Exploring asset-based support for learners left in Zimbabwean child headed households in the context of parental migration

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores asset based approaches in the support, protection and empowerment for learners in Child Headed Households (CHH) in the context of parental migration in Zimbabwe. Left-behind children in the context of parental labour migration are perceived to be disadvantaged in terms of healthy behaviours and psychosocial functioning because of parental absence. It therefore becomes critical that education and community stakeholder organisations explore the environment of CHH learners in the scope of Ubuntu with the objective of establishing sustainable, roots-driven interventions. This study followed the qualitative research approach and data was collected through a focus group discussion organised, as an information sharing session. Six purposively selected learners in CHH arrangements and seven key community informants from a secondary school in the Shurugwi district of Zimbabwe, informed the study. The study revealed that the optimal utilisation of available environmental assets, capacities and skills that are rooted in culture goes a long way in building resilience. This in turn becomes an important mediating resource in improving the wellbeing and educational experiences of left behind children in Zimbabwe. The understanding is that parents will continue to be absent, hence, harnessing the best out of their circumstances is cardinal in building sustainable support.

KEY TERMS: *asset, family, child headed household, parental migration, support, Zimbabwe*

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INTRODUCTION

The separation of families due to parental labour migration is a common and rapidly increasing household experience for many children in Zimbabwe and other developing countries. The result is distance parenting and fluid family arrangements which invariably affect the wellbeing and educational proficiency of left-behind children particularly those left in child headed households (CHH). Such children left in the origin household, in child only households, are perceived to lack requisite social and emotional capacity to cope which disadvantage them, more specifically, in terms of healthy behaviour, social wellbeing and learning outcomes. Thus, this study sought to step in with schemes for roots-driven support, protection and empowerment built on available assets inherent and drawn from the environment of the affected learners. This study sought to engage community stakeholders and left-behind learners in CHH in exploring and mobilising available assets nurtured through Ubuntu principles to build sustainable psychosocial support for learners affected by parental migration. The research question that guided the study was: How can local community stakeholders, psychosocially support left-behind learners in CHH, using available assets to attain improved wellbeing and sustainable learning? A phenomenological case study design was adopted and data was collected through a focus group discussion structured as an information sharing session. This paper is part of a larger research that explored psychosocial support for left-behind learners in the context of parental labour migration. Findings would be important in ensuring that parental labour migration is transformed from threatening the psychosocial wellbeing of left behind children into a sustainable strategy through the utilisation of inherent and available community assets. This study proceeded in five steps, firstly, it gave a background to the study which fitted this investigation in context; secondly, a review of related literature on left-behind children; thirdly, a discussion on the methodology adopted for the study; fourthly, a discussion of results, findings and conclusions drawn from the study and fifthly, the study proffered recommendations and implications.

BACKGROUND

From around the year 2000 to date, a considerable population of adult Zimbabweans are said to have migrated to different countries (Muchanyarei, 2020). Whereas some parents migrate with their families/ children, inhibitive factors with the host countries, costs, risks, immigration restrictions and in some cases illegal routes used, necessitate that parents leave their children behind in the home country (Zanamwe & Devillard, 2010). Thus, the traditional family structure is disrupted and fragmented across time and space with child only families in the origin home and adult only families in the destination country.

Considerable scholarly attention is acknowledged in Zimbabwe and other developing countries on how left-behind children following parental labour migration are negatively affected in terms of healthy behaviours, emotional well-being and learning outcomes (Kufakurinani, Pasura & McGreggor, 2014; Muchanyarei, 2020).There is however, no similar attention in building schemes of sustainable support against perceived effects. This is a gap that this study sought to close through exploring asset based support schemes. Studies in China, Mexico and Philippines, corroborated with studies in Africa and Zimbabwe which indicate that the cohort of children left behind by migrating parents are associated with elevated levels of stress, grief, sadness, increased victimisation experiences and have higher rates of behaviour and conduct problems as compared to children living with their parents (Fellmeth, Clarke, Zhao & Busert 2018; Kufakurinani et al 2014). Furthermore, the left-behind children are also said to have a marginally higher risk of binge alcohol drinking, smoking and drug abuse that affect their conduct in school and at home (Fellmeth et al. 2018). A report by SADC (2015)further reveals that parental absence add onto vulnerabilities and pose as a barrier to the children's psychosocial functioning and in accessing their rights.

