted and included in school, majority of the respondents, that is, 88(56%), answered in the affirmative by citing, 'yes, always', while 64(41%) responded as 'yes, sometimes'. Only 5(3%) indicated that they did not feel included and accepted.

### 7.2 Exposure to Stigma and Discrimination Due to Family Situation

Another line of enquiry relating to social inclusion and community support sought to establish whether the orphaned student had experienced stigma or discrimination because the family situation.

**Figure 9:** *Exposure to Stigma and Discrimination*



As per Figure 10, 64% (101) of the orphaned children indicated that they had not experienced stigma or discrimination due to their family situation while 56(36%) indicate that they had.

### 8.0 Community Programs or Activities that Support Orphaned Children's' Education

In response to the question as to whether there were any community programs or activities that supported the orphaned children's education, 69 (44%) indicated that there were, 52(33%) indicated that they were not there, while 36 (23%) were unsure.

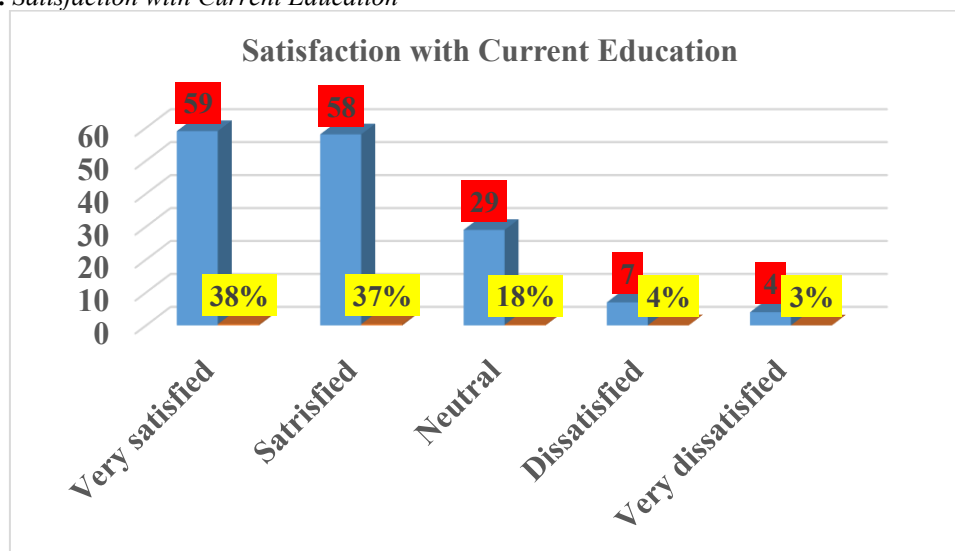
#### 8.1 Overall Educational Experience

Orphaned children were also asked to share their overall educational experience.

#### 8.2 Satisfaction with Current Education

In relation to overall education experience, the children were asked to provide an indication of their satisfaction with the current education. The responses were as follows:

**Figure 10:** *Satisfaction with Current Education*



According to Figure 11, most of the orphaned children indicated satisfaction with their current education system with a combined 74%(117) indicating that they were either satisfied or very satisfied. A mere 11 (7%) of the children indicated dissatisfaction with the current education, while 29(18%) remained neutral on the matter.

### 8.3 Steps That Can Be Undertaken to Improve Education for Orphaned Pupils in Kibera Slum

In regard to what children thought could be done to improve education for orphaned children in Kibera slum, the findings were as follows:



**Table 3: Steps that Can Be Taken to Improve Education for Orphaned Children in Kibera**

Steps to Improve Education	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Increase availability of scholarships or financial support to cover school fees and essential supplies	43	27.4	27.4	27.4
Improve school facilities and resources, such as classrooms, textbooks, and learning materials	70	44.6	44.6	72
Implement mentorship programs or counselling services to support emotional and academic development.	35	22.3	22.3	94.3
Enhance community involvement and support through programs like feeding schemes or after-school activities	9	5.7	5.7	100
Total	157	100	100	

From Table 4, among the steps cited by a sizeable number of children that could be taken to improve education for orphaned children include improving school facilities and resources, such as classrooms, textbooks, and learning materials, as cited by 70(45%) of the respondents, Increasing availability of scholarships or financial support to cover school fees and essential supplies as indicated by 43(27%) of the orphaned children, and implementing mentorship programs or counselling services to support emotional and academic development, as cited by 35 (22%) of the children.

