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**INVESTIGATION ON THE SCHOOLS' PREPAREDNESS IN DEALING WITH
ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN (OVCs) IN PUBLIC PRIMARY
SCHOOLS IN MATHIRA DIVISION, NYERI COUNTY, KENYA**

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of HIV/AIDS scourge appeared to undo the progress that society had made on children survival, development, protection and participation, leaving many children as orphans and others suffering from HIV/AIDS. Most of orphans are vulnerable to physical and emotional deprivation. School managers advocate on behalf of vulnerable children through the mobilization of communities and sponsors so as to remove or reduce barriers that prevent children from attending school. The central problem addressed in this study was that despite the role played by government and other school managers in dealing with orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs), children are still experiencing inadequate care and performing poorly in the academic examinations. The strategies employed by schools managers in dealing with orphans and vulnerable children in public primary schools in Mathira Division Nyeri County has not been adequately investigated and well understood hence could be hindering quality care. To this end, the purpose of this study was to investigate schools' preparedness in dealing with orphans and vulnerable children in the targeted region. The objectives of the study was, to investigate strategies employed by school manager in dealing with OVCs, find out whether schools have resources to cater for OVCs and to investigate the implementation of educational policies governing school managers while handling OVCs. The study adopted a case study with a qualitative methodology. The target population comprised 27 head - teachers, 27 Deputy Head teachers and 351 Members of PTA, and 351 teachers, making a total population of 756 respondents. Ten schools were selected using random sampling method. From each of the 10 primary schools, 10 head teachers, 10 deputy head teachers, 60 teachers and 60 Members of PTA were elected yielding a sample size of 140 to participate in the study. Interview guides for, Head Teachers, Deputy Head Teachers and Teachers, while Focus Group Discussions for Members of PTA were used. The research yielded qualitative data which was analyzed qualitatively. In summary, all objectives of the study were achieved. The first objective was to investigate the strategies employed by school managers. The research revealed that 5 (50%) of the respondent postulated that seeking for donors was one of the strategies employed by school managers, 3(30%) revealed that managers seek funds from NGOs, while 2(20%) indicated that the strategy employed was prior teaching/learning. The second objective intended to find out adequacy of OVCs resources. The study findings revealed that 5(50%) of the respondents viewed that physical resources are adequate, 3(30%) indicated human resources adequacy, while the rest 2 (20%) denoted financial resources adequacy. The third objective of the study was to examine the level of awareness of educational policies in management of OVCs. From the findings, (70%) of the respondents indicated children's right was one of the OVCs rights, 2(20%) indicated UNCRC as yet another policy, while the rest 1(10%) pointed out African charter as yet the other policy. The study made a number of recommendations, with the first recommendation stating that an intensive study on OVCs should be conducted in private primary schools in Mathira division Nyeri County Kenya. Secondly, the researcher recommends a study to be conducted on the effectiveness of the Schools' Preparedness in Management of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) in Public Primary schools in Mathira Division, Nyeri County and the rest of Kenya. Additionally, the researcher recommends revision of OVCs policies regarding school preparedness. Lastly, the study recommends that resources be pulled together in supporting OVCs, and right strategies of managing OVCs should also be implemented.