The absence of the parent because of labour migration creates a gap because the parent is expected to model behaviour, set boundaries, share love, monitor the children and provide guidance (Seepamore, 2016). The restructuring of the family also affects the provision of other dimensions of care such as emotional, moral support, personal care and advice. According to Seepamore (2016), parenting becomes "monetised", implying that parents tend to make up for their absence by providing financial resources and material items for their children but appear not to be in a position to cater for the other necessary dimensions of care. This implies that the ensuing milieu affects the wellbeing of the children left behind hence, justifying the need to develop sustainable support schemes and this study considers it important that the support be built on inherent and community assets. This is even more critical considering that parents continue to be absent in the lives of their children even at critical stages of their development.

Ubuntu approach to assets

In Africa, roots-driven inclusive solutions are always valued highly as compared to solutions from outside. This understanding form the basis of Ubuntu approach to assets that recognise the potential and capacity to collectively

deal with local challenges using local resources (Mabasa, 2020). The understanding is that local communities understand their challenges and have capacity from within themselves and from their local environment to deal with own challenges. Everyone and everything has potential to be transformed into assets essential in dealing with local challenges. The Ubuntu approach to assets recognise the significance of traits such as solidarity, empathy and the notion of a person only being regarded as a person through others. (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013). The Ubuntu approach to Assets focus on homegrown solutions to local challenges using local assets a process that make Africans an authentic people (Zvomuya, 2020). Examples of such assets generally fall into individual, family (relational), community, communal, societal, institutional, environmental and spiritual assets, all of which are significantly shaped by the key tenets of the Ubuntu philosophy.

In Africa an individual is part of a "larger and more significant relational, communal, societal, environmental and spiritual world" (Zvomuya 2020:24). This understanding forms the base on which relevant community resources, values and skills housed in the social structure of society and supported by culture can be exploited for the benefit of its members. According to Nel (2020) social assets are built on networks, connectedness and setting a relationship of trust and reciprocity. These are the same principles that inform Ubuntu. Children in adverse living conditions, such as left-behind learners could tap into this rich network and resources for their psychosocial support. Such values inculcated within children and nurtured in the community through Ubuntu become key assets useful in support schemes for left-behind learners. The assets in this case includes the rich African culture, religion, network of relatives, friends, physical resources, business and family all of which becomes an important resource base for roots-driven inclusive solutions to local challeges.

Other approaches

The study was also informed by the asset based approach coined from the work of Jody Kretzmann and Jon McKnight (1993) which focus on discovering, mobilising and optimising resources that are present within the community for the good of the community (Green, Moore & O'Brien, 2006). This study views the mobilisation of available resources as significant in an effort to improve the wellbeing and learning experiences of left-behind learners.

METHODOLOGY

As educationists, we noted with concern that left-behind learners, following parental migration, may not bring to school, the requisite emotional and social competencies for sustainable learning. Teachers perceive such learners with negative behavioural patterns and consider them vulnerable. This motivated us to explore ways in which left-behind learners can be supported, protected and empowered. To achieve the latter, this study followed the qualitative research approach as it sought to understand the behaviour of left-behind children from their own frame of reference (Nyarawanda, 2014). This route allowed an in-depth exploration of the available community resources and internal assets that form the base for building sustainable psychosocial support against perceived effects. In respect of indigenous knowledge systems, this study embraced inclusivity and participatory approaches in negotiating the research purpose, data collection, data analysis and in presentation of findings (Khupe & Keane, 2017).

