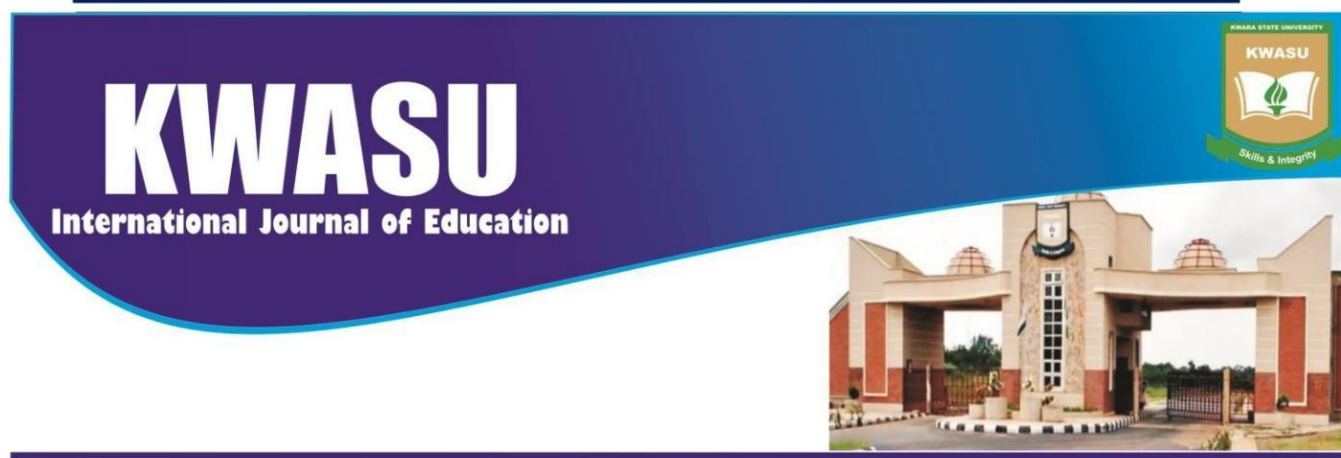




ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT OF PUPILS LIVING IN ORPHANAGE HOMES IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

*The increasing number of orphaned children resulting from different socio-economic and family-related challenges has raised concerns about their ability to integrate successfully into formal educational systems. Consequently, this study assessed the school adjustment of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised 835 primary school pupils residing in 18 registered orphanage homes across Kwara State. A total of 146 primary school pupils participated in the study through a census sampling technique due to the manageable population size. Data were collected using a self-developed instrument titled **Pupils School Adjustment Rating Scale (PSARS)**. The instrument was teacher-rated and consisted of fifteen (15) items measured on a four-point Likert scale. Face and content validity were established through expert review, while reliability was determined using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of **0.90**. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, were used to answer the research question, while independent sample t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were employed to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that pupils living in orphanage homes demonstrated a **high level of school adjustment (Mean = 3.35)**. There was no significant difference in school adjustment based on gender ($t = 0.269, p > 0.05$) or school location ($t = -0.191, p > 0.05$). However, a significant difference existed based on the duration of stay in the orphanage ($F(2,142) = 8.307, p < 0.05$), with pupils who had stayed between six and ten years demonstrating better school adjustment than others. The study concluded that a stable and supportive orphanage environment enhances pupils' school adjustment. It therefore recommended strengthening caregiver orientation programmes, promoting gender equity in school activities, and ensuring equitable teaching practices across both orphanage-based and external schools.*

Keywords: School Adjustment, Pupils, Orphanage Homes

Introduction

Globally, millions of pupils experience difficult life circumstances such as the loss of parents, abandonment, neglect, family disintegration, armed conflict, natural disasters, unfit parenting, and the absence of extended family support. Although every child deserves the care and stability of a nurturing family environment to develop strong socio-emotional skills and adjust successfully to school life, many children are deprived of regular parental care. As a result, they remain among the most vulnerable populations worldwide. This growing challenge has increased the demand for orphanage homes, which provide residential care, shelter, protection, and educational support for children without adequate parental care while facilitating their successful integration into society.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2024), approximately **153 million children worldwide** have lost one or both parents. Similarly, Save Our Soul (SOS) Children's Villages estimates that Nigeria has approximately **17.5 million orphaned children**. The socio-emotional competencies of these children often differ from those of children who receive adequate parental care, affection, supervision, and emotional bonding because institutional care cannot completely replace parental attachment (Seeberg & Goździak, 2016).