### 9.0 Evaluation of Enrollment Rates of Orphaned Children in Public Primary Basic Education in Kibera Slum

The first research question sought to determine enrolment rates of orphaned children in public primary schools in public primary basic education in Kibera slum. To answer this question, 167 participants, comprising of 157 pupils, 5 head teachers and 5 teachers, were given Likert scale statements to respond to in the questionnaire. The questionnaire also had open ended questions. The teachers and guardians, in addition, provided information through key informant interviews (KIIs). The quantitative data from the questionnaires is tabulated and presented in, percentages and figures while qualitative data from the head teachers and guardians, are presented in words.

### 10.0 Presentation of Quantitative Data

To gauge the enrolment rates of the children in primary education 167 research participants (including 157 pupils and 10 stakeholders made up of 5 head teachers a were asked to rate described enrolment trends relating as relates to their school in the past few years, on a five-point Likert scale. A numerical descriptive summary of their responses is presented in Table 5, followed by a narration of the main outcomes.

**Table 4: Rating of Enrolment Rates of Orphaned Children in Public Primary Basic Education in Kibera**

Variable	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
<b>Enrolment rates</b>						
1. The enrollment rates of orphaned children in public primary schools in Kibera are high	23	39	27	49	29	167
	14%	23%	16%	29%	17%	100%
2. There has been a significant increase in the enrollment rates of orphaned children in recent years	24	31	40	45	27	167
	14%	19%	24%	27%	16%	100%
3. The majority of orphaned children in Kibera attend public primary schools.	31	13	30	50	43	167
	19%	8%	18%	30%	26%	100%
4. Government policies have effectively boosted enrollment rates of orphaned children.	15	35	46	40	31	167
	9%	21%	28%	24%	19%	100%
5. Community initiatives have played a vital role in increasing enrollment rates	12	27	48	48	32	167
	7%	16%	29%	29%	19%	100%



As per the results in Table 4, in spite of a considerable number of respondents choosing to remain neutral on the provided statements that were intended to gauge the enrolment rates of orphaned children in public primary basic education, more of the respondents tended to agree with the overall view that the enrolment rates were high and growing than as compared to those who were in disagreement. A combined 56% (93) of the 167 respondents were in agreement (agree and strongly agree) that the majority of orphaned children in Kibera attend public primary schools as compared to 27% (44) who were in disagreement. Similarly, as compared to 23% (39) of the respondents who were in disagreement with the view that community initiatives had played a vital role in increasing enrollment rates, more than twice this number, that is, 48% (80) of the respondents, were in agreement.

Forty-three percent (72) of the respondents were in agreement with the view that there has been a significant increase in the enrollment rates of orphaned children in recent years as opposed to 33% (55). While 46% (78) of the respondents were of the view that the enrollment rates of orphaned children in public primary schools in Kibera are high, 37% (62) disagreed with this view.

Overall, the obtained data and analyzed results lead to the finding that the response lean more towards the enrolment rates of orphaned children in public primary basic education have been on the increase. This is manifested in the findings that the majority of orphaned children in Kibera attend public primary schools, community initiatives had played a vital role in increasing enrollment rates, and the view that there has been a significant increase in the enrollment rates of orphaned children in recent years.

### 11.0 Presentation of Qualitative Data

The key informants for KIIs consisted of the teachers and school administrators (head teachers). The head teachers pointed at a high pupil-to-teacher ratio in Kibera, with public primary schools in Kibera slum, having approximately 82 teachers for 7,493 pupils, and which translates to a ratio of about 1 teacher for every 91 pupils. This reflects the growing challenges encountered by schools in informal settlements in as far as catering for the educational demands of a growing population is concerned. This suggests the need to provide more educational resources (facilities and teachers) to ease the overcrowding of classrooms and limited individual attention for pupils. In agreement with the findings from both the school administrators and teachers was the view that enrollment of orphaned children in public schools had been on a steady increase in recent years.

On the assessment of the enrollment rates of the orphaned children:

“they were on the rise due to the prevailing situations such as Free Primary Education (FPE) supported by the legal framework in Kenya. The trajectory and or trend of the enrollment rate of orphaned children in, for illustration, Kibera Primary School, has been on the increasing for the past five years due to the rural to urban migration coupled with the enabling legal framework for the basic compulsory education in Kenya” (Head teacher 2).

From one of the teachers, the comment regarding enrollment of orphaned children was: “The factors which I am convinced to be the ones affecting the enrollment of the orphaned children in the school that I work as a teacher are: lack of support systems, discrimination and stigma, economic barriers and quality of education” (Teacher 1)

From another of the interviewed school administrators:

“When it comes to the strategies that my school has implemented or may possibly implement to increase enrollment rates of the orphaned children comprise: community as well as parental engagement, inclusive school policies, collaboration with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) along with government programs, financial support and scholarships and creating a supportive school environment.” (Head teacher 1).