Six left-behind learners (coded as ZLR1 to ZLR6) and seven teacher and community informants were purposively selected from a secondary school in the Shurugwi district of Zimbabwe. The sampled learners were boys and girls aged between 15 to 18 years who have been in CHH for periods exceeding a year because of parental migration. The key informants included a local church pastor (ZSH1), Teacher (ZSH2), representative from a local non-governmental organisation (NGO) (ZSH3), a representative from the school's psychological services (ZSH4), Teacher (ZSH5), parent in the School development committee (ZSH6) and local police representative (ZSH7). In total 13 participants constituted the team that informed the study.

Data used in this study was shared by participants on their experience with learners in CHH in an information sharing session. The session also allowed learner participants to share their lived experiences. An inclusive and participatory approach was allowed in the exploration of the available assets that possibly have the potential to be optimised for the psychosocial wellbeing of left-behind learners. Three key aspects were ascertained in this process, firstly, how the learners are affected in terms of their psychosocial functioning; secondly, an exploration of inherent and external resources available for the support and empowerment of the learners and thirdly, a discussion on how the assets can be optimised to attain improved wellbeing and sustainable learning. Follow up probing questions were utilised by the researchers to gain elaboration.

The researchers obtained ethical clearance from the Central University of Technology (FRIC 21/18/2) and Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe. Informed consent was obtained in writing from the participants. With permission from the school head, learner participants completed the consent form (15-17 year old) to participate in this study. Participants were also made aware that they can withdraw at any given time without facing any penalty. A teacher in charge of Guidance and Counselling at the selected school was approached and assisted in organising the focus group discussion session and in disseminating information.

Participants were assured of confidentiality and informed that the data collected is for research purposes only. Data was audio recorded, transcribed and thematically analysed by the researchers. The data analysis followed the general five steps structure outlined by Mabuza, Govender, Ogunbanjo and Mash (2014). Firstly, data was transcribed verbatim. Secondly, the researchers read through the data allowing for a reflection on overall meaning and gained impressions. The impressions and reflections were guided by the researchers' understanding of the African context and cultural understanding. Thirdly, an inductive process was followed in coding the data into portions called chunks and allocated codes (Mabuza et al. 2014). Fourthly, from the allocated codes, the researchers generated descriptions and themes. Fifthly, a representation of the themes and descriptions were made using narrative passages and excerpts of verbatim quotes. As the research process was inclusive and participatory, the researchers involved some of the teacher participants in the data analysis process which assisted with data validation.

FINDINGS

Findings from this study revealed three major themes that explain how assets within the left-behind learners and available in their environment can possibly be utilised to achieve improved wellbeing for left-behind children in Zimbabwe.

- The psychosocial effects of parental migration on left-behind children.
- Internal resources and external assets available for the support of left-behind children in CHH.
- The significance of assets in supporting, protecting and empowering left-behind learners in CHH.

Theme 1: Psychosocial effects of parental migration

Participants (learners, teachers and community stakeholders) shared that left behind learners are affected in terms of their psychosocial functioning. The effects were noted both in terms of their internalising disposition and externalising behaviour. It is in view of such effects that warrants the development of asset based support to assist, protect and empower learners left in CHH following parental migration. The exploration of the psychosocial effects was done for the purpose of matching the proffered support to the gaps and needs of the children in CHH arrangements.

Internalising disposition

Learners left behind in CHH expressed their distress to living in CHH, following parental migration. Participant ZLR2 (girl, 16 years old) shared the following:

> *When my mother went to work in South Africa, things changed at home. I am now supposed to do all the household duties, prepare food, clean the house and look after my young brother and sister. It is not easy because I also have my school work. Sometimes I wish my mother was here as things were much better and we were happy.*

Teacher participant ZSH2 also shared the following,

> *The left-behind child has to balance between school work and household work. Managing the home puts a lot of pressure on the young child*".