Socio-emotional skills refer to an individual's ability to understand and regulate emotions, establish healthy interpersonal relationships, and make responsible decisions (Adeyanju & Olufemi, 2021). When pupils begin formal schooling, these competencies become essential for developing friendships, interacting effectively with teachers, participating in classroom activities, and adapting to school routines. Pupils who successfully establish positive peer relationships generally enjoy school more and achieve better academic outcomes (Adewale & Yusuf, 2023).

School adjustment is a critical developmental process that determines how effectively pupils adapt to the academic, social, and emotional demands of school. For pupils residing in orphanage homes, adjustment may be particularly challenging because of emotional trauma, lack of parental care, limited social support, and institutional living conditions (Adewale & Yusuf, 2023). These pupils may experience difficulties in forming meaningful relationships with teachers and peers, managing emotions appropriately, and coping with academic expectations, thereby affecting their educational achievement and psychological well-being.

In Nigeria, the increasing number of orphaned children resulting from parental death, conflict, abandonment, poverty, and health-related crises underscores the need to understand how these children adjust to school and the factors influencing their successful integration into educational settings.

Academic adjustment involves a child's ability to meet learning expectations, remain engaged in classroom activities, and develop positive attitudes toward schooling. Pupils who adjust successfully academically often demonstrate higher motivation, better concentration, improved classroom participation, and greater resilience in overcoming educational challenges. Recent studies have identified emotional stability, supportive teacher-pupil relationships, and enriching learning environments as important contributors to academic adjustment, particularly among vulnerable children such as those living in orphanage homes (Okafor & Adeyemi, 2024).

Social adjustment encompasses effective communication, conflict resolution, cooperation, and the ability to establish positive interpersonal relationships that foster emotional security and a sense of belonging. Ogunleye and Ibrahim (2024) observed that social competence significantly promotes positive educational outcomes and long-term psychological well-being among orphaned pupils by facilitating successful adaptation to school environments.

Likewise, emotional adjustment involves managing stress, coping with challenges, building relationships, and developing a strong sense of belonging within the school environment (Adewale & Yusuf, 2023). Pupils who experience difficulties regulating emotions often struggle academically and socially. Factors such as parental absence, socio-economic conditions, caregiver support, and school climate substantially influence emotional adjustment among orphaned pupils.

Studies have shown that boys and girls often exhibit differences in emotional regulation, social interaction, and coping mechanisms because of biological, psychological, and socio-cultural influences (Adewale & Yusuf, 2023). In many Nigerian orphanage homes, girls generally demonstrate higher levels of empathy, emotional regulation, and social competence, partly due to societal expectations that encourage nurturing behaviours and emotional expressiveness among females. Boys, on the other hand, are often socialised to suppress emotions and exhibit independence, which may limit emotional expression and relationship building (Ogunleye & Ibrahim, 2024). Consequently, gender differences in socio-emotional skills may influence school adjustment, peer relationships, and overall psychological well-being among pupils living in orphanage homes. The duration of stay in an orphanage also plays a significant role in children's socio-emotional development. Longer stays may influence emotional regulation, interpersonal relationships, and overall psychological well-being. Although prolonged institutional care may expose children to attachment difficulties because of caregiver

changes and limited family interaction, some studies suggest that children who receive consistent emotional support within orphanage homes gradually develop resilience, adaptive coping strategies, and improved socio-emotional competence (Eze & Nwachukwu, 2024). In Nigeria, where orphanage homes differ considerably in caregiver-child ratios, psychosocial support services, and educational resources, the duration of stay may significantly affect pupils' school adjustment and academic development (Okafor & Adeyemi, 2024).