A teacher observed that:

“According to me, the main economic barriers which are associated with the financial well-being of guardians, caregivers and orphaned children which hinder orphaned children from attending schools include: lack of adult care, child labour, household poverty, gender disparities and geographical encumbrances, such as long distance to learning institutions as well as lack of transportation that could be aggravated by economic restraints” (Teacher 1).

### 12.0 Presentation of Inferential Analysis: Correlation Analysis Between Social Inclusion and Enrollment Rates for Orphaned Children in Kibera

To investigate the extent and significance of the relationship or correlation between the social inclusion and Enrolment Rates, an inferential statistical tool, the Spearman's coefficient of correlation was employed, supported by the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) processing. From the correlation test results, the relationship between social inclusion programs and enrolment rates indicated a statistically significant positive correlation of 0.362 implying that effective integration of social inclusion programs is associated with higher enrolment rates of children in public basic education in Kibera. Given that the correlation between social inclusion programs and student enrolment rates returns a p-value of 0.000, social inclusion programs have significant impact on enrolment rates of orphaned children in public primary basic education.

### 13.0 Discussion of the Findings

Although the enrollment of orphaned children in public primary schools has lacked behind those of non-orphaned children, the findings of the current research, from both the questionnaire (quantitative data sources) and qualitative (KII sources) that in recent years the enrollment has been on an upward trend has been supported by empirical works of other researchers. Oketch *et al.*, (2018) observed that, NGOs such as Compassion International and Save the Children made efforts that have enhanced enrollment and retention of orphaned children in Kibera schools through strategies such as offering scholarships, learning materials, and psychological support. However, spite of such efforts, the continuing sustainability of such initiatives raises concern due to these initiatives consistent dependency on unpredictable external funding. The need to focus more on the educational needs for orphaned children is brought about by the observation that, despite, the operationalization of the Free Primary Education (FPE) program in 2003 ensuring the rise in enrollment rates in primary schools, contrastingly, the influence of this policy on abandoned children in informal communities like Kibera remained immaterial. A study by Ngware, Oketch, and Ezech (2011) demonstrated that orphaned children in slum areas still lagged behind, even as the general rates of primary school enrollment rose under the FPE program.

Research has shown that enrollment rates are poorer for orphaned and vulnerable children compared to their fellows who are not orphaned, and, for instance, based on the data for instance, UNESCO Data (2019), the tripartite problem of poverty, the loss of parental care, and social marginalization consequently lead to most orphaned children not being enrolled in school worldwide. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the state of affairs has been worsened by the HIV/AIDS scourge, where pandemic has orphaned many, leading to many children finding it hard to obtain an education.

It has been argued that in spite of Kenya's Free Primary Schooling policy purporting to deliver learning access for all, distinct needs of orphaned children have often been disregarded in its implementation. According to Bold *et al.*, (2020), the policy's wide strategy disregards the special situations that are faced by disadvantaged people like orphans. Orphaned children constantly face institutional impediments to education because of lack of inclusion for precise support instruments in the policy framework. Children going through economic troubles for instance, often stay out of school to work or tend to their younger siblings needs; this is further aggravated by societal isolation and discrimination. Head teachers and teachers that participated in the key informant interviews (KIIs) echoed similar disadvantages befalling orphaned children. Owing to the difficult nature of this obstacles, education interventions ought to employ an expansive approach that integrates community participation and tailored assistance.

The findings from the inferential statistical analysis of the current study that indicate that social inclusion strategies or programs had a significant positive impact on orphaned students enrolment rates in public primary schools in Kibera, are supported by recommendations from other empirical works such as that of Kabeer (2021), who underlined the need to involve local people in educational initiatives of orphaned children and opined that local leaders, parental and community-driven efforts may help alleviate social stigma and foster an accepting atmosphere conducive for more orphaned children to enroll in schools. It is also instructive to point out that Vygotsky's social constructivism research (1978) underscores the critical role of interaction between fellow students and local involvement in establishing a compassionate and positive educational environment.

## II. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study confirms that while progress has been made in increasing the enrollment of orphaned children in public primary schools in Kibera, significant challenges remain. Economic hardships, social marginalization and lack of tailored policy frameworks continue to hinder access to education for this vulnerable group. The study highlights that interventions by Non-Governmental Organizations and community organizations have played a crucial role in mitigating these barriers through scholarships, educational resources and psychological support. Nevertheless, concerns over the sustainability of these initiatives necessitates a shift towards more systemic governmental-led solutions.

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