Participant ZSH4 (male, School psychological service) revealed that children living in CHH are affected psychologically as they miss their parents and associate this with their misbehaviour,

> *... the left behind children miss their parents and some of the negative behaviour patterns and the uptake of drugs and alcohol are all because of the emotional pressure associated with heading the house.*

This suggest that the eldest child assume the parental roles and is also affected emotionally by living in the absence of the parents. Participant ZSH4 also revealed that the burden of household work usually fell on the shoulders of the girl child even when she may not be the eldest in a CHH, *"...you find that the girl in the household is expected to take over all the housekeeping roles"*. Thus, substitute caring roles would have consequences in terms of exhaustion, psychological distress and missed educational and human development opportunities (Lopez-Ekra, Aghazarm, Kotter & Mollard, 2011).

Externalising behaviours

Lack of parental supervision also results in the children being disadvantaged in terms of healthy externalising behaviour and learning outcomes. Participant ZLR1 (left- behind girl 17 years old) shared the following,

"I find it difficult to control my young brother he always does what he wants and spends a lot of time with his friends". Teacher participant ZSH2 also concurred,

> *Lack of parental supervision results in the children misbehaving, remember most of them are adolescents and they have challenges in terms of managing their emotions and are experimental. They experiment with drugs, alcohol and premarital sex. This becomes more difficult when they are left alone at home. You notice them by their rowdy behaviour that often result in expulsion as school.*

Participant ZSH3 (female, NGO representative) added,

> *It is because the children lack parental supervision that we see them engaging in premarital sex. The girls are not safe alone in the homes as they sometimes fall victim to rape or date rape. They are easily lured by very simple things and they engage in sexual activities resulting in early child marriages, unwanted pregnancies, school dropouts and even sexually transmitted infections.*

Thus, parental labour migration results in negative behaviour patterns ad expose the left-behind children to abuse situations because of children lack parental supervision. Parental roles such as moulding behaviour and giving guidance to the children prove to be critical for the development of children (Seepamore, 2016).

Assets for psychosocial support for left-behind learners

In view of the various challenges that affect the psychosocial functioning of left-behind children, participants expressed the essence of exploring the environment for assets that can be utilised to build sustainable support. Participants identified some of the potential resources as being inherent and housed in the individual traits of the learners themselves and also available in their social context.

Theme 2a: Internal assets

Following parental migration, left-behind children were noted as having certain attributes within themselves that are potential assets that can be utilised for improved wellbeing. Teacher participant ZSH5, shared the following:

> *Usually when parents migrate, they do a proper assessment on the children they leave behind. True, not all children can be left alone, suggesting that the children that we find in CHH passed the parental assessment and do have important attributes".*

Participant ZSH6 added,

> *Parents usually leave children they consider more responsible and have the potential to survive alone. This means the children simply need our support"*

Such internal resources act as both protective and are essential in building resilience an important variable in enhancing adolescent well-being (Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick & Yehuda, 2014).

Maturity, sense of autonomy and the development of resilience

Teacher and parent participants (ZSH2; ZSH5; ZSH6) revealed that most of the left-behind children are of relatively mature age. Participants contrasted children in CHH following parental migration with other configurations of CHH such as orphans in which even very young children are found in such settings. Participant ZSH1 (male local church pastor) remarked,

> *You need to understand that leaving children behind as parents migrate is a deliberate choice. This explains why most parents leave mature children who are better able to manage the home. Obviously no parent can migrate and leave behind a six year old alone in the home.*

Participant ZSH3 also added,

> *Most of the children are found among secondary school learners because they are mature and would have acquired relevant housekeeping skills when they stayed with their parents. It is because the children are mature that they can remain as children and can stand up for themselves.*

Participant ZSH4 also valued maturity as a virtue and recounted,

> *It is because some of the children are mature that as teachers we find it easier to train them with skills such as assertiveness, children rights and HIV and AIDS .... This is more effective in protecting left-behind children from abusive situations and HIV and AIDS.*

This suggests that maturity is an important asset that is within left-behind learners that has potential in ensuring that the children in child only homes are not victimised or taken advantage of. With maturity also comes in housekeeping experience and open the possibility of empowerment so that they can stand for themselves. Participants (e.g. ZSH4) argued that teachers need to take advantage of the maturity of most of the left-behind learners and equip them with socio-emotional development skills that would assist in their positive development in cases of prolonged parental absence.