School location also constitutes an important factor influencing school adjustment. Pupils residing in orphanage homes may either attend schools located within the orphanage premises or schools outside the orphanage community. Those attending external schools are usually exposed to broader social environments, increased academic competition, and more diverse peer interactions. According to Herawati, Rahman, and Supraha (2023), independence and self-regulation are essential competencies that enhance successful adjustment among orphaned pupils. However, these competencies may be difficult to develop in institutional settings where daily activities are highly structured and decision-making opportunities are limited. Consequently, pupils who attend schools outside orphanage environments may encounter greater adjustment challenges because of increased social expectations and unfamiliar learning environments.

School adjustment among pupils living in orphanage homes is therefore a multidimensional process influenced by several socio-emotional competencies, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, interpersonal relationships, and social competence. These competencies determine how effectively pupils manage emotions, establish friendships, interact with teachers, and participate successfully in classroom learning activities. In addition, demographic factors such as gender, duration of stay in institutional care, and school location may influence pupils' school experiences and long-term psychological development.

Considering the unique educational and emotional challenges faced by pupils living in orphanage homes, this study assessed the school adjustment of pupils residing in orphanage homes in Kwara State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

School adjustment is an essential determinant of pupils' academic success, emotional well-being, and social integration. However, pupils living in orphanage homes frequently experience unique developmental challenges arising from parental loss, abandonment, neglect, limited family attachment, and inadequate social support. These challenges may hinder their ability to adapt effectively to school environments and participate fully in academic and social activities. Despite numerous interventions implemented by governmental agencies, non-governmental organisations, faith-based organisations, and international development partners such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the socio-emotional well-being and educational adjustment of orphaned pupils remain a major concern. UNICEF (2024) estimates that approximately 153 million children worldwide have lost at least one parent. In Nigeria, the growing population of orphaned children resulting from parental death, armed conflict, abandonment, family disintegration, parental illness, poverty, natural disasters, and inadequate extended family support has further increased the burden placed on orphanage homes.

Interactions with caregivers and teachers in orphanage homes across Kwara State suggest that relatively little attention is devoted to structured programmes specifically designed to enhance pupils' socio-emotional competencies and school adjustment. Consequently, many pupils may experience emotional, behavioural, social, and academic difficulties that could hinder their overall educational development.

Although previous studies have investigated various aspects of orphan care and child development, limited empirical evidence exists regarding the school adjustment of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State, Nigeria. This knowledge gap provided the motivation for conducting the present study.

Research Question

The study sought to answer the following research question:

1. **What is the level of school adjustment among pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State, Nigeria?**

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the **0.05 level of significance**:

H01: There is no significant difference in the school adjustment of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State based on gender.

H02: There is no significant difference in the school adjustment of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State based on the duration of stay in the orphanage.

H03: There is no significant difference in the school adjustment of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State based on school location.

Methodology

This study adopted a **descriptive survey research design**. The survey design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researchers to obtain information from respondents regarding the school adjustment of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State, Nigeria.

The population for the study comprised **835 primary school pupils** residing in **18 registered orphanage homes** across Kwara State, Nigeria, according to records obtained from the Kwara State Ministry of Social Development (2023). From this population, **146 primary school pupils** were included in the study using the **census sampling technique** because the accessible population was relatively small and manageable.

Data were collected using a researcher-developed instrument titled **Pupils School Adjustment Rating Scale (PSARS)**. The instrument was completed by the pupils' class teachers and consisted of two sections. Section A obtained respondents' demographic information, including gender, duration of stay in the orphanage home, and school location. Section B contained fifteen (15) statements measuring pupils' school adjustment using a **four-point Likert rating scale**. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts from the Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education and specialists in Test, Measurement, and Evaluation, Faculty of Education, Kwara State University, Malete.