Personal competencies associated with maturity tend to confer resilient responses from the left-behind learners (Jaure & Makura, 2021). Resilience in this case implied that the children generally appreciated why their parents had to migrate. Learner participant ZLR4 (boy 16 years old) shared,

> ...our area does not get enough rain and so my parents had to go and work in South Africa. Yes, it was difficult but now I am getting used to this situation.

Left-behind learners appreciated the reason for their parents' migration and found it difficult in the first few months but with passage of time, they get used. Time and the appreciation of the reasons motivating migration helped in the promotion of resilient responses. Resilience in this case allows the left-behind child to revert back to baseline level of functioning following significant stress or adversity (Southwick et al. 2014).

Theme 2b: External resources

Participants in the study (teachers, pastor, learners and NGO representative) revealed that sustainable support for left-behind learners ca*n* be built on external resources housed in institutions such as the school, church, NGO'S and extended family Such institutions were described as reservoirs from which learners disadvantaged by parental labour migration could draw support from. External resources for support are also housed in African cultural principles, such as Ubuntu.

Participant ZSH4 shared,

> In Africa children with parents away easily get support from relatives, neighbours and even from community members because we believe in Ubuntu, everyone can be a parent and can correct misbehaviour.

This understanding resonates with the definition of Ubuntu as "being self through others" thereby depicting sympathy, compassion, generosity collectively and kindness (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2013). Participants also noted financial resources from the migrating parents as essential potential assets for positive development of left-behind children. Remittances in this case differentiates CHH in the context of migration and the other configurations of CHH, such as orphans (Kufakurinani *et al.* 2014).

School based assets

Teacher and learner participants (e.g. ZSH2; ZSH5; ZLR3; ZLR6) shared that the school as an institution has the potential to be an important source of support for learners in CHH in the context of parental migration.

> One of the key roles expected of us teachers is to act in loco parentis, meaning we can play both the father and mother role at school. This means that when the parents are away, the teacher can step in and give support

On being asked to elaborate on the kind of support expected from the teachers, participants (ZSH3, ZSH4 and ZSH5) identified counselling and advisory roles,

> Being a teacher entails that you play counselling and advisory roles, in fact teacher training in Zimbabwe equip teachers with such skills. Learners also have a lot of trust in their teachers making it easy for them to confide in them. So the teacher can step into the shoes of the parents. (Participant ZSH5).

In the school setup there is also a network of peers who constitutes an important coping resource for learners negatively affected by parental absence through migration. Participant ZSH3 shared the following observation, "

> Children spend a lot of time at school, so those learners negatively affected by parental absence can find support from their peers at school. It is through peers that they find encouragement and support that may help in coping with parental absence.

School based support was also noted within the school curriculum in which the teacher again plays an important role. Teacher participant ZSH2 expressed the following,

> Within the Zimbabwean school curriculum we have learning areas that can assist learners, negatively impacted by parental absence. We have G&C (guidance and counselling) and we also have co curriculum clubs that assist learners in adverse conditions. We have these things but the problem is both the teachers and learners don't take them seriously.

In that regard, the school was identified by participants as an important institution from which learners in adverse conditions can find support. The school has important human resources such as teachers, school administrators, senior teachers, school prefect all who have potential to assist learners in developing pro-social attitudes and cope in vulnerable circumstances.

Community resources

Participants in this study also revealed that learners negatively affected by parental migration can also get support from their community. Community support was described as being housed in institutions, such as the church. Participant ZSH1 (pastor) shared,

> *"As a church we do things according to the word of God and so we reach out to those children with no parents, we support them with all that we have. We always try to bring such children to church for guidance".*

The community was also said to have important authority figures that would also assist learners in adverse living conditions. Participants (parents, learners, teachers) identified community health workers, village head, Neighbourhood police details and councillors as important community members as potential resources for the support of children in CHH. The community stakeholders and their organisational capacities are there not only for support but for protection of such learners as well.

Cultural resources

Community based support was also related to culture. Participant ZSH6 who is a local parent shared that within the African culture children belong to the whole community.

> *... there is no way I can just pass by when my neighbour's child is in trouble, the only problem is that some of the children and parents are pompous and they think that their money is everything. The result is what you see, we just watch and do nothing to help.*

Participants also acknowledged the principle of Ubuntu as a potential resource in assisting children in CHH arrangements. Participant ZSH2 shared,

> *you would notice that a child have grandparents, aunts, uncles, nephews and so on who can help them, but this kind of support is not being utilised largely because of western culture.*

Participant ZSH4 also added,

> *In our community you would find that through the system of totems everyone is related and this further widens the network of relatives. Some of the relatives such as the uncles, aunts and grandparents are also mandated through culture to impart African norms and values.*

Thus, children left behind by migrating parents have at their disposal a network of relatives that if allowed, can play a protective and supportive role. The family and relatives can easily step into the shoes of the migrating parents because they are related and so the relationship is built on trust. In line with Ubuntu, things are only considered good when and if they are also good for the community and society at large (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2019).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study brought forth the various ways in which left-behind learners disadvantaged by parental labour migration can potentially benefit from inherent and environmental assets for improved psychosocial wellbeing. While the extra parental roles, lack of parental supervision and support would physically exhaust and exert emotional pressure on left-behind learners, this study reveals the moderating role of inherent, community and cultural assets in improving the wellbeing of left-behind learners.

Inherent assets

Findings from this study indicate the significance of inherent assets that play a significant role in resilience moderation. In other words, support obtained from community, school or family build on the inherent capacities and potential that is inherent among the left-behind learners. Over time and by experience left behind learners would have acquired skills and attributes that qualify to be regarded as inherent assets that come in handy in adverse living conditions. Jaure and Makura, (2021) regard such internal assets as essential elements in moderating resilience among left-behind learners, Participants noted maturity and a sense of autonomy as inherent assets obtained among left-behind learners. This study revealed that in most cases learners left behind in child headed households are often those considered mature enough to cope. The inherent assets also owes a lot from the culture of Ubuntu. This explains why the representation of this population is largely among secondary school learners who are mostly teenagers. From these observations, the development of inherent capacities owe a lot from the culture of Ubuntu.

Social assets for psychosocial support

Findings from this study reveal that left behind learners do have social assets at their disposal for support. The essential part is to follow a process for the discovery, mobilisation and optimisation of social assets for the good of the community (Green, Moore & O'Brien, 2006). The left-behind learner is not isolated. Participants identified institutions such as the school, church, community leadership (village head, chiefs), non-governmental organisation that could be utilised in the support of left-behind learners. The extended, family, peers and neighbours were the other potential sources of support. Zvomuya (2020) describes an individual in Africa as part of the larger, significant rational, communal, societal, environmental and spiritual world. This becomes the resource base that left-behind children can draw psychosocial support. Thus, the psychosocial challenges that disadvantage left-behind learners are counteracted by the support obtained in the community.
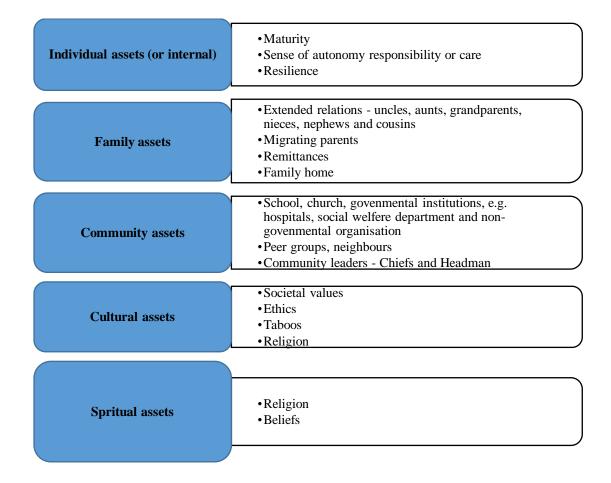
The value of Ubuntu in the support schemes

Furthermore, participants in this study revealed that according to the African culture, the left-behind child is related to many of the community members through the system of totems or ancestry. The collectiveness and unified trend underpinning Ubuntu becomes an important resource in developing support and protection mechanisms for left-behind children (Mugumbate & Nyanguru, 2019). In other words, the community of left-behind learners have at their disposal a network of closely connected community and social assets for improved wellbeing. Thus, the defining feature of community depicts shared interests, connectedness, empathy and reciprocity which are key tenets for the support of children in adverse conditions.