To determine reliability, a pilot study was conducted among twenty (20) pupils residing in orphanage homes outside Kwara State. Responses obtained from the pilot study were analysed using **Cronbach's Alpha**, which yielded a reliability coefficient of **0.90**, indicating that the instrument possessed a high level of internal consistency.

The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics, including **frequency counts, percentages, mean, and standard deviation**, to answer the research question. Independent sample **t-tests** were employed to test Hypotheses One and Three, while **Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)** was used to test Hypothesis Two. All hypotheses were tested at the **0.05 level of significance**.

RESULTS

Research Question One

What is the level of school adjustment among pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Level of School Adjustment of Pupils Living in Orphanage Homes in Kwara State, Nigeria

Decision Rule:

- 1.00–1.74 = Never
- 1.75–2.49 = Rarely
- 2.50–3.24 = Sometimes
- 3.25–4.00 = Always

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remark
1	The pupil is always happy coming to school.	3.35	0.74	Always
2	The pupil actively participates in class discussions and activities.	3.28	0.66	Always
3	The pupil understands and follows instructions given in class.	3.41	0.63	Always
4	The pupil demonstrates a positive attitude towards school activities.	3.23	0.60	Sometimes
5	The pupil seeks help when he/she does not understand a task or subject.	3.48	0.60	Always
6	The pupil manages stress related to school tasks effectively.	3.18	0.54	Sometimes
7	The pupil remains calm during school tests or assessments.	3.22	0.71	Sometimes
8	The pupil perseveres when faced with challenges in school.	3.13	0.72	Sometimes
9	The pupil handles failure related to school tasks positively.	3.12	0.77	Sometimes
10	The pupil shows respect and cooperates with teachers.	3.55	0.58	Always
11	The pupil interacts well with peers during group work and activities.	3.39	0.61	Always
12	The pupil feels comfortable asking classmates for help when necessary.	3.34	0.80	Always
13	The pupil easily makes friends and maintains positive peer relationships.	3.52	0.54	Always
14	The pupil actively participates in social activities and school events.	3.63	0.56	Always
15	The pupil consistently completes class activities on time.	3.46	0.68	Always

Weighted Mean = 3.35 (High Level of School Adjustment)

Interpretation

Table 1 shows the level of school adjustment among pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State, Nigeria. The weighted mean score of **3.35** falls within the **"Always"** category, indicating a **high level of school adjustment** among the respondents.

Most of the pupils were rated highly on indicators such as happiness in attending school, participation in classroom activities, obedience to classroom instructions, seeking academic assistance when necessary, maintaining positive relationships with teachers and peers, participating in school social activities, and completing classroom assignments on time. However, relatively lower mean scores were observed in stress management, remaining calm during examinations, perseverance during challenges, and coping with academic failure, although these still indicated moderate positive adjustment.

Overall, the findings suggest that pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State exhibit satisfactory academic, social, and emotional adjustment within their school environments.

Research Hypothesis One (H01)

H01: There is no significant difference in the school adjustment of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State based on gender.

Table 2: Independent Samples t-test Showing Gender Difference in School Adjustment

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p-value	Decision
Male	78	50.48	4.93				
Female	65	50.24	5.79	0.269	141	0.780	Not Significant

Interpretation

Table 2 presents the independent samples t-test comparing the school adjustment of male and female pupils living in orphanage homes.

The result shows $t(141) = 0.269$, $p = 0.780$, which is greater than the **0.05 level of significance**.

Therefore, the null hypothesis was **not rejected**.

This indicates that **gender does not significantly influence the school adjustment of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State**.

Research Hypothesis Two (H02)

H02: There is no significant difference in school adjustment based on the duration of stay in the orphanage.

Table 3: ANOVA Showing Difference Based on Duration of Stay

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Between Groups	426.185	2	213.093	8.307	.000
Within Groups	3591.423	140	25.653		
Total	4017.608	142			

Interpretation

Table 3 reveals a statistically significant difference in school adjustment based on pupils' duration of stay in the orphanage.