Ubuntu assets model

Figure 1 summarises the Ubuntu based assets that are available in the environment of left-behind learners. The assets become an essential support resource that give left-behind learners a chance to cope with the disadvantages posed by parental migration. In line with Ubuntu, there is communal ownership of the assets and there is shared responsibility of children in the community.

Figure 1: Ubuntu assets model

Individual assets (or internal)	• Maturity • Sense of autonomy responsibility or care • Resilience
Family assets	• Extended relations - uncles, aunts, grandparents, nieces, nephews and cousins • Migrating parents • Remittances • Family home
Community assets	• School, church, govenmental institutions, e.g. hospitals, social welfere department and non-govenmental organisation • Peer groups, neighbours • Community leaders - Chiefs and Headman
Cultural assets	• Societal values • Ethics • Taboos • Religion
Spritual assets	• Religion • Beliefs

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Findings from this study revealed that while parents migrate for the good of the family, it would appear that left behind children bear the brunt. The children are made to cope with parental absence thereby doing without parental care, guidance and protection. Consequently, the children are negatively affected in terms of their psychosocial functioning. The left behind learners were associated with largely unhealthy behaviour patterns and are also suffer psychological distress by being in CHH. This aspect therefore, warrants the need to develop schemes for psychosocial support.
- Participants in this study also demonstrated the superiority of utilising inherent assets and external resources housed in existing community institutions (e.g. School, church, community structure and culture) in building sustainable psychosocial support for learners, negatively affected by parental migration. The support was considered sustainable as it is and rooted in culture (*Ubuntu/unhu*).
- The study revealed that while community institutions, such as the school has potential assets that can be utilised for the support of learners in adverse living conditions, there were no coordinated support schemes in existence in the study community.

Based on our findings, left-behind children are negatively impacted by parental migration in terms of their psychosocial functioning. Furthermore, their community have abundant resources that has potential to be utilised for improved wellbeing. This study therefore recommends the following:

- The migrating parent(s), school and community stakeholders work together to establish a continuum of support for left-behind children for a healthy psychosocial development.
- Mobilise community resources housed in the school, culture of Ubuntu (Figure 1-Ubuntu assets model), religion and develop a system of referrals and synergies between school and community stakeholders to support, empower and protect learners adversely affected by parental absence through migration.
- Optimisation of inherent assets through socio-emotional development trainings (e.g. emotional intelligence training) for left-behind learners by community and school stakeholders.
- Besides homegrown communities need to be empowered to design own locally acceptable indicators of success.
- Future research to employ a quantitative approach to assess the impact of parental migration on educational outcomes for the purpose of utilising identified assets in improving learning outcomes of left-behind learners. Future research can also be employed to assess community based interventions in the support of such learners affected by parental migration. The goal is to ensure that parental migration which is unlikely to contract soon is transformed from being a barrier to being an avenue for improved wellbeing and improved learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to explore the availability and use of assets in the environment of left-behind learners for the purpose of building sustainable support initiatives. Participants in the study revealed the available internal and external assets that have the potential to be utilised in the support and empowerment of learners in CHH. The inherent assets identified, such as maturity, a sense of autonomy and resilience could possibly assist with the development of a coordinated support scheme for left-behind learners. The inherent support is augmented with environmental assets built on extended family structures, culture of Ubuntu and community capacities. It is through mobilising such kind of support that parental migration and the idea of leaving children behind in CHH could be transformed into a sustainable strategy for left-behind children in Zimbabwe.

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