The ANOVA result indicates:

$F(2,140) = 8.307$, $p < 0.05$

Since the calculated probability value (**0.000**) is less than **0.05**, the null hypothesis was **rejected**.

This implies that **duration of stay in the orphanage significantly influences school adjustment**.

Table 4: Post Hoc Multiple Comparison

Duration of Stay	Mean Score	Grouping
1–5 Years	50.59	B
6–10 Years	51.58	A
11 Years and Above	46.25	C

Interpretation

The post hoc analysis indicates that pupils who had stayed in the orphanage for **6–10 years (Mean = 51.58)** demonstrated significantly higher school adjustment than those who had stayed for **1–5 years (Mean = 50.59)** and those who had stayed for **11 years and above (Mean = 46.25)**.

This suggests that moderate duration of stay provides sufficient time for emotional adaptation and social integration, thereby enhancing school adjustment.

Research Hypothesis Three (H03)

H03: There is no significant difference in school adjustment based on school location.

Table 5: Independent Samples t-test Based on School Location

School Location	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p-value	Decision
School within the Orphanage	44	50.25	6.56				
School outside the Orphanage	99	50.43	4.70	-0.191	141	0.152	Not Significant

Interpretation

Table 5 presents the comparison of school adjustment based on school location.

The result indicates:

$$t(141) = -0.191, p = 0.152$$

Since the p-value is greater than the **0.05 significance level**, the null hypothesis was **not rejected**.

This finding implies that **school location does not significantly influence the school adjustment of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State**.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study are discussed in relation to the research questions, hypotheses, and previous empirical studies.

Level of School Adjustment among Pupils Living in Orphanage Homes

The first finding of this study revealed that pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State demonstrated a **high level of school adjustment**. This finding suggests that, despite experiencing parental loss and institutional living, the pupils have adapted positively to their academic and social environments. Their ability to participate actively in classroom activities, maintain cordial relationships with teachers and peers, and comply with school routines indicates that they have acquired the emotional and social competencies necessary for successful school adjustment.

A plausible explanation for this finding is that orphanage homes provide structured daily routines, emotional support, supervision, educational assistance, and stable living conditions that enable pupils to adapt successfully to school life. Consistent caregiver support, regular school attendance, and access to educational resources may have contributed significantly to their positive adjustment.

This finding agrees with **Khurshid and Nighat (2021)**, who emphasized that school adjustment depends largely on balancing personal needs with environmental demands. Similarly, **Palak et al. (2017)** reported that pupils with better school adjustment demonstrate stronger academic motivation and improved academic performance. Likewise, **Hacibekiroglu and Yilmaz (2019)** found that positive teacher-pupil relationships and supportive peer interactions significantly improve children's adaptation to school environments. Collectively, these studies suggest that supportive institutional environments can compensate, to some extent, for the absence of parental care by fostering pupils' emotional stability and educational success.

School Adjustment Based on Gender

The second finding indicated that **there was no significant difference in school adjustment between male and female pupils** living in orphanage homes.

This finding implies that gender does not determine how effectively pupils adjust to school. Both boys and girls appear to receive similar educational opportunities, emotional support, and social experiences within the orphanage environment. Consequently, they develop comparable levels of academic, emotional, and social adjustment. One possible explanation is that orphanage homes generally operate under uniform caregiving policies, where pupils receive equal access to educational resources, counselling services, school activities, and caregiver attention regardless of gender. Such equitable treatment may reduce gender-related differences in school adjustment.

This finding corroborates the study conducted by **Odiba (2024)**, who reported that although female pupils may outperform males academically, gender does not significantly influence school adjustment. Similarly, **Amedu and Dwarika (2023)** concluded that teacher support, classroom engagement, and positive school climate contribute more to pupils' adjustment than gender differences. Therefore, educational interventions aimed at improving school adjustment should focus more on enhancing supportive learning environments than on gender-specific strategies.

School Adjustment Based on Duration of Stay in the Orphanage

The third finding revealed a **significant difference in school adjustment based on the duration of stay in the orphanage**. Specifically, pupils who had resided in orphanage homes for **six to ten years** exhibited significantly higher levels of school adjustment than those who had stayed for shorter or much longer periods.

This finding suggests that the amount of time spent in institutional care influences pupils' emotional adaptation and social integration. Pupils who have stayed for several years may have become familiar with institutional routines, developed stronger relationships with caregivers and peers, and acquired coping mechanisms that facilitate better adjustment to school.

Conversely, newly admitted pupils may still be adapting to the orphanage environment, while those who have remained in institutional care for extended periods may experience emotional fatigue, uncertainty about their future, or prolonged psychological distress, which could affect their adjustment.

This finding supports **Ashimolowo et al. (2023)**, who found that adjustment strategies among orphaned children improve with time and are influenced by the duration of institutional care. Likewise, **Akpan and Akpakip (2024)** reported that emotional competence developed through prolonged supportive care positively influences academic and social adjustment. Similarly, **Okon et al. (2020)** concluded that continuity of caregiving and consistent school attendance significantly improve educational outcomes among orphaned children.

School Adjustment Based on School Location

The fourth finding revealed **no significant difference in school adjustment based on school location**. Whether pupils attended schools located within the orphanage premises or schools outside the orphanage environment did not significantly influence their ability to adjust to school.

This finding indicates that the internal support systems provided by orphanage homes may be more influential than the physical location of the school. Emotional support, supervision, academic assistance, and stable caregiving practices appear to prepare pupils adequately for school irrespective of where they receive formal education.

The finding agrees with **Alade (2021)**, who reported that school location does not necessarily determine pupils' educational adjustment. Likewise, **Unugo (2023)** concluded that although school location may influence certain academic variables, it has limited effect on pupils' capacity to adapt successfully to school demands. These findings suggest that strong institutional support can minimize possible disadvantages associated with different school locations.

CONCLUSION

This study assessed the school adjustment of pupils living in orphanage homes in Kwara State, Nigeria. The findings demonstrated that pupils generally exhibit **high levels of school adjustment**, indicating that many have successfully adapted academically, socially, and emotionally despite the challenges associated with institutional care. The study further established that **gender** and **school location** do not significantly influence school adjustment, suggesting that equitable educational opportunities and consistent caregiving practices promote similar adjustment outcomes among all pupils.

However, **duration of stay in the orphanage** was found to significantly influence school adjustment. Pupils who had resided in orphanage homes for six to ten years demonstrated better adjustment than those who had stayed for shorter or much longer periods.

Overall, the findings underscore the importance of providing stable caregiving environments, emotional support, structured routines, and equitable educational opportunities for pupils living in orphanage homes. These factors collectively enhance pupils' resilience, emotional well-being, and successful adaptation to school life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Teachers and orphanage administrators** should strengthen collaborative partnerships to ensure continuous academic support, counselling services, and extracurricular activities that promote positive school adjustment among pupils.
2. Since gender was not found to significantly influence school adjustment, school administrators should continue providing equal educational opportunities and participation in academic, social, and emotional development programmes for both male and female pupils.
3. Caregivers in orphanage homes should establish structured orientation programmes for newly admitted pupils to facilitate smoother emotional adaptation and integration into school environments.
4. Guidance counsellors should regularly organise counselling sessions focusing on emotional regulation, resilience, self-esteem, and interpersonal relationship skills among pupils living in orphanage homes.
5. Government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and education stakeholders should provide additional psychosocial support services, educational materials, and recreational facilities to improve the overall well-being and educational experiences of orphaned pupils.
6. Policymakers should ensure that both schools located within orphanage homes and those outside the orphanage environment maintain equitable access to learner-centred teaching methods, inclusive educational practices, and supportive learning environments.
7. Future researchers should investigate other factors such as caregiver-child relationships, psychological resilience, social support, and institutional resources that may influence school adjustment among orphaned pupils in different regions of Nigeria.

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